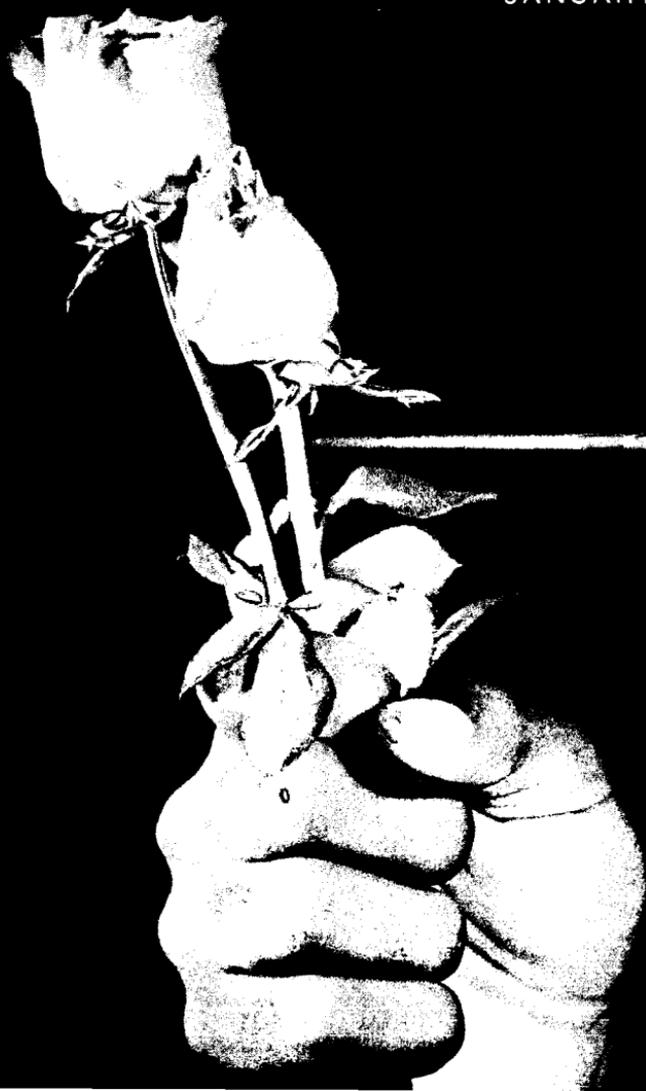


Adult Sabbath School Lessons

LAW, LOVE, and LIFE

JANUARY—MARCH, 1982



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Southern Asia Division

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Dear Sabbath School Members:

New workers' homes, additional classroom space, and the extension of hospital facilities all testify to growth. New members mean more educational facilities and extra classroom space. The extension of the church's witness demands the spread of the health message. Small health-care institutions begun in faith and housed in temporary quarters, need permanent buildings.

Through the years you have been supporting the work in Southern Asia through your Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects Offering. We thank you for your interest in our growth and the demonstration of your support by your faithful and generous contributions in the past. This quarter we present our needs for expansion and consolidation of our witness in the countries of this Division. Your offering this Thirteenth Sabbath will help us:

1. Provide homes for workers at the Lakpahana Adventist Seminary and College in the beautiful island of Sri Lanka.
2. Build new classrooms for the E. D. Thomas Memorial High School in South India.
3. Construct a new hospital building for the Ruby Nelson Memorial Hospital in Jullundur, north India.

As you think especially of Southern Asia this quarter may we request that you remember us regularly in your prayers. We are facing many difficult problems and the assurance of your prayers on our behalf will be a source of strength to us. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

G. J. Christo
President

mb

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**Editorial Office: 6840 Eastern Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012**

Lesson Author: Samuel Chien-Sheng Young
Editor: Gordon M. Hyde
Editorial Secretary: Florence L. Wetmore
Circulation Manager: Gary D. Grimes
Art and Design: Pacific Press

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Law, Love, and Life

Christianity is more than a system of rituals or mere outward conformity to a set of rules. Christianity, in practice, is a new relationship between a sinful person and the God who created and sustains him. Jesus Christ is the direct link between God and man, by His incarnation. He also became the Substitute and Surety (Pledge, Guarantee) for the sinful race.

Sinful men may enter a new-covenant relationship with God by faith in the Substitute and by continual cooperation with the Surety. Christ takes our sins and gives us His righteousness. We receive it in two ways. In Him we are accounted righteous and remain so as long as we maintain our absolute dependence upon Him and His merits. He also enters into a living relationship with us whereby the Holy Spirit brings about a new-birth experience in our hearts and minds and writes the laws of God, as the inward law, upon the fleshy tables of our hearts. (See Heb. 10:16.) From and by this inward law all of life is shaped for the believer. He wills to work out what God puts within.

In our lessons of this quarter we will concentrate upon the inward law and its outworking in our individual lives. But it is vital that we recognize throughout this study that the outworking of the inward law does nothing toward earning our salvation. There is no question of deserving salvation.

Our acceptance with God is already secure in Jesus Christ. "Ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). What the Father thinks of Christ makes us acceptable, in Him, to God. Let us remember that this law is implanted in the heart by God when we accept "Jesus only" as our righteousness. By the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing resurrection power into our lives—the same power within Himself by which Jesus rose from the dead—the inward law becomes the motivation and the direction of our lives. In essence it is the implanting of the Ten Commandments in the wellsprings of our thoughts and actions.

That Ten Commandment law is the expression of the character of God in human terms fitting our human situation. Hence it is the law of love, for God is love. This law of love is likewise the law of life—the life of God in us. So we blend the three elements in the title of the lessons of this quarter—Law, Love, and Life. Our Saviour becomes the pledge of the fulfillment of all three in our standing with God and in our daily experience with God and man.

Basic to human nature and universal in its application is God's law of love, which transcends all cultures, customs, socioeconomic classes, ages, races, nationalities, time, and geographical locations. It makes Christianity a religion, not of the East or of the West, but of the whole world. A believer from any nation does have to accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour and open his heart to the Holy Spirit.

From the individual and human viewpoint there can be no objective values despite the claims of moral philosophers. At a time when "there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), and still he does today. But if the standard of goodness is given by God, who is absolutely objective, then the establishment of a universally objective law is not only possible but sure.

Man's law is enforced by government officers. Sentence passed on the convicted is frequently based upon incomplete evidence. But God's law is enforced by (1) man's own conscience, (2) by God's direct, redeeming intervention, and (3) by natural events following the laws of cause and effect. Man's law can only deter crime, but God's law inspires virtue. In God's court there is perfect justice. Here the attorney-at-law would have no advantage over the accused, for each is convicted by his conscience and judged by his own inward law enlightened by the law of love and grace. Before God's perfect law all are condemned. Only an Omnipresent and Omniscient God qualifies as the judge, for He alone can discern the true motive of each action.

Love—The Supreme Motive

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor. 13:4-7, NIV).

Love is not merely an emotion; it is also a principle. We find meaning in life because we know somebody loves us. We do good because we love. Yet we are all sinful, and we are all selfish. When the love of self becomes dominant, we forget the welfare of others. One may become so blind to the needs of others that he pursues his own goal regardless of whether it causes pain or even death to others. If everyone on earth were to become extremely selfish and exceedingly ruthless in pursuing his own goal, there could be no law or law enforcement on earth. Violence would rule.

There is no darkness in light; so there is no selfishness in love. The Bible tells us that there is no boastfulness, hypocrisy, jealousy, envy, pride, rudeness, irritability, grudges, or failure in love. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)

Divine love does not change, and it endures forever. Love involves faith, and it also involves hope. Only to and for persons we love can we show faith and have hope. We must thank God because He sees in us something capable of responding to His grace.

In loving unresponsive sinners, God must love us exceedingly. In order to continue to love, He must also have great faith and great hope in us. Only when we turn around to look with faith into the face of Christ—the Christ on the cross—will our hearts be touched by this matchless love and will we surrender ourselves unconditionally at the foot of the cross.

The summary of God’s law is love. God is prepared to write His love in our hearts as the inward law. He has even promised to take away our stony hearts that are not capable of responding to His love and by His miracle to give us hearts of flesh that we may respond to His love with love. When this takes place, then we may learn to love others as He does.

Part 1
What
Love Is

Since love is difficult to define, how would you describe it?

“Love is patient, love is kind.”

“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor. 13:4, 6, 7, NIV).

In the above verses we are told that love is the combination of (1) patience, (2) kindness, (3) truthfulness, (4) faith, and (5) hope. Love without patience is not enduring love. Love cannot be felt if not expressed in kindness. Love rejoices not at wrong, but in truth. Love without faith results in suspicion and jealousy. And love without hope could bring about tragedy and even death. Love must involve all these factors put together, all at once.

Love is something which all of us have experienced but none of us fully understands. We cannot live without love. Our lives are sustained by a net of love. Yet sinful men are selfish and full of hatred—which is the opposite of love. It may be easier to describe what love is not rather than what love is, because we see more selfishness and hatred around us than we see love.

How did Jesus and the apostles John and Paul indicate love's relationship to God? John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:8.

Love is centered on another. Love is giving a part of self to another, sharing something with him. But the greatest love is that seen in the life of Christ, who made the supreme sacrifice for sinners even before they knew Him, even when they hated Him. Such love does not originate on this earth; it is divine.

“When love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not because of favors received from them, but because love is the principle of action. Love modifies the character, governs the impulses, subdues enmity, and ennoble the affections. This love is as broad as the universe, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 38.

“Love's agencies have wonderful power, for they are divine. The soft answer that ‘turneth away wrath,’ the love that ‘suffereth long, and is kind,’ the charity that ‘covereth a multitude of sins’ (Proverbs 15:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4, RV; 1 Peter 4:8, RV)—would we learn the lesson, with what power for healing would our lives be gifted! How life would be transformed, and the earth become a very likeness and foretaste of heaven!”—*Education*, p. 114.

What would one do if he truly loves God? (See 1 John 3:16-18.)

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 133, 134; *The Great Controversy*, p. 468

Part 2
What Love
Is Not

What are some of the attributes that are the opposite of love?

“Love . . . does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil” (1 Cor. 13:4-6, NIV).

In these verses the Bible lists what love is not: (1) envy, (2) boastfulness, (3) arrogance and rudeness, (4) self-seeking, (5) irritability, (6) resentfulness, and (7) smugness over wrong in others. These are all negative factors harmful to one’s personality and to human relations.

What are some additional contrasts to the characteristics of love?
Rom. 1:28-32; Gal. 5:19-21.

When a Christian reveals jealousy of others and is not tolerant of their failings, he brings a bad name upon the Christian way. We do not win others by bluntly telling them of their weaknesses or condemning their wrong actions. If we have the love that is long-suffering and kind, we will have a tender spirit, a gentle and winning way that will save and build.

In showing love, we do not need to give up our individual ways that make us a person. Unity in diversity is the real possibility and the ideal of those who come together in Christ. We do not want a community of all Peters or all Mary Magdalenes. The variety of personalities is a strength to the church. All do not see things just alike and should not be pressured into doing so. But where the love of Jesus is, there will be a basic harmony, sympathy, and respect one for the other. It will be understood that all need support in their various trials and experiences. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 65, 66.)

True love is not sentimentalism; it does not end in tragedy or suicide. True love is not a selfish, lustful feeling which disappears in a short while; it endures changes of time and circumstances. Love is a principle; it does not change. Love means sharing, giving, and sacrificing. A mother’s love is great. Woman’s love is deep; a friend’s love, like Jonathan’s toward David, may be deeply moving; but only God’s love is everlasting and more wonderful than anything we experience and understand now.

God is love. We believe in God because we are attracted to Him by His love. But how much (or how little) do we love God?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 168, 169, 530, 531

Part 3
When There
is No Love

Without love as a motive, how “good” are good deeds?

“If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing”(1 Cor. 13:1-3, NIV).

Speaking with the tongues of men and angels, having the gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, and giving everything to the poor—all these are apparently good; however, they are not truly good if the motive behind them is selfish. Love must be the purpose, the method, and the motive for all good work. Only love can keep one doing good regardless of what others feel and do. To help, to serve, to donate for fame or for fun cannot be sustained for long. Love and love alone endures forever.

Note how tender were the words of Jesus to His beloved but wayward disciples just before Gethsemane. John 13:33-35.

“This term of endearment [little children], nowhere else used in the Gospels, and once only employed by Paul (Gal. 4:19), is appropriated by the beloved disciple himself, who no fewer than seven times employs it in his first Epistle. **Ye shall seek me**—feel the want of Me. . . . **34. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another**—This was the *new* feature of it. Christ’s love to His people in giving His life a ransom for them was altogether new, and consequently as a Model and Standard for theirs to one another: It is not, however, something transcending the great moral law, which is ‘the *old* commandment’ (1 John 2:7 . . .), but that law *in a new and peculiar form*. Hence it is said to be both *new* and *old* (1 John 2:7, 8). **35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples**—the disciples of Him who laid down His life for those He loved. **If ye have love one to another**—for My sake, and as one in Me; for to *such* love men outside the circle of believers know right well they are entire strangers. Alas, how little of it there is even within this circle!”—Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), pp. 1059, 1060.

One of the greatest evidences that the love of heaven is in our hearts is found in our growing ability to listen to others.

What kind of world would it be if love totally disappeared from human hearts?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 137

**Part 4
True Love
Is Timeless****In the human sphere, what quality lasts forever?**

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Cor. 13:8, NIV).

The Revised Standard Version translates this verse as follows:

“Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.”

These versions focus on the time element in this verse. Nothing in this world can be called everlasting. Almost all things last but a short while and then pass away. Empires, pyramids, great walls, skyscrapers, things made or established by human hands will pass away. Heroes, kings, scholars will also pass away and be forgotten. Of all things human, only love lasts forever. Since only that which is living is capable of loving, we must first have eternal life before we can love forever.

Timeless love means love which can endure trial, tribulation, and even denial. Paul, touched by the measureless love of Jesus, cried out, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Rom. 8:35). While his feelings or determination may be admirable, how many a Christian has been able to withstand Paul’s list of trials and still be loyal to Christ? But Jesus’ love is timeless and changeless.

“The divine Teacher bears with the erring through all their perversity. His love does not grow cold; His efforts to win them do not cease. With outstretched arms He waits to welcome again and again the erring, the rebellious, and even the apostate. His heart is touched with the helplessness of the little child subject to rough usage. The cry of human suffering never reaches His ear in vain. Though all are precious in His sight, the rough, sullen, stubborn dispositions draw most heavily upon His sympathy and love; for He traces from cause to effect. The one who is most easily tempted, and is most inclined to err, is the special object of His solicitude.”—*Education*, page 294.

“At all times and in all places Jesus manifested a loving interest in the human family and shed about Him the light of a cheerful piety. Students should be taught to follow in His steps.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 172, 173.

Who can enjoy God’s love in eternity? Rev. 7:9, 10, 13-17.

How can this kind of timeless and changeless love grow within us?

Further Study: Eilen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 955.

Part 5 Perfect Love

In this imperfect world, marred by sin; what are we hoping and waiting for?

“We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor. 13:9-12, NIV).

Although Paul is pointing to the life to come, when the corruptible nature is changed forever, even now, in Christ, the imperfect becomes more nearly perfect, more complete; the selfish becomes more selfless. God takes away our stony hearts and gives us hearts of flesh—tender, compassionate, capable of loving. This miracle can be wrought only when we submit ourselves *totally* to Christ.

It is not easy; it takes courage to go to an enemy and say, “I’m sorry.” Only the grace of God can help us love our enemies, but we must learn to love perfectly—to love as Christ loves.

Because our capacity to love is small and our life is short, we take for granted that we should love the members of our families more than friends, and friends more than strangers. But in heaven there will be no strangers. Our capacity to love will increase to such an extent that everybody will feel fully accepted.

Some Christians have said that they must live with their mothers or husbands or children in heaven. If they cannot live with them, heaven will not mean anything. This feeling is based on imperfect knowledge and on imperfect love. Jesus Christ once said, “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30).

Here, Jesus pulled aside the curtain of mystery and allowed us to take a glimpse of heaven. Our imperfect love will become perfect. Human relations will broaden into a different form. We just cannot use our small yardstick of this earth to measure the love of heaven.

Perfection is something all of us desire but have not attained. Where have you seen even a glimpse of perfect love?

“Since there is no fear in love, one who fears demonstrates that he is not yet made perfect in respect to the high form of love of which the apostle [John] is speaking. [See 1 John 4:18.] Fortunately, development is possible. As we learn to know the Lord we begin to love Him, and our fear changes from a haunting dread of a powerful and avenging God to a ‘clean’ (Ps. 19:9) fear that does not wish to disappoint a friend.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 670.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 551, 552

Part 6 Faith, Hope, and Love

Of three key elements which open to us power to live a Christian life, which is the greatest?

“These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV).

Though we need not worry now about what will be the exact relationships in heaven, we must learn here and now to grow in love daily, to grow more like Jesus. On this earth, where we see things as though looking into a mirror of polished brass, we must have faith. Through the eyes of faith we see beyond the mirror to peace and confidence in the future.

We must have hope. Without hope our eyes would be fixed on the present and the past, and the memory of unpleasant things might seem unbearable. But with hope we can endure all kinds of hardship and be patient until we reach our goal. When we see Jesus face-to-face, we will have perfected faith; we will have perfected hope, because we will have arrived in the future—infinite time. Yet love abides forever in the past, the present, and the future—even in heaven eternal. It is admirable to have strong faith, yet how much more do we need to have strong love!

We need to hold fast our hope, the blessed hope, the return of Christ. We can hold it fast only as a strong love for Him carries us through the most difficult trials and temptations. What the Laodiceans lack today is not more money. We are counseled to buy gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve that we may be rich, be clothed, and see. The lukewarmness of the Laodiceans is caused by their love for earthly things. Because of it, many have turned away and are no longer with us in the pilgrimage to God’s kingdom. Let us learn how to love God, love each other, and love strangers—even enemies—that we may truly be called sons and daughters of God.

Note Peter’s combination of faith and hope in the experience of a child of God. 1 Peter 1:21.

In what ways is love given an adequate place in my Christian life—even greater than faith and hope?

“The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 99.

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Beatitudes,” pp. 37, 38

Conscience and the Spirit

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa. 30:21).

When God created man, He, with infinite wisdom, gave man the ability to discern right from wrong. What is considered to be right may differ from culture to culture, time to time, and place to place. But the ability to separate the right from the wrong, given us at Creation, was not completely lost under the blight of sin.

The *S.D.A. Bible Dictionary* defines conscience as “an inward faculty of consciousness that sits in judgment on the moral rightness of thoughts, words, and actions, independent of the individual’s desires or inclination.”—Page 234.

The Bible speaks of a good conscience, a pure conscience, and a conscience void of offense toward God. It also talks about a weak conscience, a conscience that can be defiled, seared with a hot iron, or put away. Fortunately, the Bible teaches that the conscience can be cleansed and purged. Consideration of the shed blood of the Saviour makes a believer’s conscience tender. In more detail, Ellen White describes a conscience quickened by the Holy Spirit, as the guide of conduct.

Conscience is not only an inner voice, a sixth sense, it is a most important part of the decision mechanism. Through the Bible-enlightened conscience, the Holy Spirit directs the will and controls the whole life. When violated, the sensitivity of the conscience can be so blunted and benumbed that one does not see sin as sin. Therefore, God in His great love, by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice, promised to take out the stony heart and put within man a heart of flesh which can respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Only with such a new heart and a new spirit, bathed in the love of Jesus, can one walk in God’s statutes and keep His commandments. (See Eze. 11:19, 20.)

How important it is that we, who are purchased by the precious blood of Christ shall be careful in guarding the purity and tenderness of the conscience. For once a man’s conscience is silenced, the Holy Spirit can no longer influence him, and he can no longer discern right from wrong. He will perish in the eternal darkness of his heart.

Part 1 The Inner Voice

When a man is confronted with a choice, what provision has God made through teachers or prophets to help him make the right decision?

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa. 30:21).

We make decisions every day, some routine and some more important. Everybody is forced to make serious decisions many times in his lifetime. Often, because the future is unknown, decision making becomes an agonizing experience. A choice may mean success or failure, even life or death. Sometimes even when faced by not-so-serious decisions, we wish someone would point out the right way. Fortunately, our loving God has made such help available to us. He has created a conscience in our minds so that we hear an inner voice which tells us what is right and what is wrong. Those believing in Christ and open to the teaching of the prophets in His Word know that this is the voice used by the Holy Spirit.

“The word of the Lord comes to us all who have not resisted His Spirit by determining not to hear and obey. This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord’s message of light to His people.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 28.

“It is right that you should both cherish integrity and be true to your sense of right. The straight path of duty should be yours from choice.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 62.

“The spirit of truth and a good conscience are sufficient to inspire and regulate the motives and conduct of those who learn of Christ and are like Him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 487.

We have looked at the ear open to God’s voice, but in a special sense the sensitive conscience is like an eye, providing light to the mind. The spiritual healthfulness of the whole soul and being depends upon its correct view of things. The Word of God convicts the conscience of sin.

The Spirit of God also works to keep evil out of our lives through the control of conscience. There is only danger for the one who exalts himself above the influence of the Spirit. He will reap a harvest of iniquity.

What does the inner voice have to do with character building?

“Not by eloquence or logic are men’s hearts reached, but by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, which operate quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 169.

Further Study: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 27, 28

Part 2 "ce" of the Holy Spirit

In order to be on safe ground, whom should we allow to guide the conscience?

"When he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove [convict, convince] the world [believers and unbelievers, individuals and masses] of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

"The renewing, sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, which would give peace and hope to the troubled conscience, and restore health and happiness to the soul" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 186) is the guide for the conscience. A perverted conscience can allow a man to be very wrong and yet think that he is on the correct path.

As the Holy Spirit speaks to the conscience by the heart appeal of Calvary, something of the evil of sin, of its power, of its guilt, of its woe is seen. Sin loses its appeal for the sinner. It is seen as separating man from God and placing him in bondage to the power of evil.

Of whom does the Holy Spirit come to testify? John 15:26.

God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit work together to show man the perfect heavenly life-style. Only by the movings of the Holy Spirit can we correctly understand Jesus. The focus of all of Heaven's efforts for our salvation is the cross. It is the things which Christ has for His church that the Spirit brings to our attention.

Some have resisted the Spirit's appeal to the conscience. Even if they respond later, what is the danger in resisting? For examples, see Acts 24:25; 26:27, 28.

Although some may see their folly and repent of sin and receive pardon, they have wounded their own souls. They have brought upon themselves a life-long danger. The power to distinguish between right and wrong, which ought ever to be kept keen and sensitive, is in a measure destroyed. They are not as quick to recognize the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit or to detect the devices of Satan. Too often in time of danger they fall under temptation and are led away from God.

What can I do to become more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Consider that the Spirit always works in harmony with the Word, which He inspired, and in exaltation of the cross, where sin was defeated once and for all.

Further Study: *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 125; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 164

Part 3
Gift
to All

In Paul's day, who beside believers had a conscience?

“When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom. 2:14, 15).

Here the apostle Paul says that the Gentiles, who had not God's law, also had a conscience, for there is no respect of persons with God. (See Acts 10:34.) If they did not have a conscience, the Holy Spirit would not have had a channel of influence over them, and their conversion would not have been possible. That non-Christians become Christians testifies to the fact that conscience is a gift God has given to every human being. Once converted, our duty is to keep ours pure and enlightened.

In the light of Ephesians 4:19, there are some who have muffled conscience so long that it and they are no longer sensitive. In the text for today Paul may have been challenging the spiritually favored Jewish people to live up to their privileges when even the pagan can do good things in spite of his limitations.

As modern believers, if we cherish a habitual impression that God sees and hears all that we do and say, that He keeps a faithful record of all our words and actions, and that we must meet them all in the judgment, then we will seek to follow the dictates of an enlightened and alert conscience. We will also cherish more and more Christ's victory over sin for us and in us.

How often does an “authority figure” become conscience for a Christian? Consider Rom. 14:5; Titus 1:13, 14; John 9:18-34.

A constant danger faces those who hold any position or relationship that would give them a ready opportunity to dominate any other human being in any way. One part of the danger is that they will exercise their position so as to become the conscience of that other person.

Church leaders, parents, teachers, and dormitory deans; husbands and wives; older brothers or sisters; psychologists, counselors, psychiatrists, and physicians; bosses; pastors, evangelists, and Bible instructors—all of these and many more need constantly to be alert to the danger of being conscience for another, especially when the other may invite it. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 61, 62; vol. 9, p. 234; *Education*, p. 288.)

In winning souls, how can I help to develop the conscience of the enquirers?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 214

Part 4 Good and Weak Consciences

From what source flows the love that sums up the commandment of law and gospel?

“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5, NIV).

“Keep the conscience tender, that you may hear the faintest whisper of the voice that spake as never man spake.”—*My Life Today*, p. 322.

What is one result of following a good conscience? 2 Cor. 1:12-14.

The supreme source of enlightenment for the conscience is the Bible. Together with sanctified reason and a prayerful, teachable spirit, the Holy Word—enlightened by the Holy Spirit—will uphold the cross and guide into truth. It will provide sound principles as a guide to the conscience and will result in a joyous Christian experience.

What effect do corruption and unbelief have upon the conscience? Titus 1:15.

Going against an enlightened conscience is the surest way to weaken its effectiveness. As a watchdog barks less and less if a stranger is allowed in the house, so the voice of conscience is heard less and less if we permit evil to dwell in the soul. Ultimately it will be deadened and lose its soul-protecting power.

Even in connection with the work of God, in all its branches, the road of progress may be blocked when those responsible have perverted the conscience to the point that it is hard and unimpressible. The youth also need to keep the conscience tender and instructed by Spirit-directed Bible study:

“If you could only arouse, if your slumbering, deadened conscience could be awakened, and you could cherish a habitual impression of the presence of God, and keep yourself subject to the control of an enlightened, wakeful conscience, you would be happy yourself and a blessing to your parents, whose hearts you now wound.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 563.

By what means and methods may a bad conscience be restored to its original pure condition?

Even the slightest move to obey the conscience, when enlightened by the Word, will help to strengthen it.

Further Study: *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 177; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 89-93

Part 5 Can Be Put Away

How does Paul describe the possibility that a good conscience can be lost?

“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19).

Young people who have been religiously instructed at home and who go away to schools or jobs, comparatively innocent and virtuous, may become corrupt by seeking the company of worldly-minded people. In the process, they lose self-respect and sacrifice noble principles. There is little then to keep them from the downward path, for they have rejected their conscience to the place that sin does not appear so sinful anymore.

How does the preceding thought relate to Paul’s reference to a seared conscience? (See 1 Tim. 4:2.)

Repeatedly in the Scriptures and in helpful comments on them, the message comes through that the sensitivity of the conscience is influenced by what an individual does or shrinks from doing. Shunning the cross weakens the conviction of future duties, and soon disobedience fails to disturb the soul. Only a continual love-response to Calvary’s all-sufficient Sacrifice can keep the heart tender to Spirit-directed duty. Otherwise “the heart is hardened, the conscience seared.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 279.

To church families living sensually, the counsel was given:

“While living under and proclaiming the most solemn message ever borne to mortals, . . . they are transgressing its holy precepts. The consciences of those who do this have become seared and terribly hardened. They have resisted the influences of the Spirit of God until they can use sacred truth as a cloak to hide the deformity of their corrupted souls.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 468.

What must have happened to David’s conscience during the series of gross sins which he committed involving Uriah the Hittite? (See 2 Samuel 11 and 12:1-14.)

There is a sobering warning for each of us who professes to be a part of God’s remnant people:

“Those who have had the light upon the subjects of eating and dressing with simplicity in obedience to physical and moral laws, and who turn from the light which points out their duty, will shun duty in other things.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 51.

How guarded must I be against worldly influences? How much is enough? Is it possible to be too guarded?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 229, 230

Part 6 The Unpardon- able Sin

What is the biblical description of an unpardonable sin?

“Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10).

It is so easy to fall into the trap which caught the boy who called “Wolf, wolf!” when there was no wolf. When there actually was a wolf, his fearful cries brought him no help. He had played his game too long.

With the matter of the conscience, we do the opposite—usually with similar results:

“Those who are quieting a guilty conscience with the thought that they can change a course of evil when they choose, that they can trifle with the invitations of mercy, and yet be again and again impressed, take this course at their peril. . . . The experience, the education, the discipline of a life of sinful indulgence, has so thoroughly molded the character that they cannot then receive the image of Jesus. Had no light shone upon their pathway, the case would have been different. Mercy might interpose, and give them an opportunity to accept her overtures; but after light has been long rejected and despised, it will be finally withdrawn.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 269.

In rejecting the voice of conscience, whom are we actually rejecting? (Compare Ps. 51:1-3 with Isa. 30:21 and Ps. 32:1-4.)

“It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men willfully reject the Spirit, and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

There is a solution to the problem of a seared conscience. We have mentioned it earlier, but it bears repeating lest some are tempted to give up in despair. The feeblest positive response to the Spirit’s work upon the conscience will open the way for Christ’s grace to enter the soul for redemption. As a physically sick person can regain strength by carefully planned exercise—even if it begins with the fingers only—so the spiritually sick person can receive remarkable results by exercising faith in Christ. Even faith expressed in terms of unbelief can bring from God warmth, love, understanding, an illuminated conscience, and a will responsive to the Spirit’s prompting. (See Mark 9:24 and context.)

Could I be so quick to pass counsel to others that I cease to hear what the Spirit has for me?

Further Study: *Messages to Young People*, p. 114

The Inward Law

“This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33).

In last week’s lesson we studied the function of the conscience, a gift from God to all. The fact that we all have a conscience does not mean that we all have the same evaluations of right and wrong (which are influenced by our concept of what is good and what is bad). As some have suggested, law is essentially an aspect of culture. Men’s concepts of good or bad are largely nurtured by cultural backgrounds.

Because circumstances and cultures differ, human law is somewhat relative. For example, in severe weather conditions, when food supply is low, the permitting of infants or the aged to die is acceptable among some peoples.

As behavior permissible by law may differ widely, so with standards of goodness, unless tied to divine law and instruction. In some places, although prohibited by written law, society in general still considers passing money “under the table” as a necessary, if not a good, process to get things done faster and better. Some argue that it differs little from giving tips to a taxi driver, a barber, or a waitress in the restaurant. If small tips are sanctioned by the government, when and why do “bigger tips” become corruption? In the area of fashions, there are other issues. The wearing of hats or the veil for the ladies, the width of the necktie for men, the length of hair for both sexes, vary from time to time and place to place. The sense of appropriateness of a certain standard is often temporal.

These illustrations show that each person and group has his or their own set of inward laws which are the result of culture, education, socioeconomic status, occupation, age, location, religion, and a number of other factors. Since these are changeable, relative, and subjective, God wants to write His law—a much higher and moral standard, the expression of His character—in our hearts. His law transcends culture, race, age, class, religion, time, and locality. He invites us to accept it in place of our imperfect, incomplete, and defective moral concepts.

Part 1
The Good

To what does the Bible point in its definition of the good?

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Once a ruler asked Jesus: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” Jesus answered, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:16, 17).

Although Jesus was trying to help the ruler understand who He was, Jesus here points to God as the source of all that is good. All good things and goodness originate with Him. The Ten Commandments—the law of life He gave to the race—can be summed up in one word: love (Matt. 22:37, 38; 1 John 4:8).

“Goodness is the result of divine power transforming human nature. By believing in Christ, the fallen race He has redeemed may obtain that faith which works by love and purifies the soul from all defilement.”—*My Life Today*, p. 54.

Since each person has a different set of standards for what is good and what is bad, most moral philosophers conclude that there are no real and constant values. Some say that “good” cannot be defined, described, or explained. They say that goodness is simply self-evident. It can be known only by how it feels and fits! Other theories and interpretations lead to further cheapening of the subject. The problem is that most moral philosophers refuse to commit themselves to any moral code. When one refuses to accept an absolute, eternal, and unchangeable moral standard and believes instead in a standard of right and wrong dependent on circumstances, time, and place, he will soon find himself floundering in doubt. When one eliminates God from his system of thought and tries to construct for himself a set of moral standards, he produces only limited statements which are dwarfed before the broad, majestic, and beautiful truths stated in the Bible.

From what great motive is goodness produced? 1 Cor. 13:4 compared with Gal. 5:22.

“From a worldly point of view, money is power; but from the Christian standpoint, love is power. Intellectual and spiritual strength are involved in this principle. . . . Wealth is often an influence to corrupt and destroy; force is strong to do hurt; but truth and goodness are the properties of pure love.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 138.

From a spiritual standpoint, what is true greatness? (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 305.)

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 541, 542

**Part 2
Goodness
and Man**

What view does Paul hold of the possibility that man can be good in himself?

“I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18).

“In ourselves we are incapable of doing any good thing, but that which we cannot do will be wrought by the power of God in every submissive and believing soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 98.

What have the moral philosophers said on the subject of goodness?

As early as about 300 B.C., the matter of whether man is basically good or bad was debated by two great Confucianist scholars—Mencius and Shuntze. Of course, the debate came to no satisfactory conclusion, for man is neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, states in the beginning of his *Ethics* that every reasoned human activity aims at some good. Men are seeking happiness, and pleasure is part of it. Unlike Plato, he saw that there cannot be a universal good. In other words, goodness, in the eyes of human beings is only a value based on personal opinion. Measured by his own standard, one may pronounce himself good. But that good may not stand the test of some other standard of goodness. Only God’s standard is the real and unchanging rule, the standard which can be applied to all.

Just exactly how Adam’s sin causes us to sin we cannot fully understand. But we do observe that nobody is immune to sin. On the contrary, men are selfish, unholy, and prone to sin. Pride, jealousy, deceit, covetousness, hatred—all can be found not only among adults but also among children. No wonder the apostle Paul confesses that there is no good thing in him. (Compare with Rom. 5:12-19.)

Can science or education change the sinful nature of man?

“It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 18.

Today men are acting as in the days of the judges—“every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Will they ever see that they are wrong? Sinners “will find in the day of judgment that they turned from God’s express requirements and set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong. They will find that what seemed to them unimportant was not so regarded of God. His requirements should be sacredly obeyed.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 70.

Further Study: Romans 7 and 8

Part 3 The Standard of Right

How does law relate to Heaven's standard of right and wrong?

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7).

In a broader sense than provided by the moral law alone, “the word of God will give the correct standard of right and wrong, and of moral principle. A fixed principle of truth is the only safeguard for youth”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 194.

From another point of view, “if there is any question in your minds in regard to what is right, look to the Lord Jesus, and He will guide you.”—*Life Sketches*, p. 447.

What is *legally* right may differ from what is *morally* right. In the eyes of legislators, a law can be a good law or a bad law. But once a law is enacted, violation of even a bad law is never legally right, for the very function of law is to point out crime. In the eyes of a judge, all laws must be enforced and respected, whether good or bad.

In this corrupt world, where violation of man-made law is sometimes seen as advantageous and even honored, how should the Christian act with regard to that law? Rom. 13:1-7; 12:17-19.

The Christian may find himself unable to take advantage of what may be legal because he is bound by a higher law.

“We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, the world is indebted for its great reforms. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 460.

What guides the Christian in his choices day by day as to what is right to do? 1 Peter 3:10-17.

“The truly converted soul . . . does not consider present convenience; he is not ambitious for display; he does not crave the praise of men. His hope is in heaven, and he keeps straight on, with his eye fixed on Jesus. He does right because it is right, and because only those who do right will have an entrance into the kingdom of God. He is kind and humble, and thoughtful of others' happiness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 569.

To choose right may cost something: popularity, position, possession, even life. Am I prepared to stand for the right at all times?

Further Study: *My Life Today*, p. 219

Part 4
The Inward
Battle

How does Paul vividly describe the battle going on in his heart?

“That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:15-19, 23).

“As man yields to temptation, and indulges in sin, his mind becomes darkened. The moral sense is perverted. The warnings of conscience are disregarded, and its voice is less clearly heard. He gradually loses the power to distinguish between right and wrong, until he has no true sense of his standing before God. He may observe the forms of religion and zealously maintain its doctrine, while destitute of its spirit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 682.

How does the Holy Spirit speaking to the conscience, help us to obey God’s law? Consider the setting of Pentecost. Acts 2:14-37.

Seventh-day Adventists understand, in common with God’s true children in every age, that the plan of salvation is designed to restore them to harmony with the will and mind of God. Thus we see it as not enough to say “I believe” and then proceed to ignore or violate the laws by which God governs His vast universe.

The heart that has been converted by the love of God revealed at Calvary *cannot* treat lightly the will of God in any sphere of life. “Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the Word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience.”—*Evangelism*, p. 309.

Over what issue will the Spirit’s final appeal be made to the conscience? Rev. 12:7, 17.

“The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 582.

In this life-long battle in which everyone must engage, with his eyes upon Calvary, how careful will one be in order that he may win?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 146

**Part 5
Heart
Religion**

What promise has God made in giving us His law to be followed as our inward law?

“This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33).

The law that was written by God on tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. We may have continuing peace of mind in knowing that instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. At the same time the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth “the fruit of the Spirit” spoken of in Galatians 5:22, 23. Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the inward law—the law of God written upon our hearts.

What is the fruitage of “looking unto Jesus”? (See Heb. 12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18.)

“We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 355.

What is the secret power which can strengthen and elevate moral standards? Rom. 13:10; 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

Although love is at the heart of the Spirit’s work, it is not without conscious effort on our part that our lives are brought to resemble the divine Pattern. The Christian life is not a dreamlike drift toward the kingdom of heaven. It involves choices, decisions, goals. It involves conscious denial of the everywhere-present demands of the fashions, customs, teachings, and practices of the world. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 146.)

As the relentless tides of worldly influences sweep against us again and again and again, we must have Christ’s character developed in us. Looking ever to the cross of Jesus will give us the moral courage to shun the customs of the world while remaining open to the heart needs of our fellowmen.

How high is the standard God has set for His children?

Further Study: *Education*, p. 30; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 297

Part 6 Reaching Up for Goodness

As Paul found in his continual struggle with a sinful nature, who only can help us to have peace in our hearts?

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:24, 25).

“Desires for goodness and true holiness are right so far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Good purposes are right, but will prove of no avail unless resolutely carried out. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians; but they made no earnest effort, therefore they will be weighed in the balances and found wanting. The will must be exercised in the right direction.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 265, 266.

When we experience conflict with temptation, the Word of God brings to us the power of the Holy Spirit, in answer to prayer. So it was with our Lord in the wilderness. By the Word of God in His heart and mind our Lord conquered Satan. The Holy Spirit that inspired the Word gives power to that Word today wherever it is preached. All over the world it has the power to bring conviction of sin and trust in the divine Saviour. Cultural barriers do not limit the universal appeal of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What hope is there for weak and weakened sinners? (See Isa. 55:7; Matt. 6:14, 15; Eph. 4:32.)

“You should yield your own spirit and take in its place the spirit of the dear Saviour. Reach up and grasp His hand, that the touch may electrify you and charge you with the sweet properties of His own matchless character. . . . Your moral strength will be equal to the closest test of character. Your integrity will be pure and sanctified. Then will your light break forth as the morning.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 63.

From the example of God’s compensation of Paul’s handicaps, where do we find a real source of power today? 2 Cor. 12:9.

Christ has the means and power to lead His children to wholehearted moral and spiritual soundness. He can draw us to His throne of grace and put a prayer in our hearts that will bring just the needed help. There is no resource in heaven that He will not make available to the heart that senses its need. We “are complete in him” (Col. 2:10). (Compare with Eph. 3:14-21.)

By what steps are we taking ‘God’s law into our hearts and making it the basis of our thought and our behavior?’

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 203

Freedom of Choice

“Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (1 Cor. 8:9).

In Eden, along with a conscience, God gave man freedom of choice. One may choose to believe in God; one may choose not to believe in any god, but one may actually create a god for oneself. One may choose to marry a John or a Karen, a Peter or a Margaret. Even in trivial things, one still has to make choices—a salad or a sandwich, an apple or a mango.

When we choose something, we must take into account the limits and the consequences of the choice. The apostle Paul says that even though he has the freedom to do things which are lawful, he would not allow his liberty to become a stumblingblock to others who are weak in faith. So we find that a Christian’s freedom is subject to the moral code which he has chosen to follow.

But the most serious choice each of us must make is patterned after Christ’s choice in Gethsemane—whether we wholeheartedly dedicate everything we have and are to God. Some may feel that they should go only part of the way now and somehow, at a certain point in the future, they will complete the decision to serve God without reservation. So they hope to gain all the advantages of this world and also heaven. But they may suddenly die, and eternal life will forever be lost to them. Unless, “looking unto Jesus,” we put everything on the altar—unless we decide that to please God is our most noble choice and goal in life—it is so easy to falter.

Unfortunately, some use their freedom to choose a task, an ideal, as a “god.” When these tasks or ideals take the place of God, they become idols—be they money, fame, position, power, ideology, beauty, a degree, vainglory, or simply material things such as a car, a house, a boat, an airplane, or even more trivial things.

Jesus is our perfect Model and Pattern. The major purpose of His life was to do God’s will and to glorify Him. If we would focus our attention on Him, His life, His sacrifice, His intercession, and learn His life-style, we would have no other god.

**Part 1
The
Freedom
of Choice**

Before exercising freedom of choice, what should a Christian consider first?

“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience?” (1 Cor. 10:27-29).

Paul here is not concerned with the question of whether or not meat is a wholesome food to eat. He does not deal with the question of clean and unclean meat. The subject is meat offered to idols. The lesson here is on personal and religious freedom. Everybody likes freedom, and some want unlimited freedom. But the apostle Paul felt differently. He would not use his liberty in such a way that doubt would arise in the minds of others. Nor would he, in order to enjoy his own freedom, offend the conscience of others. We are all free to make choices, but we are not free to choose just whatever we like. Our choices must be guided by a set of mature inward laws.

Seventh-day Adventists are quite conscious of religious freedoms, and we are perpetual watchdogs on those whom we fear may be planning the restriction of our liberties. But Paul’s counsel seems to suggest that we have reason to be equally concerned about and respectful of the religious liberty of others—even, and perhaps especially, that of those who thoroughly disagree with us (or we with them!).

In Jesus’ words, what makes us free? John 8:32.

In planning the eternal security of heaven and the new earth (see Nahum 1:9), God has made no place for the use of force or pressure to lead a person to accept the will of God. Those entrusted with the freedom of heaven must have chosen freely the will of God here.

What is the biblical view of one believer’s righteousness being shared with someone else? Eze. 18:5, 9, 10, 13.

Why does God give man freedom of choice but at the same time restrict him with His law?

Freedom of conscience does not include freedom from instruction from those inspired to convey God’s messages to the church.

Further Study: *Gospel Workers*, p. 174

Part 2 The Limits of Freedom

What limitations are there upon a Christian's freedom to do lawful things?

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth” (1 Cor. 10:23, 24).

In this rights-conscious age in which we live, some are quite unwilling to consider what influence even a “lawful” deed might have on another. Someone younger in the faith may not be able to understand finer points of truth, on the one hand, or see the broader principle, on the other. A true Christian knows that no man is an island. He knows that he is accountable for what others could misunderstand in his exercise of lawful freedom.

Before we speak or act, what should we think about first? James 2:12; Eccl. 11:9.

Following the ancient Chinese emperor, around the clock, were the recorders who wrote down every word he said. Because what the emperor said became law, this practice of recording helped these rulers to be careful in what they said. We too are judged by our own history. Not long ago a U. S. President was judged by his own words on tapes. How careful we should be in exercising our freedom!

What counsel does the Word offer for those who resent limits upon their freedom? Prov. 23:19, 26; 28:7; 29:17.

“I am a mother; I know whereof I speak, when I say that youth and children are not only safer but happier under wholesome restraint than when following their own inclination. . . . The unbounded freedom granted to children at this age has proved the ruin of thousands.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 62, 63.

Prudence in decision making is a habit. It can and should be cultivated. What attention have I paid to this?

In no aspect of human experience can the impact of the gospel reveal itself more vitally than in making life's choices. This is especially true when those choices have a bearing on other individuals' lives. Perhaps we ride roughshod over others most readily when we are in haste with our decisions. It is always appropriate, however, to ask how this particular choice might affect someone else.

Further Study: *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 29, 30

**Part 3
Care in
Using
Freedom**

God has given us the freedom of making choices. Why should we be careful in using it?

“Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” (1 Cor. 8:9-11).

Some Christians have stronger faith, and some have weaker faith. A frank and testing statement may stimulate one to study more of his Bible, but the same may cast doubts in the mind of another. Mature Christians must be considerate of the needs and weaknesses of others.

In Paul’s day, the act of offering food to idols did not change the nutritional value of the food (and he was not here teaching regarding a better diet), but the apostle would refrain from eating such for the sake of those with a weak conscience. Likewise, Christians today should also be careful lest without wishing it, they cause the weakening of the faith of a fellow Christian.

After feeding the multitudes, how did Jesus act to save the people from an action that would close down His ministry too soon? John 6:15.

What admonition involving use of freedom did the apostle Paul give to the church? 1 Cor. 14:40.

“By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. These deceived souls regard it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. . . . I have been instructed that it is Satan’s special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course independent of the counsel of their brethren.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 257.

What lesson can we learn from Israel’s disregard of God’s law and later use of it as a wall to separate themselves from the world?

In the history of Israel, national calamity taught God’s people the results of a failure to live out the law of God. They resorted, therefore, to device after device to compel themselves to remember the law and to be strict in its observance. So they attached portions of the law to their garments or to their doorposts. But they failed to see that God’s law written on the heart affects the outward acts. They even made their strictness a wall that shut them off from witnessing about Jehovah to their heathen neighbors.

Part 4
Idols**What is an idol? What makes it folly to worship idols?**

“They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed” (Isa. 44:9).

“No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 173, 174.

In the experience of the rich young ruler, how aware was he of the idols he was worshipping? How could Jesus love him under such circumstances? How radical was the spiritual surgery which he needed for a cure? (See Luke 18:18-27 and Mark 10:21.)

“He [the young ruler] had cherished an idol in the soul; the world was his god. He professed to have kept the commandments, but he was destitute of the principle which is the very spirit and life of them all. He did not possess true love for God or man.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 392.

Christians may be unintentionally worshipping idols. What is the cure? (Consider 1 Thess. 1:8-10.)

There is an endless battle for the affections of the followers of Jesus Christ. When the world surges in with its earthly treasures as an enticement for our attention, our love for Christ grows cold and feeble. Only as we consciously choose to expel these potential idols from our hearts will our love for Christ have hope of revival.

“When one idol is expelled from the soul, Satan has another prepared to supply its place. Unless you make an entire consecration to Christ and live in communion with Him, unless you make Him your Counselor, you will find that your heart, open to evil thoughts, is easily diverted from the service of God to the service of self.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 107, 108.

How do I know that I am not worshipping any idol? Could my idol be no problem to someone else, and vice versa? What does that matter?

Further Study: Deuteronomy 29

Part 5
Models

Who alone is presented to us in Scripture as a perfect model?

“Hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:21-24).

While He was on earth, Jesus did everything according to His Father’s will, yet He enjoyed the greatest freedom because sin had no power over Him. He loved God so much that He was perfectly happy to do His will. Wholeheartedly He chose to obey God. God’s will became His. When He carried out God’s will, He did it by His own choice. He says to us, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matt. 11:29).

“Christ stands before us as the pattern Man, the Great Medical Missionary—an example for all who should come after. His love, pure and holy, blessed all who came within the sphere of its influence.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 20.

How far can human beings go in duplicating the perfect pattern set for them by the Man, Jesus? (See John 15:3-5, 14, 16; Phil. 2:5.)

“He [Christ] is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549.

With regard to following Christ’s example, what did the apostle Paul ask us to do? 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9.

It may seem almost presumptuous for Paul to urge his fellow believers to be followers of himself when he was human too. But he only asked them to follow him to the degree that he was himself a follower of Christ.

In the absolute sense, Paul was not a perfect replica of Jesus. But no one made a more earnest, more total, or more constant effort to imitate and resemble the divine Pattern. The call is for us to do likewise.

Is it possible for man to rise to the level of enjoying complete freedom and no longer making wrong decisions?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 345

Part 6
The Highest
Standard

What challenge from Paul could give us a sound motive for making right decisions?

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

In the call of the gospel there is a series of seeming paradoxes—opposing ideas that an unbeliever would read as contradictions. One pairing of opposing concepts is suggested in the offer of freedom and the call to service (virtually to be God’s bond servant or slave). The youth especially covet freedom—freedom to think, to explore, to improve on the past. But they and we must understand that the truest freedom is found in the most complete and voluntary bondage to the love of Christ.

The love of Christ, in turn, is expressed to meet our situation and condition in the words of the Ten Commandments. He who seeks God’s glory rather than his own will hold back nothing from being examined by the eternal principles contained in God’s law. Entire and constant consecration is no price to pay for eternal joys with God. It provides perpetual joy now and true freedom forever.

What was one of Paul’s favorite titles for himself? Eph. 3:1.

When called by Christ, Paul was not a prisoner. When he accepted the commission from Jesus as the apostle to Gentiles, he gladly called himself a “prisoner of Jesus Christ for . . . Gentiles.” This willingness to submit one’s own plans to God is the secret of achieving the highest freedom.

The apostle John, a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos, was also a free man. In the truest sense, he was not a prisoner confined to this earth; he was certainly not a prisoner of sin. He was free to meet Christ, whose hair appeared “as white as snow,” whose “eyes were as a flame of fire,” and whose “feet [were] like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace” (Rev. 1:14, 15). No sinners can meet Jesus in His glory and still live. Yet John had the freedom of meeting his beloved Master. True freedom is not a freedom to sin, but the freedom to do God’s will as though doing one’s own.

How can I be so free that in making my own choice I am at the same time obeying God’s will?

“God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

Further Study: *Gospel Workers*, p. 128

Respect for Authority

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1).

Authority, according to Webster, is the “power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior.” Authority also means “freedom granted by one in authority.”—*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*.

A father has a kind of authority over his children because he participates in giving them life, he nurtures them to adulthood, and educates them by his knowledge, example, and financial means.

An employer has authority over his workers because he, in paying them wages based on a certain agreement, has contracted their services, including the use of their time, energy, and talents.

In days gone by, the king had authority over his subjects because they believed that he was ordained of God to rule. So in China the emperor was called “tientze,” the “Son of Heaven.” Today there may be presidents, premiers, or governors who lead their countries and the governments of the people.

These are traditional concepts of authority, and some are still valid today. However, with the increase and spread of knowledge, the diversification and multiplication of the means of production as a result of the industrial revolution, the ordinary citizen has been recognized as having great significance to his country and government.

The apostle Paul admonishes us to respect the authority of the government. Some governments may be ineffective, corrupt, and even oppressive. But when a government enacts a law, be it good or bad, the right thing to do is to respect and obey that law to the limits of a good conscience.

A Christian will obey the laws of his land out of an inner commitment to love and justice. He understands the need for laws to govern man’s behavior and to preserve order in society. And because he recognizes that civil authority comes from God, he will choose to be obedient to secular laws under all circumstances, and in good conscience.

**Part 1
Origin of
Authority****What is the source of the highest human authority?**

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Rom. 13:1, 2).

In the experience of Israel, “God was the center of authority and government. Moses, as His representative, was to administer the laws in His name. Then came the council of seventy, then the priests and the princes, under these ‘captains over fifties, and captains over tens’ (Numbers 11:16, 17; Deuteronomy 1:15), and lastly, officers appointed for special duties.”—*Education*, p. 37.

In our present-day experiences, we often see the power of “captains,” “princes,” and “councilmen,” but seldom do we think of them as servants of God from whom they have received authority.

Even in church elections the officers may be elected by the congregation, but they really indirectly receive the authority from God, “the center of authority and government.” Like the apostles, in God’s name they administer the church business.

In Commonwealth countries, on government envelopes are the words “On Her [His] Majesty’s Service.” We are God’s servants doing His Divine Majesty’s service.

By contrast to the state, where does the church get her authority?
Matt. 28:18; 16:18, 19. (See RSV.)

The authority of the church is an agency authority. It does not reside in her, of herself. The Lord, who founded the church when He was here, called her to administer His authority in spiritual matters in His absence. He has not left her without a charter; He has placed supreme authority—in His absence—in His Word as interpreted to us by the Spirit of truth. In this Word is the record of unchanging, eternal principles which are an expression of God’s own unchanging character. (See Heb. 13:8.)

Jesus Christ, provides by His atonement the only basis for His law to be written in the hearts of believing sinners. Thus the atonement undergirds the authority of the church.

How should I treat the servants of God?

“Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God show contempt, not merely for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God’s words, His reproofs and counsel, that are set at nought; it is His authority that is rejected.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 605.

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 719

**Part 2
Authority
of Govern-
ment****Should Christians pay tax to every kind of government?**

“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing” (Rom. 13:6, NIV).

Here the apostle Paul speaks about paying tax to the government. In the days of the Roman Empire, government was headed by a caesar, some good, some bad. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, Nero, the wicked king, was sitting on the throne in Rome. Nevertheless, Paul admonished the Roman Christians that they should not evade tax, but be honest in paying it. Should we not also respect government in this way today?

Unfortunately, some ambitious and selfish people take God’s authority into their hands and use it to exploit others to their own good. Because of this, respect for authority has eroded.

In the twentieth century, wars and revolutions have changed many governments—not only in form, but also in the ideologies which shape these forms. As a result, there has been a great deal of conflict. Often authority is under attack, and respect for authority sinks to low levels. When there is no respect for authority, anarchy rules.

“In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

What is the nature of authority in the government of a home? Eph. 5:21-25; 6:1.

“Parents, make home happy for your children. . . . If you allow them to do as they please, their purity and loveliness of character will quickly fade. Teach them to obey. Let them see that your authority must be respected.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 271.

Over the centuries Christians have lived and worked under various kinds of governments. Wherever you may live, as you study this lesson, how can you best represent Jesus Christ before your nation?

Further Study: *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 627

**Part 3
Varying
Authorities**

If God's authority over our lives is challenged, what should we do?

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Everywhere in the world, followers of Christ will need to consider carefully and prayerfully the meaning of today's text. To work cooperatively with government efforts to uplift and strengthen the citizens of each country is the Christian's privilege. He will cherish the freedom to worship, to meditate, to pray. He will show full respect for the consciences of those who may not share his understanding in all matters.

"We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

What is the true meaning of religious liberty? Rom. 14:5-10.

On the basis of Bible prophecy, we look for religious powers especially to usurp the authority of God, His Word, and His church. Churches will trample conscience in the attempt to bring a kind of unity that it is hoped will save the world from destruction. Unity will call for conformity to human laws that will actually counter the authority of the laws of God. This was what brought the oppression and persecution that marked the rule of an apostate world church during the Dark Ages. But God had promised final deliverance to His loyal and loving children. They will cherish His will above life itself.

In different parts of the world we can see a revival of the call for government to enforce moral principles.

Why should God's people have to suffer for obeying His righteous law of love to God and man? (See Rev. 12:17; 13:11-17.)

Seventh-day Adventists have long understood the challenge to individual conscience that Bible prophecy sees at the climax of history. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 459.) It is the same kind of test as God's children have faced since the trouble between Cain and Abel. The apostolic church and the Reformation-era churches knew this conflict well. It is almost to be expected that the climax of the controversy between Christ and Satan should be marked with a climactic confrontation.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 361

Part 4
Fear as a
Motive

What will be a Christian's attitude toward officers of the various areas of government under which he lives?

"Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil" (Rom. 13:3).

The Christian will be an ideal citizen in any country in which he lives. He will be honest in all his dealings. He will not be a drunkard or one to provoke civic unrest. He will do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. He will not interfere with or disturb the peace and harmony of his neighbors. He is appreciated by government officers at all levels because he is a peacemaker.

For whom is a government official "the minister of God"? Rom. 13:4.

There is an obvious limit to our duty toward government authorities, but it is easy to think to justify disobedience to them because of their limited knowledge of truth or because of weaknesses revealed.

Why is it that even fear often fails to carry a restraining influence upon criminals? Eccl. 8:11.

If God had destroyed Satan when he first rebelled or if Adam and Eve had died immediately after partaking of the forbidden fruit, all creatures in the universe would be so afraid of God that they would never even consider the possibility that God is love. In His great mercy God allowed sin to develop and show its effect. He also allowed the plan of salvation to unfold to vindicate His eternal love for men. That is why we are still alive today.

There is no doubt that fear has limits in its power to reform. For example, smoking is hazardous to one's health; but because smoking does not immediately kill, many people continue to smoke. On the other hand, only those with wisdom know what to choose and what not to choose. To recognize evil and to refrain from doing evil are signs of maturity.

Among other reasons, we fear God because He judges. But we don't have to be afraid of Him in that respect because Jesus Christ, our High Priest, has paid the penalty for our sins and has given us His robe of righteousness that we may not be shown filthy or naked before God. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

How much respect do you show for the government in your own country?

Further Study: *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 627

**Part 5
The Motive
for Doing
Good**

What desired effect may Christians have on government?

“Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same [the higher power or governor]” (Rom. 13:3). (Compare 1 Cor. 13:3.)

Honor and praise, especially from high officials, encourage many people to do good. A few do good because of fear. But even in this sinful world, the motive for much good is love.

There are many sources of power in the world today. Brute force, the power of armaments, the power of wealth, the power of superior education, the power of intellect, the power of persuasion, the power of the majority. But any and all of these tend themselves to corruption on the part of the possessor and rebellion on the part of those dominated by them. Love is different. It may use any number of sources of power, but its way of applying power and its motive for so doing are truly selfless. It seeks only the benefit of its recipient. Like the heavenly merchantman, it only stands at the door and knocks. It does not batter the door down!

When every other means of persuasion has failed, love may find a way. (See 1 Corinthians 13.) It is both quiet and all-pervasive in its operation.

What may be a key factor in producing rebellion in society and in the church today? (See Eph. 2:2, 3; James 3:14-16.)

Every parent and every teacher, particularly, is troubled today over the question of the discipline of children. The long reign of a permissive philosophy has increased the size of the discipline problem in part because the dominant influence is so often against right-doing. On the other hand, independence of action is the road for some. Firm gentleness or gentle firmness is again called for.

“Wherever the power of intellect, of authority, or of force is employed, and love is not manifestly present, the affections and will of those whom we seek to reach assume a defensive, repelling position, and their strength of resistance is increased. Jesus was the Prince of Peace. He came into the world to bring resistance and authority into subjection to Himself. Wisdom and strength He could command, but the means He employed with which to overcome evil were the wisdom and strength of love.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 135, 136.

Love may be slow in achieving the intended effect, but fear may achieve immediate results. This principle is true in the home, in the classroom, and in society. How much love and fear should the parent, the teacher, and the government express?

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319

Part 6
Obey "for
Conscience
Sake"

What should be the underlying reason for obedience to government?

"Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake" (Rom. 13:5).

The Christian should be the most outstanding example of law-abiding citizenry in his community. Observance of speed limits, parking zones, rightful ownership of an unguarded stall in the marketplace, returning an overpayment of a bill—these are but examples from everyday life that challenge our relationship to law.

When the Christian's life is motivated by the law-loving example and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ, his will is continually given up to the will of the Lord. He does not follow his own inclinations, nor does he depend upon himself for the carrying out of the will of Heaven.

"Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506.

Why should servants obey their masters? 1 Peter 2:18-20.

As servants of Christ we are all involved in obeying our Master. "Obedience to God is of more value to you than gold or silver. Yoking up with Christ, learning His meekness and lowliness, cuts short many a conflict; for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 95.

"It is better to request than to command; the one thus addressed has opportunity to prove himself loyal to right principles. His obedience is the result of choice rather than compulsion."—*Education*, p. 290.

One may obey grudgingly. Another may obey blindly. Still another may obey gladly. What is my attitude in obeying God's commandments and the law of the land?

How essential it is to remind ourselves constantly that there is no saving merit in our obedience to the laws of God or the laws of the land—even if rendered cheerfully! Human nature possesses an inborn and cultivated tendency to take credit for or to seek merit in obedience. But there can be no true obedience in the heart that does not know its own sinfulness, its own helplessness, its own utter dependence upon the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ.

"[1 John 2:4, 5; 3:24 quoted.] John did not teach that salvation was to be earned by obedience; but that obedience was the fruit of faith and love."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 563.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 522

Sabbath—Sign of the Inward Law

“He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Mark 2:27, 28).

After having created the earth and everything in it, God set up an institution, the Sabbath, a channel through which He might bless mankind. Even in the Garden of Eden where there was no sin, God saw the need for setting aside one seventh of the human family’s time for communication with Him; for He knows our need to fellowship with Him. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

In order to accept this free gift from heaven, mankind must believe in God. Ancient Israel died in the wilderness and lost the rest they could have enjoyed in Canaan because they did not believe. “They despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols” (Eze. 20:16). Yet God, in His infinite love, offered the race another chance.

Rightly observed, the Sabbath provides fellowship with God and reminds us of the cross and the resurrection. This fellowship draws us into holiness and obedience. For six days we are busy with our own affairs; but on the Sabbath, the seventh day, God wants us to pause, to look to Him, to think of His creative and redemptive acts. Thus we may renew our close friendship with Him and review our relation to our fellowmen. When we cease to meet and fellowship with God, we become selfish tyrants in our own “kingdom.” We become proud and self-centered. Our love toward God and our fellowmen diminishes. To cure this malady God has designed the Sabbath and called upon us to keep it holy. By keeping the Sabbath, we were reminded that we are created by God, our loving heavenly Father. We learn to know as brothers and sisters those who call the same God their Father.

On the Sabbath especially, by coming into communion with God, we enter a holy atmosphere akin to the peace that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. By having faith in God, we may gain what ancient Israel lost. In this atmosphere of fellowship with God and meditation upon Jesus, we will become like Him.

Part 1
Sign of
Obedience

What sign has God given to man to show His sanctifying power?

“I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that I am the Lord that sanctify them” (Eze. 20:11, 12).

There are two senses in which we are sanctified. Being united with God by faith, we shall be sanctified, be wholly consecrated, by “the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, ASV). The presence of God sanctifies. By entering into His holy presence in holy time—the Sabbath—we are especially set apart.

The Sabbath has been given to the world as the sign that God is both Creator and Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in God’s own likeness. The Sabbath day is the sign of the lifework of sanctification to those who keep it holy. True sanctification involves being set apart to God’s service and receiving power to live in harmony with God. It grows in dependence upon the merits of Jesus and in the consequent loving obedience to the law—those principles that are the transcript of God’s character. The keeping of the Sabbath becomes a sign of allegiance to God by the one who, from the heart, obeys the fourth commandment. The same person will obey the whole law.

“Obedience to all the commandments of God is the only true sign of sanctification.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

Is the Sabbath a sign only in the Old Testament period? (See Ex. 31:16; Luke 23:54-56; Acts 13:44, 45.)

“We are to bear witness to all nations, kindreds, and tongues that we are a people who love and fear God, a people who keep holy His memorial of creation, the sign between Him and His obedient children that He sanctifies them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 107.

“The Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 288.

It is so essential that we continually remember that our acceptance with God has already been completed in Jesus Christ. Nothing that we can do by obedience to the commandments can add one particle to the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The cross and baptism are symbols of Christianity. Do they, like the Sabbath, serve as signs of sanctification?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 198

**Part 2
What Is
Lawful
on Sabbath**

In what setting did Jesus Christ show us one aspect of the true meaning of Sabbath observance?

“He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace” (Mark 3:4).

Whatever Jesus did on the Sabbath and whatever the Holy Spirit prompts us to do is “lawful.”

“As God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds. The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect accord with the law. It honored the Sabbath.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 207.

“According to the fourth commandment the Sabbath was dedicated to rest and religious worship. All secular employment was to be suspended, but works of mercy and benevolence were in accordance with the purpose of the Lord. They were not to be limited to time or place. To relieve the afflicted, to comfort the sorrowing, is a labor of love that does honor to God’s holy day.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 77.

What did Jesus do on Sabbath? Luke 4:16; Matt. 12:12, 13.

The Lord of the Sabbath is certainly a safe example for us to follow in our observance of the day. For Him it was not a day of idleness or merely a catch-up-on-sleep day following excessive labor or selfish activity during the week. It was a day of worship in synagogue and mountain, a day of fellowship with those dear to Him and with those to whom He ministered. As with the other days of the week, it was one for showing mercy and bringing healing to the needy souls everywhere present. Not by His design was it a day of controversy, but it became such, at times, as the Lord sought to deliver His day from the erroneous attitudes toward it which had grown up over the centuries of Israel’s experience.

The Jewish teachers had failed to see, in the Sabbath, God’s sweetest invitation to them as individual persons to keep an appointment with Him, a personal and loving God, the Creator and Sustainer of life and all things in the universe—and particularly on this earth.

How could Seventh-day Adventists emphasize more what we should do on Sabbath rather than what we should not do?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 285

**Part 3
Letter
Versus
Spirit**

What pharisaical concept of Sabbath observance conflicted with Jesus' Sabbath activities?

“It came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:23, 24).

The fourth commandment is stated positively. It is a command to do something that requires us to be something. Unlike the eight commands which are couched in the setting of “Thou shalt not,” this commandment exhorts us to remember and to keep the Sabbath.

What concept regarding law does Paul introduce in his letters? Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6.

As with the rest of the Ten Commandments, the fourth deals with spirit as well as letter. With the best of intentions, the Jewish teachers had hedged the Sabbath in with multiple regulations of their own invention in the effort to enforce upon the people the sacred observance of the day. They knew their checkered history was in part the result of forgetting the Sabbath. But there is no blessing in the letter of the law. The blessing is in its spirit—the inward aspect of the law. Sabbath observance, to be a joy and a blessing, must be a special time devoted to fellowship with our best Friend. But if we have no relationship with Him, the Sabbath is a burden and a bore—a good work grudgingly performed with the hope of avoiding a penalty.

Consider the attitude of heart that may have produced ancient breakdowns in Sabbath observance. Jer. 17:19-27; Neh. 13:15-22.

It is not wise to reject out of hand the “mechanics” of Sabbath observance. As kneeling reinforces the spirit of reverence, so acts of Sabbath respect may strengthen our sense of its sacredness.

“The rabbis reduced the Sabbath to an absurdity by their rigid and meaningless distinction between what might and what might not be done on that day. . . . They emphasized the negative aspect of Sabbath observance—of refraining from certain things. The forms of religion were set forth as the substance of it.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 589.

In what way could it be lawful for David to eat the shewbread which was reserved for the priests?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 283-286

Part 4
Purpose
of Sabbath
and God's
Law

For whom and for what reason was the Sabbath made?

“He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

God meant it when He said that the Sabbath was made for man. Man was created before the Sabbath was made. God needed no rest from His labors. But man needed a continual reminder that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all. He also needed a special time in which to put aside the joyous labors of Eden and devote himself wholly to fellowship with and worship of his God. Therefore, in the Garden of Eden the Sabbath was made for man—Adam and his wife. Their soon forgetting of what God had told them is evidence enough of how much they needed the “remember” commandment. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 582, 583.)

Note Christ's personal involvement with the Sabbath day. Matt. 12:8.

“God did not create man because He had a Sabbath and needed someone to keep it. Rather, an All-wise Creator knew that man, the creature of His hand, needed opportunity for moral and spiritual growth, for character development. He needed time in which his own interests and pursuits should be subordinated to a study of the character and will of God as revealed in nature, and later, in revelation. The seventh-day Sabbath was ordained of God to meet this need. To tamper in any way with the Creator's specifications as to when and how the day should be observed is tantamount to denying that God knows what is best for the creatures of His hand.

“God ordained that the Sabbath should be a blessing, not a burden, and it is to man's interest and not his injury to observe it. It was designed to increase his happiness, not to work a hardship on him.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 588.

The purpose of God's law is to make us aware of our sins and to restrain us from committing wrong. Can the same law sanctify us?

When God's law is enshrined in the heart, so that the believer truly loves God's law, there grows within that heart a loathing for sin. A call to respect the rights of the fellowman inscribed on the second table of the law also grows. So the law is a shield between man and man. It encourages growing respect and concern for the other, whoever and whatever he may be—boss or subordinate, father or son, teacher or student. The principles of the law are eternal and unchangeable. (See *Education*, pp. 76, 77.)

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 288, 289

**Part 5
Faith and
the Sabbath**

Consider the scripture in which Paul may have used the Sabbath as an example or illustration of entering into Christ's rest.

“He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:10, 11). (Compare 1 John 5:3-5.)

The kind of faith that trusts in God for the “rest” of salvation is also the heart of true Sabbath rest. Faith in God is essential to a life of holiness, of which the Sabbath is a sign. Likewise, in the day soon to come when Sabbath keepers will be severely persecuted it will require great faith to be a Seventh-day Adventist.

In the present general climate of growing tolerance for deviations from normal—let alone Christian—behavior, it seems impossible to believe that there will ever be a penalty upon those who elect to observe the outward sign of the law in the heart—the Sabbath. But in some lands of earth there is, even now, severe persecution of any who bear the name of Christ.

Seventh-day Adventists, in the line of the historical school of prophetic interpretation, have long understood and anticipated a final time of religious confrontation. In it the conscience of the minority will be pressed in the interest of a form of unity of belief and practice designed to save the world from extinction. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 582-592.)

And what, besides a miracle-supported “Lord’s Day,” could be seen as the greatest unifying symbol in the Christian world? And how will the deviating Sabbath observers fare then?

Already Christian groups numbering in the millions are beginning to advocate a Christian domination of politics and governments. There are groups reacting against the “freedoms” that have been won at considerable price by various movements since the 1950s. A few shifts of power and emphasis can bring on the prophesied violation of conscience. Protest by violence is even now threatening the fabric of society on an international level. (See Revelation 13 and *The Great Controversy*, p. 592.)

The saints will need to enter by faith both into God’s rest of salvation and dedication to Him and His Sabbath if they are to be kept true in such a time.

Why could not the ancient Israelites enjoy God’s Canaan peace and rest? Heb. 3:16-19.

What is the relationship of faith and obedience as the saints prepare for the eternal rest?

Further Study: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 68

Part 6**A****Sanctifying
Experience**

What do sanctification and Sabbath observance have in common in terms of human experience?

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. 58:13, 14).

Unless a Christian willingly and gladly observes the Sabbath and truly calls it a delight, keeping the Sabbath cannot be a sign of his sanctification. When known to him, the believer cannot be indifferent to God’s personal invitation for fellowship on the Sabbath. He cannot be careless with the Sabbath and at the same time experience the close fellowship and surrender of the will to God that is basic to the process of sanctification. We cannot profess wholehearted love for God while the bleating of the sheep of our Sabbath violations is sounding in His ear! (See 1 Samuel 15.) Only a holy person can keep a holy day. Only one wholly for God can keep a day holy. For that person the Sabbath is a sign of the sanctification process at work in his life.

“To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

What extraordinary experience did John have on Patmos on a Sabbath? Rev. 1:10-19.

Perhaps it was only a coincidence that this man of God was so blessed by his Lord on the Sabbath day. Perhaps not (see *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 955). John was by nature a “son of thunder,” but under the discipline of Christ and heaven he had been transformed into a meek and gentle follower of the Lord Jesus. His constant burden for the church in his later ministry was that its members—whom he addressed as “my little children”—should love one another. (See 1 John 4:7.) God can entrust to such a life revelations of Himself and His purposes for the church and the world. It would have been quite fitting for the Lord of the Sabbath to give His servant on that day the greatest revelation of Jesus that he had ever received.

To what extent am I getting all the benefits that I should get in observing the Sabbath?

Further Study: *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 74-79

Religion in the Family

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).

Of all the different kinds of human relations subject to the inward law, the first and most basic is that between the child and his parents. From this develop all other human relations. If one does not have a satisfying relation with his parents, the development of his personality and the building of other human relations may be threatened. Regardless of a family’s economic situation, father, mother, and children have roles in the family that are not repeated in society as a whole.

The fifth commandment tells us to honor our parents. But implied in this command is the principle that parents are to teach their children and to love them in such a way that children will return to parents continuing respect and honor.

Regardless of the family background or setting, the children are born dependent. Each one deserves the parents’ total attention and lots of love, without which the child will grow up not knowing how to accept or respond to love.

Children have a responsibility toward their parents too. They must not neglect to respect their parents, especially when parents are old, sick, or handicapped—times when they most need the sympathy, love, and support of their children. Even though parents may have adequate wealth and be physically well cared for, they have psychological needs—they need love from their children. Their loneliness and their hunger for love can be satisfied only by genuine love from their children.

Loving sons and daughters will find frequent occasions for showing love to their parents. Jesus once condemned the Pharisees for their legalistic and cold attitudes toward their parents. While no law can compel sons or daughters to love their parents, they should rely on no tradition or custom as an excuse from fulfilling the inward law of love.

Be that as it may, it is not enough just to love the members of the immediate family. Christ has taught us to enlarge our family to include everybody. He teaches us to address God as our heavenly Father. Thus we all become brothers and sisters.

**Part 1
The First
Commandment With
Promise****What God-given duty do children have toward their parents?**

“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:2, 3).

Children naturally love parents. Only the selfish would do otherwise. To love parents means giving time to, saying or sending words of affection to, or doing something for them.

“Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

“The honor here spoken of [in Eph. 6:2] is not a sentimental respect, but actual obedience. A divine comment on this principle is given in Matt. 15:4-8. Honor may be thought of as the attitude from which obedience springs, and it should be observed that this honor is due both father and mother. One is not to be placed before the other in esteem. This honor is shown in a variety of ways. It includes the little attentions that youth should show to age, confidence in the word and judgment of the parents, and loyalty to the family name and integrity.

“Not only is it natural that obedience should be given to parents, but it is God’s express will. It is the first commandment in the Decalogue to which a promise is specifically attached; indeed, it is altogether unique in that respect. . . . Special blessing is promised upon those who obey their parents.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1040.

Under what conditions, if any, should children not obey their parents? Eph. 6:1.

We should obey “in the Lord” our parents. Since parents are human and some perhaps have not accepted Christ, we may not always be able to obey them “in the Lord.” If the parents’ wishes or commands are contrary to the Lord’s, we should obey the Lord, for He has the higher wisdom and His way is perfect.

What kind of world would we be in if children did not respect or honor their parents?

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 244-246

Part 2 Family Ties

How does Isaiah compare a mother's feelings for her child with the Lord's feelings toward us?

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” (Isa. 49:15).

“When children love and repose confidence in their mother, and have become obedient to her, they have been taught the first lessons in becoming Christians.”—*My Life Today*, p. 164.

In today's economy, more and more young mothers are working outside the home—many times of necessity. This makes God's ideal for the home that much more difficult to fulfill. How can the mother be the child's sunshine in the most protective and comfortable place on earth if she cannot be there much of the time? So often she must entrust to another—who does not always have reason to care—the privilege of loving and training her child.

How should fathers, as authority figures, show their love toward their children? Eph. 6:4.

“Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children. Seek to become acquainted with their various dispositions, that you may know how to train them in harmony with the Word of God. Never should a word of discouragement pass your lips. Do not bring darkness into the home. Be pleasant, kind, and affectionate toward your children, but not foolishly indulgent. Let them bear their little disappointments, as every one must. Do not encourage them to come to you with their petty complaints of one another. Teach them to bear with one another and to seek to maintain each other's confidence and respect.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 222.

Is it possible that in this “enlightened” age, there are parents who are dictatorial, gruff, and authoritarian? Many complain that parents are too indulgent of and permissive toward their children. Be that as it may, it is vital to remember that for the little child, the parent provides the basic impression of what God is like. So it is important that the treatment of the child be governed by an affectionate discipline. The parent who never plays with children is probably missing the best of opportunities to reveal love, interest, and acceptance. When we expect more of a child than he is able to deliver, we may be giving him a false impression of the character of God. We may also be robbing him of self-worth. This may hamper all his future development and happiness in the Lord.

If the father loved the prodigal son as he did, why did the son want to leave home?

Further Study: *Child Guidance*, pp. 21-25

**Part 3
Respect for
Parents**

In the setting of controversy over ceremonial strictness, in what words did Jesus repeat Moses' emphasis on reverence for parents?

"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . . Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death" (Mark 7:7-10).

While no other obligations should be used as excuses to neglect responsibility toward parents, parents also have a responsibility to love and to educate their children. Unless the children are taught to honor their father and mother, not only by words, but by example, they will not know how to do it.

"Teach your children to honor you, because the law of God lays this duty upon children. If you allow your children to lightly esteem your wishes and pay no regard to the laws of the household, you are winking at sin; you are permitting the devil to work as he will; and the same insubordination, want of reverence, and love of self will be carried with them even into the religious life and into the church."—*Child Guidance*, pp. 87, 88.

Our children, after all, know best what kind of Christian we are. They sense, almost instinctively, when all is well. They are quick to forgive, if we could ever bring ourselves to acknowledge to them our failings and wrongs. They can even forgive us for the contrast that too often exists between our church-pew image and our at-home image.

How does respect for parents relate to their care in old age?

There may be a question of how much time and how much money the children are willing to give. If the family situation permits a woman to quit her job and stay home to take care of elderly parents, she provides the comfort and love that would be difficult to find in an institution. On the other hand, if everybody in the family needs to work, the nursing home may have to provide necessary care.

Should children send their aging parents to a home for the aged?

Once this topic was hotly debated between a Westernized Chinese and an old-fashioned Chinese. The former felt that it is a crime to keep the aging parents home where they cannot get adequate physical care. But the latter contended that it is more cruel to send the aging father or mother to an impersonal institution and let him or her die in loneliness.

Further Study: Gen. 22:1-14; 1 Samuel 1-3

Part 4
Tradition
Versus
Commandment

What complaint did the Lord bring against some of His people in regard to a pious method they had for ignoring the needs of parents?

“But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother” (Mark 7:11, 12).

Often we pay much attention to the trivial and unimportant, but forget the essential. We exalt the traditional but neglect the commandment. So it was in the setting recorded in Mark 7:1-23. The Pharisees were accusing Christ’s disciples because they failed to carry out the ceremonial washings required by rabbinical tradition. In responding to them, Jesus pointed out a procedure which they had invented by which to appear pious and yet neglect to care for their aged parents. By assigning property to the temple, they would have use of it during their own lifetimes, but could not share it with parents.

“Jesus made no attempt to defend Himself or His disciples. He made no reference to the charges against Him, but proceeded to show the spirit that actuated these sticklers for human rites. He gave them an example of what they were repeatedly doing, and had done just before coming in search of Him. . . . They set aside the fifth commandment as of no consequence, but were very exact in carrying out the traditions of the elders.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 396, 397.

What good motive undergirded much of the ritual burden which the rabbis of Jesus’ day imposed upon the people? How did this lead to the accusations against Jesus?

The Jews knew that their neglect of the Ten Commandments of God and the law of ceremonies, which illustrated the plan of salvation, had led to their falling into the hands of the heathen as God withdrew His protection. Determined to remedy past errors, they made laws upon laws to make it impossible for anyone to fail on the basic ones. The only problem was that these laws did not work!

In our relationship with parents and children, what does God require from us?

We need constantly to consider our motives in what we do for those who are too young or too old to discern, let alone defend themselves against our handling of their affairs.

Further Study: *Education*, p. 244

**Part 5
Jesus'
Example**

What example did Jesus set, as a child, in obeying His parents?

“He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them” (Luke 2:51).

In a peasant's home Jesus faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. Here was the Commander of heaven, whose word angels had delighted to fulfill, now doing the work of a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. Working with His own hands in the carpenter's shop with Joseph, Jesus learned a trade.

When we read that Jesus learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8), we surely must consider the fact that for some 18 years after He realized who He really was, He went back home to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was obedient to their requirements.

While He was hanging on the cross, what provision did Jesus make for His mother? John 19:26, 27.

For all time, Jesus has left us the perfect example of a loving and caring son of a widowed mother. While suffering agonies that have no basis of comparison in human experience, He thought of the safety, security, and welfare of His dependent mother. “Looking into her grief-stricken face and then upon John, He said to her, ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ then to John, ‘Behold thy mother!’ John understood Christ's words, and accepted the trust. He at once took Mary to his home, and from that hour cared for her tenderly. O pitiful, loving Saviour; amid all His physical pain and mental anguish, He had a thoughtful care for His mother! He had no money with which to provide for her comfort; but He was enshrined in the heart of John, and He gave His mother to him as a precious legacy. Thus He provided for her that which she most needed,—the tender sympathy of one who loved her because she loved Jesus. . . .

“The perfect example of Christ's filial love shines forth with undimmed luster from the mist of ages. . . . Even in His last agony, He remembers to provide for His sorrowing, widowed mother. The same spirit will be seen in every disciple of our Lord. Those who follow Christ will feel that it is a part of their religion to respect and provide for their parents.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 752.

Is Jesus' example relevant today? Have the times changed so much that we simply can no longer use Him as our Model?

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, p. 290

Part 6
Our
Heavenly
Father

In the setting of family relationships, with what new title did Jesus teach His disciples to address God?

“After this manner therefore pray ye: **Our Father** which art in heaven, **Hallowed be thy name**” (Matt. 6:9).

We who have grown up with the Lord’s Prayer can have little sense of the surprising nature of the title which Jesus gave to the Sovereign of the universe when He introduced Him as “Our Father.” The religious teachers of Christ’s day stressed God’s power, majesty, rulership, and awesomeness. They had little thought for the paternal warmth of divine love and care.

Those of us who have been blessed in our childhood and youth with a loving and lovable human father can little understand the problem faced by those who have not. For such, the suggestion that God is a “Father” can have negative impressions. Soul winners may need to keep this possibility in mind and offer to their hearers other names and comparisons of God that will have more positive counterparts in their own experience.

Since God is our Father, there may be some “family” relationships with all the members of the church. (See Luke 8:19-21; Matt. 23:8; 2 Tim. 1:2).

By calling God our Father, we recognize our fellowmen as brothers and sisters. In doing so, we extend our family circle to include all who call Him “heavenly Father.” When this new relationship is truly established worldwide, there will be no war, no crime, and no hatred. Only love will rule in the hearts of men.

How does the psalmist describe God’s love toward us? Ps. 103:11-13.

If we realized how much God loves us and responded with love, we would love to do His will. To serve Him would be a delight.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

If we love our earthly father because he loves us, how much more should we love our heavenly Father whose love toward us cannot be measured?

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, p. 69

Life, an Irreplaceable Gift

“Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13).

Concerning another aspect of the inward law, God declares that life is sacred. Other than God, no one can create life. Once life is taken, no human effort can remedy the loss. With life gone, wealth, fame, power, or even love mean nothing. In order to enjoy any of these, man must have life.

We all have life in us, but what is life? Definition is most difficult. Life has many aspects. It is the gift of God. It is more than a phenomenon. With the aid of modern medical equipment, an unconscious person can be kept physically alive yet have no conscious “life.” On the other hand, consciousness itself is not an indispensable factor to life. We all recognize that there is life in a sleeping person.

The opposite of life is death—coldness, immobility, silence, and the absence of all vital signs. Death also means decay, decomposition, and disappearance. While a few people have had their thoughts written down, or their activities recorded on film or videotape, the great majority of the world’s population are not remembered after their death. They soon pass into oblivion.

God is the Creator of life. In Him and only in Him is life. When God created man, He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). It is from that beginning that we inherit life.

If man had continued to live in God’s love and obeyed Him, he would have continued to enjoy the fruit of the tree of life and would have lived forever. Unfortunately, he lost paradise; and death—or the absence of life—has come to mankind. In fact, we lose vitality every moment.

Inasmuch as life is so precious, we must not give any thought to taking life. We should do everything we can to preserve life—the life of others and our own. In the fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ has enlarged the definition of killing. If we hate, if we get angry with one another we are taking his life, at least a portion of his life. Likewise, if one hates himself, loses the purpose of life, or becomes intemperate, he also kills a portion of his own life.

**Part 1
God, the
Life-giver**

Contrary to scientific speculations, what is the true origin of human life?

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7).

“God is the life-giver. From the beginning all His laws were ordained to life.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522.

“All life-giving power is from Him.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 113.

“In God we live and move and have our being. Each heart-beat, each breath, is the inspiration of Him who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1081.

Through whom was life created? John 1:1-4; Col. 1:15-17.

We derive life from Jesus Christ. His life is original and unborrowed. Within ourselves we may have a small stream from the fountain of life, but He is the fountain of life itself. God gives us life, and He takes it back to Himself again. When Christ shall appear, if our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall also appear with Him in glory. (See *Medical Ministry*, p. 7.)

Through Jesus Christ the life that was lost through sin is given back to the believer. Christ has life in Himself and so is able to give life to those who choose to live in Him. Only God has the right and power to give immortality. As man, Christ voluntarily laid down His life that He might purchase the right to give eternal life to as many as will receive Him. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786, 787.)

How will God give life back to the saints? 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 51-54.

The same Saviour who restored an only son to a dependent widow, who called a little girl back to life at the request of her influential but grieving father, who put surging life in a body already suffering decay will one day restore life to all within whose hearts and minds He has dwelt by His Spirit during their earthly sojourn. So sure is His promise that He speaks of eternal life as the present possession of all who believe. (See 1 John 5:13.) The glorious morning of the resurrection will witness the bestowal of immortality on all the redeemed. God haste the day!

A piece of tissue can be kept alive in the laboratory indefinitely. What does this have to do with immortality?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 264

Part 2
The Value
of Life

Why did Jesus come to die for man? What is the value of one soul?

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Christ endured shame and agony and death for us. . . . Jesus died, not only to make atonement for us, but to be our pattern. Oh, wondrous condescension! matchless love!”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 17.

Relate the Source of life to the value of life. 1 John 5:11, 12; Acts 17:24, 25, 28.

In order to allow the innocent to have a chance against the law of revenge, what provision was made in ancient Israel? Joshua 20:1-3.

Compared to those of other nations and cultures of their day, the laws of Israel showed a profound respect for human life. In a trial for murder the accused was not to be condemned on the testimony of one witness, even though circumstantial evidence might be strong against him. The Lord’s direction was, “Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die” (Num. 35:30).

At the same time, should the guilt of the one accused of murder be substantiated by adequate testimony of sufficient witnesses, the sentencing and punishment must not be avoided. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6). “Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death” (Num. 35:31). “Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die” (Ex. 21:14). “The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Num. 35:33).

In Christ we find “a city of refuge” where we can escape vengeful hands. Our present life is precious, for once it is taken, nobody can give it back except God perform a miracle. God makes provision to give man eternal life in Christ Jesus. He even allows Christ to be man’s attorney-at-law and his Substitute.

When one loses his life, he loses all his intellect, memory, properties, love relations, and the ability to enjoy things in life. In man’s eyes, one life may be more valuable than another. Why is it that God values all lives equally, whether rich or poor, wise or simple.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 209

Part 3
Killing—an
wful Crime

What change of relationship takes place as the Lord confronts Cain with the unacceptability of his offering? Gen. 4:9-16.

“Cain the murderer was soon called to answer for his crime. . . .

“God had given Cain an opportunity to confess his sin. He had had time to reflect. He knew the enormity of the deed he had done, and of the falsehood he had uttered to conceal it; but he was rebellious still, and sentence was no longer deferred. The divine voice that had been heard in entreaty and admonition pronounced the terrible words: ‘And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.’ ”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

In divine teaching following the Flood, how was the sacredness of life preserved? Gen. 9:5, 6.

What does the law of Moses stipulate as punishment for a murderer?

“If he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death” (Num. 35:16).

“ ‘Thou shalt not kill.’

“All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for ‘whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer’); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

In the system of justice ordained by the God of Israel, no partiality was accorded because the accused had rank or wealth. Human life must be sacredly guarded.

The Lord even held a city or community accountable if it conspired with the accused to work out an exemption from punishment in the case of murder. “The Lord designed to impress upon His people the terrible guilt of murder, while He would make the most thorough and merciful provision for the acquittal of the innocent.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 999.

Is the death sentence a form of revenge on the murderer? How should society today relate to a murderer?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516

Part 4
A Motive
for Killing

What is one of the motives that may lead to murder?

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt. 5:21, 22).

The clear teaching of Jesus is that murder first exists in the heart. Hatred in the heart sets the feet in the path of the murderer, and even the offerings of such a one are abhorrent to God. The only sure remedy for such a spirit of hatred is the implantation of the love of Christ in the heart through the Holy Spirit.

“It was envy that made Saul miserable and put the humble subject of his throne in jeopardy. What untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world. The same enmity existed in the heart of Saul that stirred the heart of Cain against his brother Abel, because Abel’s works were righteous, and God honored him, and his own works were evil, and the Lord could not bless him. Envy is the offspring of pride, and if it is entertained in the heart, it will lead to hatred, and eventually to revenge and murder. Satan displayed his own character in exciting the fury of Saul against him who had never done him harm.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 651.

What perilous days will, or have, come to us when crime will seem to be without restraint? 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

The time may be here when man’s conscience will be totally benumbed regarding life’s sacredness, and killing will become extremely common. When warfare seems inevitably to glorify the skillful taking of life, when movies, novels, and TV shows portray killing as heroic, perhaps there is no surprise in the sharp increase of murders.

How does God judge man—by his actions or by his motives?

A story is told of a cannibal who once asked a civilized person: “Why do you kill so many people in war? You cannot eat them all! Is it not rather wasteful to kill so many?” Who has the higher standard of conscience, the cannibal or the so-called civilized person?

Although the sixth commandment is concerned with murder, the wanton killing of animals could reduce the sense of the sacredness of life. Men kill animals for no other purpose than fun. Many are also killed for the value of their skins, tusks, or other body parts.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 309-311

**Part 5
Reconciliation**

Concerning reconciliation, what admonition does the Prince of Peace give to His followers?

“If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23).

The spirit of heaven is love and forgiveness. Christ came to help us to be reconciled to God and to men. Love takes away the hatred which motivates one to kill. But God’s love does not sacrifice justice.

“One of Christ’s last commands to His disciples was ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ John 13:34. Do we obey this command, or are we indulging sharp, un-Christlike traits of character? If we have in any way grieved or wounded others it is our duty to confess our fault and seek for reconciliation. This is an essential preparation that we may come before God in faith, to ask His blessing.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 144.

On the other hand we may need to remind ourselves that differences of opinion or conviction need not show a lack of Christian charity or friendliness. We should not take offense over honest and legitimate differences of understanding of truth. Any such differences do not need to be regarded as grounds for confession of ill-will or wrongdoing toward the one holding opposing views. At the same time, there is great weight to the biblical question, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

What advice does Jesus give us in His Sermon on the Mount that indicates Heaven’s blessing on efforts to reconcile? Matt. 5:9.

There is a frame of mind that looks for trouble everywhere and all the time. There is a constant suspicion of another’s motives and a tendency to make a mountain out of every molehill of difference or fault. It is of the essence of the inward law that we minimize blemishes or stumblings, giving for as long as possible the benefit of the doubt. Seeking the best, seeing the best in every situation will be the prevailing disposition.

Can we be truly zealous for God while harboring hatred toward a brother or sister? (See 1 John 2:9-11.)

It is probable that the time of prayer will bring before us a reminder of any such person, and our feelings toward them. This may be the practical outworking of the text for today.

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 5:24), pp. 58, 59

Part 6
Love, the
Cure for
Hatred

What seemingly unreasonable act has Jesus required of His followers?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:43, 44).

We are to love our enemies with the same love that Christ manifested toward His enemies by giving His life to save them.

“The heart in which love rules will not be filled with passion or revenge, by injuries which pride and self-love would deem unbearable. Love is unsuspecting, ever placing the most favorable construction upon the motives and acts of others. Love will never needlessly expose the faults of others. It does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but rather seeks to bring to mind some good qualities of the one defamed.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 168, 169.

Who is my neighbor? Luke 10:29-37.

Many of us excuse ourselves with the thought that, although we love God, it is impossible for us to love those miserable creatures known as our fellowmen. The apostle John equates our love for God with the love we show to those whose lives we touch day by day. (See I John 4:12, 20.) This is because Christian love is a principle, not a feeling. We cannot generate it within ourselves or will it into existence by some form of meditation or self-analysis. The cross of Jesus is the source of true love. Acceptance of its revelation of God’s love for all mankind, including the ungrateful and unbelieving, creates in us an echo of that love.

What room is there in Christianity for the possibility that certain individuals are kindred spirits and others not? Think of David and Jonathan; Naomi and Ruth; Jesus and John the Beloved; Jesus and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. (See Prov. 18:24.)

It seems clear that God has no objection to the reality of kindred spirits. One novel suggestion is that we are all descendants of certain “tribes.” We “hit it off” with our unmarked kinsmen. We have more trouble with those who are not.

“Pure love has special efficacy to do good, and can do nothing but good. It prevents discord and misery, and brings the truest happiness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 138.

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 5:44), pp. 73-75

The Sacredness of Marriage

“The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights: and likewise the wife to her husband” (1 Cor. 7:3, RSV).

Seeing that “it is not good that man should be alone,” God made a companion for the first man and pronounced them husband and wife. The two were to form a union and “they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:18, 24). This was God’s original plan. Marriage provides a special setting for the working of the inward law. For marriage to be successful, love must exist between husband and wife. Without love there can be no real marriage. Marriage is more than a physical union of two individuals. It is more than having children, more than sharing food and shelter. Marriage is a deep dedication and commitment to the welfare of the spouse, a strong desire to share life together, to enter upon a lifelong loyalty to each other.

Although marriage was the original arrangement for families and homes as the foundation of society, there are some in the church today who choose not to marry. The very difference in the number of women in the church in comparison with the number of men, in some places, makes single living inevitable for many. In recent years; therefore, the church has begun to recognize the reality of the growing number of single people within its ranks. The Bible has every respect for such and notes the special contributions which the unmarried can make to the work of the gospel. (Compare Matt. 19:10-12; Dan. 1:1-21; 1 Cor. 7:7, 8.)

We are all sadly aware that even among the saints separation and divorce have multiplied in many parts of the world. In order to avoid headaches and heartaches, young people should be very careful when choosing their life companions. They should seek counsel from their parents, the pastor, and other qualified counselors.

When problems develop in the family, restraint, patience, and a spirit of forgiveness must be exercised. Even when the quarreling partners feel there is very little to be salvaged from the marriage, plain facts tell us that a patched-up marriage is still better than a divorce, which leaves scars on hearts and causes lasting damage to the children.

Part 1 Function of Marriage

Why should there be such an institution as marriage?

“The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18).

Everyone needs a companion. Everyone needs to talk to somebody, to love somebody, and to be loved by somebody. In sickness, in failure, in sadness one needs someone to give sympathy and encouragement. In success, in happiness, everyone also needs someone to share the joy. In order to promote the well-being of adults and children, strengthen law and order in society, and provide a safe environment for the young, the institution of marriage was established. Although sin has robbed marriage of something of its original joy and purpose, yet marriage still lies at the foundation of the family and society and serves, in a measure, to preserve the purity and happiness of the race.

What was Christ’s assessment of His own institution of marriage? Matt. 19:3-12.

“He [Christ] announced to the world that marriage when kept pure and undefiled is a sacred institution.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 341.

What is one of the most common causes for the breakdown of the union and happiness of marriage? Proverbs 5.

“Around every family there is a sacred circle that should be kept unbroken. Within this circle no other person has a right to come. Let not the husband or the wife permit another to share the confidences that belong solely to themselves.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

The love relation between husband and wife is to be deepened as they live their lives together, meet struggles together, and enjoy life’s blessings together. This love has to be more than a physical one.

“To gain a proper understanding of the marriage relation is the work of a lifetime. Those who marry enter a school from which they are never in this life to be graduated.

“However carefully and wisely marriage may have been entered into, few couples are completely united when the marriage ceremony is performed. The real union of the two in wedlock is the work of the afteryears.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 105.

We are all human and none perfect. Can an imperfect husband and an imperfect wife have a perfect marriage?

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 105-112

Part 2 Relation With Unbelieving Spouse

What should a newly converted husband or wife do in relation to an unbelieving spouse?

“To the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy” (1 Cor. 7:12-14).

Marriage relations can be very complicated. Although the church discourages its members from marrying nonmembers because of the problems that develop due to differences in religious convictions, there is a different situation in relation between an unbelieving spouse and a new convert. (In some parts of the world tribal or social custom may face the believers with special problems. Such challenge the church to show much wisdom, patience, and prayer in each case.)

Paul advises that the believing spouse should work to help the unbelieving partner accept Christ and unite the whole family in Jesus. Patience and love will often win, sparing the children the conflicts of a divided home.

“He who has entered the marriage relation while unconverted is by his conversion placed under stronger obligation to be faithful to his companion, however widely they may differ in regard to religious faith; yet the claims of God should be placed above every earthly relationship, even though trials and persecution may be the result. With the spirit of love and meekness, this fidelity may have an influence to win the unbelieving one.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 69.

“If the wife is an unbeliever and an opposer, the husband cannot, in view of the law of God, put her away on this ground alone. In order to be in harmony with the law of Jehovah, he must abide with her unless she chooses of herself to depart. He may suffer opposition and be oppressed and annoyed in many ways; he will find his comfort and his strength and support from God, who is able to give grace for every emergency. He should be a man of pure mind, of truly decided, firm principles, and God will give him wisdom in regard to his course which he should pursue. Impulse will not control his reason, but reason will hold the lines of control in her firm hand, that lust shall be held under bit and bridle.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 344, 345.

What can you as a member of the church do to help win the unbelieving spouse and children?

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 349, 436, 437

Part 3 Adultery

According to the apostle Paul, what is the definition of adultery?

“The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Rom. 7:2, 3).

Although Paul is here using the law of marriage (general perhaps, but especially in the Old Testament) as an illustration of the relationships of a believer to Christ and also of the relationship between law and grace, he is undoubtedly giving a correct portrayal of the marriage relationship and properly defining adultery—a breakdown of the exclusive physical and spiritual oneness of husband and wife. But Jesus sets what may seem an even more demanding standard.

How does Jesus define adultery? Matt. 5:28.

In this age of permissiveness and sex emphasis in many countries, temptations are ever present. We are all too prone to yield to them. God's people must be ever conscious of God's presence. Only the feeling and the recognition of being continually before God, of being surrounded by an atmosphere of holiness, can save us from sin.

With more and more wives working outside the home—and as a backlash to the demands of some women for every type of “equality” with men—the scene is set and is working all too often with tragic effectiveness for the breakdown of the marriage relationship. Rights and freedoms have been interpreted as guarantees of license without penalty—as far as society goes. But there is a higher law that will demand fearsome penalties in the end. He or she who is being unfaithful to the spouse soon knows not whom else to trust. Trust is the bedrock of marriage.

Youth especially lose respect for marriage as a sacred institution if they learn that for some, marriage only provides a legalized setting for the lusts that otherwise lead to adultery. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 391.)

Do single persons have more “freedom” in associations with the opposite sex?

The biblical standards of morality are universal in their application whether the persons involved are single or married.

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 340, 341

Part 4 Divorce

What analysis does Jesus give of divorce?

“He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:11, 12).

In some areas, the church is more and more afflicted with the world’s increasing rush to the divorce courts. Some say this is more realistic than requiring partners to suffer on in a no-love-left situation. Others feel that there are many poor judgments made as to who is the innocent and who the guilty party in separation and divorce cases. The desire to “catch” one’s partner in an indiscretion can be tied to a feverish desire to retain one’s name on the record books of the church. Surely there will be some tragic revelations when Heaven’s books are opened. “A woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land and yet not divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law. There is only one sin, which is adultery, which can place the husband or wife in a position where they can be free from the marriage vow in the sight of God. Although the laws of the land may grant a divorce, yet they are husband and wife still in the Bible light, according to the laws of God.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 344.

Jesus does not sanction divorce, but He forgave adulterers. How is this possible? Matt. 19:6-9; John 8:3-11.

Even adultery is not portrayed in Scripture as an unpardonable sin, whether in the sight of God or the offended partner or partners.

“To live with one who has broken the marriage vows and is covered all over with the disgrace and shame of guilty love, and realizes it not, is an eating canker to the soul; and yet a divorce is a lifelong, heartfelt sore.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 346.

The word used in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 translated as “fornication,” means more than adultery. It means infidelity, living in sin (before or during marriage), against God’s law of purity. If adultery is included, the fall of a spouse does not require divorce. It calls for greater love to the other part of oneself.

Although there may be marriage problems too complex to be resolved within church standards, we should do our best not to cause unnecessary sorrow. (See 2 Cor. 2:5-8.)

Is an unhappy marriage more bitter than a heartbreaking divorce? What can be done to prevent the tragedy of divorce?

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 19:3), pp. 63, 64

Part 5 Times of Distress

How shall we understand Paul's counsel on family relationships in times of particular distress?

"I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that" (1 Cor. 7:26-28, RSV).

The words of Paul here have been the subject of much interpretation and misinterpretation over the centuries of the Christian era. This passage and parallel ones in his writing—and in the Gospels—have been used to support celibacy—the practice of nonmarriage as a requirement for religious service.

Paul was speaking to a special time and place—apparently a time of trouble already present or just coming. He "adapted his manner of teaching to the condition of the church."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 271. Caution is called for, therefore, in the application of this counsel to a different setting or problem. He spoke of married and unmarried persons in the church, it is true, but the counsel was for a time of distress.

The mature, single members of the church today, mentioned in the introduction to this lesson, are real and perfectly normal people. (That should not need to be said.) They want to be seen and accepted as such. They would like to be blended into the total church family as they are in their own families. There are also roles which they could fulfill in and for the church with special effectiveness and great joy.

What am I doing to help all members of my church feel equally that they are a part of the total fabric of the family of God?

It is a particular cruelty to lead any individual to feel that there is something about him that makes him a second-class citizen or a second-class member of the church. We are so prone to act on our differences and so forgetful of all that we have in common in the family of faith. Although some differences are innocent enough and should not be condemned, it is the work of a true Christian to draw every other one, with himself, closer to the Lord.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 507; *The Adventist Home*, p. 121

Part 6 Love, the Strongest Bond

What is the bonding adhesive which holds two different individuals together in a lifelong relationship?

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:25, 22).

“Only let a woman realize that she is appreciated by her husband and is precious to him, not merely because she is useful and convenient in his house, but because she is a part of himself, and she will respond to his affection and reflect the love bestowed upon her. Let your wife be the object of your special and hearty attention. When you feel as God would have you, you will feel lost without the society of your wife.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 416, 417.

In the marriage relationship, how should love be expressed? (See Prov. 31:10-31; 5:18-21; Song of Solomon; 1 Corinthians 7.)

One man may embrace his wife 20 times a day, and another may only say an awkward word of appreciation. Yet both may have an equally strong love.

Even in this age of boasted “rights,” there are still marriages in which all the rights are on one side. The result is that the wife is made a servant to the passions and demands of the husband. Her needs, her rights all too often are not even considered, let alone respected. In the cases where the imbalance is reversed, the same principles would apply. Love cannot manifest itself in self-indulgence. (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 125.)

To one arbitrary father and husband, the counsel was given: “Your wife needs tenderness and love. The Lord loves her. She is much nearer the kingdom of heaven than you. But she is dying by inches, and you are the one who is slowly taking her life. You can make her life happy if you will. You can encourage her to lean upon your large affections, to confide in you and love you.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 260.

Of another man of cold disposition, it was said: “Every word of tenderness, every word of appreciation and affectionate encouragement, will be remembered by her [his wife] and will reflect back in blessings upon her husband. . . . It will not be weakness or a sacrifice of manhood and dignity to give his wife expressions of tenderness and sympathy in words and acts.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 530, 531.

By what means can the warmth of love be manifested other than by physical contact—within marriage and family, within the church family?

Further Study: *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361

The Possibility of Absolute Honesty

“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23).

Let us face it at the outset: No human being is *absolutely* anything! Absoluteness is a quality of God alone. So the title of the lesson needs to be carefully explained. Once God asked Satan, the great deceiver, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” (Job 1:8, RSV). Later, in tribulation, “Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). Of how many men on earth today could God say the same words? Aren’t we all men with “unclean lips, and . . . [who] dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”? (Isa 6:5).

Since speech reflects the inner feeling or thinking of a person—even more readily than do other actions—man is frequently found at fault by his language. If he is deceitful, even his nonverbal language betrays his real intentions. The contrast between the verbal and the nonverbal language often witnesses to the dishonesty of the speaker.

The world in which we live is so full of lies that, if we are not careful, we will lie unintentionally. Neighbors are not exact in telling us about their feelings and the state of their health. How much do doctors tell their patients? How truthful are some sales talks? How do counselors deal with their counselees with the purpose of alleviating their guilt feelings? Superstitious Chinese housewives even feed their kitchen gods sticky, sweet rice-flour balls just before the New Year so that these gods, with their mouths full of sticky rice, will not be able to give a full report to the heavenly gods on the wastefulness of the home! Even though we all may know the truth and know we are somewhat cheating each other, we nevertheless put up a front just to comfort each other!

Of course, to be honest does not mean to tell everything we know to everybody everywhere. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh,” “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:4, 7). In order to be truly honest, one must feel he is constantly in the presence of God.

**Part 1
Honest in
Language**

To what extent is being honest in language a clue to being an honest person?

“In many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2).

We frequently flatter ourselves that we are not speaking falsely because we have couched our thoughts in words which sound above reproach. But there are a multitude of ways by which we may bear false witness. The real heart of the matter lies in our intention. If we intend to deceive, we are guilty of it whether our words carry a technical deception or not. A gesture can lie as readily as any word. Many of us love to tell tall tales, to see the eyes and then the mouth of the listener popping open, wider and wider. We may lie by exaggeration, on the one hand, or by intentional minimizing or suppression of truth, on the other.

What is the Lord’s attitude toward the use of flattery in speech? Ps. 12:3-5.

“Christ never flattered men. He never spoke that which would exalt their fancies and imaginations, nor did He praise them for their clever inventions; but deep, unprejudiced thinkers received His teaching and found that it tested their wisdom. They marveled at the spiritual truth expressed in the simplest of language. The most highly educated were charmed with His words, and the uneducated were always profited. He had a message for the illiterate; and He made even the heathen to understand that He had a message for them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 254.

Only a poor cause requires flattery to win its way. Truth can stand up under test, under scrutiny, and not blink. It is tragedy compounded when men of intelligence, professing godliness, stoop to use flattery to achieve their ends. Likewise, when men of experience, in positions of highest trust, surrender their better judgment under the distorting wooings of a flattering tongue.

Under what condition, in the work of God, could it ever be legitimate to engage in a modest measure of flattery? (See 1 Thess. 2:5.)

He who yields to flattery often loses respect for himself as he thinks it over. If he resists flattery, he may lose respect for the flatterer.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 243

Part 2
Helm and
Tongue

What part of the body works like the helm of a boat?

“Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, are driven by fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things” (James 3:4, 5).

Some people talk before they think. When they hear their own words, their minds are reinforced. They may not be sure of what they want, but after they talk to themselves, their ideas are sorted out, their purpose clarified, and their determination strengthened. Thus the little tongue becomes the controller and the helm of the whole person.

“Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; for a time he had feared to express the workings and imaginings of his mind; yet he did not dismiss them. He did not see whither he was drifting.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 39. Once he had voiced his feelings, his pride and ambition forbade him to repent, to take back his words. So he misled the angels with deception, and it was under the power of a lie that he led Adam and Eve to disobey the law of God. From that time on he was a perpetual deceiver and liar.

Note the dilemma of Herod in the death of John the Baptist. Matt. 14:1-12.

King Herod was caught by his words, and so he beheaded John the Baptist. Because his pride prohibited him from reversing his action, he became the slave of his tongue. Numerous other individuals have experienced the same struggle. If the tongue is not controlled, its work will ruin a person.

According to an old saying, “Practice makes perfect.” That may prove true at times. But more sure it is that practice makes permanent. We can come to accept our own lies as the truth if we repeat them often enough.

Words can kill. Who is more horrible, the cannibal or the person with a reputation-destroying tongue?

“We think with horror of the cannibal who feasts on the still warm and trembling flesh of his victim; but are the results of even this practice more terrible than are the agony and ruin caused by misrepresenting motive, blackening reputation, dissecting character? Let the children, and the youth as well, learn what God says about these things: ‘Death and life are in the power of the tongue.’ Proverbs 18:21.”—*Education*, p. 235.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 195

Part 3
The
Untamable
Tongue

What forceful words does James use in his portrayal of the human tongue?

“The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8).

James describes the tongue as a “little member,” but it is much bigger than the tiny vocal bands whose vibration provides the tongue with sound to shape into words. The entire speech mechanism is one of the little-recognized marvels of the human body.

“Some talk too much; they stand in this position: ‘Report, . . . and we will report it.’ Miserable indeed is such a position! If all these gossipers would ever bear in mind that an angel is following them, recording their words, there would be less talking and much more praying.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 40.

“Words have kindled fires that have been hard to quench. They have also brought joy and gladness to many souls. And when words are spoken because God says, ‘Speak unto them My words,’ they often cause sorrow unto repentance.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1142.

What is David’s wish in terms of controlling his tongue? Ps. 39:1.

He who uses falsehoods to make personal gain may evade detection for some time and feel that his new improved situation justifies the means. But if he continues on this course, he becomes a perpetual liar, for he has to lie some more to cover his first lies. If he does not get caught in the meshes of his own web of falsehoods, he soon finds himself in a more desperate plight. Knowing the depth of his deception of others, he himself comes to trust the word of no one.

“The atmosphere of unbelief is heavy and oppressive. The giddy laugh, the jesting, the joking, sickens the soul that is feeding on Christ. Cheap, foolish talk is painful to Him. With a humble heart read carefully 1 Peter 1:13-18. Those who enjoy talking should see that their words are select and well chosen. Be careful how you speak. . . . You may feel it no sin to gossip and talk nonsense, but this grieves your Saviour, and saddens the heavenly angels.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 457.

“Floating rumors are often the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 504.

Why is the tongue so hard to control?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 139

Part 4
Under Two
Masters

Should one use the same mouth to bless and to curse? What would God think of it?

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:9, 10).

A man cannot serve two gods at the same time. In some way he is more loyal to one than the other. Likewise, the tongue shows the loyalty of a person. By blessing God and others, he shows his allegiance to God; by cursing he demonstrates his relations with Satan. “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man” (Matt. 15:18).

When provoked by anger or possessed by envy and hatred, one may act quite differently from his usual behavior pattern. There is a kind of psychological problem called split personality. The one affected behaves as though he were possessed by different spirits. To a lesser degree, those who curse and bless with the same mouth are similarly sick. Only when one fully submits himself to the influence of the Holy Spirit can he possess full sanity.

“The mixture of cursing with the blessing may suggest the insincerity of the blessing (cf. Prov. 18:21). . . .

“James appeals to the fellowship of believers in Christ and to the unity found in the fatherhood of God. . . . Though some of the church members to whom James writes are guilty of cursing men while blessing God, he still regards them with affection.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 527.

How close is the relationship between the heart and the tongue? Matt. 12:34, 35.

“Of all the gifts which God has given to man, none is more noble or a greater blessing than the gift of speech, if it is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It is with the tongue we convince and persuade; with it we offer prayer and praise to God; and with it we convey rich thoughts of the Redeemer’s love. By this work, the canvasser can scatter the seeds of truth, causing the light from the word of God to shine into many minds.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 316, 317.

“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:36, 37).

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 175

**Part 5
The
Heavenly
and the
Earthly**

What is one of the earthly motives which causes a person to lie?

“If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:14, 15).

Motivated by negative feelings such as pride, jealousy, shame, hatred, or greed, one may accuse, insinuate, or falsify. Captivated by a fighting spirit and haunted by his own words, such is a miserable man. He makes enemies out of his friends, and he pushes himself out of his social circle.

“The tongue is evil only when it is controlled by a mind motivated by the forces of evil. When a man does not let the Holy Spirit control his thoughts, and thus his speech, the tongue functions as an instrument of evil.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 526.

“The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies; it was indulged by our first parents as soon as they yielded to the influence of Satan, and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 58.

What kind of words should we avoid, and what kind of words should we speak? Eph. 5:4.

“He who is truly wise seeks to avoid quarrels and strife, but his desire for peace will not keep him from presenting the truth, even though trouble may result. Jesus predicted that the proclamation of truth would bring contention into the world. . . , but the resulting strife is the fault of those who oppose the truth, not of those who wisely present it. Purity of life and doctrine must never be sacrificed in an effort to secure peace.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 529.

Do the Scriptures recognize that it may not be possible to live at peace with some people? (See Rom. 12:18.)

In defending truth, we cannot completely avoid confrontations. However, we must not be overcome by the spirit of strife. We must be more earnest in seeking God’s grace that He may deliver us from evil. Even under great pressure, the divine grace is sufficient for us. We are promised that we will be given words of wisdom when we are brought to the court of judgment. If we are willing to place ourselves under the influence of the Holy Spirit, He can help us to gain the victory over undisciplined speech.

What a person speaks reflects his thinking. What does your speech reflect about your inner thoughts and desires?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 122

**Part 6
Wisdom
From
Above**

What kind of language and character would one have if filled with wisdom from above?

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17, 18).

The wisdom from above affects the mood and the words of the recipient. There is, in turn, a fascinating relationship between the mood of a speaker and the quality of his voice that is heard. The pitch of the voice, the volume, the tone quality, and also the rate of speaking reflect in various ways the degree of tension that is felt throughout the body of the speaker. The tension varies with the emotions experienced. Naturally the content of the words spoken is similarly affected.

What place may meditation upon Christ have in our revelation of Him in our words and deeds? 2 Cor. 3:18.

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

What part might the manner of Christ’s speech have had in motivating the Samaritan woman to accept His offer of the “water of life”? (See John 4:10-14; 6:63.)

The words of a man of God and the manner in which they are spoken will be as a refreshing drink to thirsty travelers. The inward law manifests itself in gracious speech.

The wise man said, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). If one’s mind is filled with things from above—purity, peace, gentleness, kindness, and honesty—these virtues will be reflected in his language. How can we fill ourselves with wisdom from above?

Further Study: *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 259

A Root of Evil

“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim. 6:10, NIV).

While money itself is not evil, the *love* of money is the root of all evil. The covetous motive still leads one to steal, in violation of the inward law of love.

But before committing the *crime* of theft, one would first have harbored feelings of covetousness, a craving for an object which he should not attempt to get, such as the money, house, or wife of his neighbor.

When the love for material things increases, the love for things such as honesty, reputation, and spiritual experience decreases. In a society which “despises the poor but not the prostitutes,” as expressed in a Chinese saying, the ethical standards of some people are bound to be distorted.

Therefore, some people don't feel guilty when they evade tax, when they cheat in examinations, or even when they embezzle money from the public or the organization for which they work. Some even develop the thought that society or the government owes them so much already that any cheating they can do through such things as the free use of personal, long-distance phone calls at company expense, the stealing of computer time, or the free use of company stationery is but restoring justice!

An extreme form of covetous behavior is shown in gambling—horse racing, casino attendance, poker games, or the numbers game. Any kind of gambling has the purpose of gaining some undeserved benefit.

Life comes from God. Time, energy, talents, intellect, and skills are all from God. Whatever one inherits from his ancestors or relatives is also from God. We are God's stewards. We didn't bring anything with us when we came into this world, and we are not taking anything with us when we leave. We are here but a few years. We must be God's good stewards with whatever He entrusts to our hands. Fully realizing the principle of stewardship, we will become the masters of the wealth we possess and not the slaves of it. This is how possessions may affect our relation to the inward law.

Part 1 A Root of Evil

What effect does the love of money have upon spiritual experience?

“The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10).

People love money. Besides material things, money can bring to its owner fame, power, and influence. To many people, especially to those in the capitalistic world, money is the standard for measuring success. Success means a bigger house, an efficient car—or many cars—a fat bank balance, and conspicuous consumption of life’s delicacies.

A Chinese adage says, “Money will get the devil to run the stone mill.” Because money is so useful, the pursuit of money has been all-consuming since the dawn of history.

“Covetousness” means craving for something other persons have or possess. This could include what is not yet due to me. If this motive is not brought under control, it will become the predominant motive of all behavior.

In the hot pursuit of money, one can become oblivious to the needs of those around him—the sick, the elderly, the poor, the handicapped, and the homeless children that can be found in every community. However, the responsibility to care for these unfortunate ones may rest increasingly upon the community.

When money is used for philanthropic purposes, it can help fight disease, alleviate poverty, and promote education and culture. When put to illegal use, money corrupts the owner and creates scandal even in the higher circles of governments.

Why did the rich young ruler go away from Jesus sorrowfully? Matt. 19:22.

The rich young ruler had the desire to become a perfect man; but unfortunately he was addicted to money. The desire to keep his money was greater than the desire to enter everlasting life.

“The Bible condemns no man for being rich, if he has acquired his riches honestly. Not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil. . . . But many, absorbed in their interest in worldly treasures, become insensible to the claims of God and the needs of their fellow men.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 212.

The rich young ruler, if seeking church membership today, probably would be warmly welcomed into the church. Why did Jesus make it so hard for him to be His follower? Does He require the same standard of everybody else?

Further Study: *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 223

Part 2 Other Forms of Covetous- ness

Note some other forms of covetousness portrayed in the Bible.

“Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (James 5: 3, 4).

Here the Bible says that the employer or the manager has kept back by fraud that which is due to the laborers or employees. The profit of a factory, a company, or a farm could be equitably shared by all who contribute to the success of it. It is true that the stockholders, the managers, the owners, the bosses provide houses, goods, tools, equipment, capital, and management to make the success possible. But without the participation of the employees, there can be no profit. It is important that the owners and financiers recognize the proportionate right of the laborers to share in the profits. Some laborers may be unskillful, lazy and irresponsible; but the mistakes of a few should not be made the reason to exploit the whole. Enlightened managers nowadays have realized the need to share profits with the laborers.

Jesus described or met additional forms of covetousness recorded in Matthew 20:11, 12; 20:21; Luke 15:12.

In these three passages of the Bible we find mention of three different kinds of covetousness. The first describes a demand for equality, but in effect the complainer was trying to breach his contract with the manager. Because other workers got a better deal, he became jealous. That is definitely a form of covetousness.

The second text records the request of a mother who wanted her two sons, James and John, to sit on either side of Christ should He become King. To hope, to make plans for, or even to work for the best for one's children is understandable. But to desire them to occupy positions not rightfully theirs is another form of covetousness.

And then the third text records the prodigal son's request made of his father to receive the share of properties which customarily would have been his only after the father had passed away. In the Orient, this kind of request for inheritance is considered to be a wish that the father would die, a most disrespectful attitude and a very covetous act. This may provide added significance to one of the best-known of Christ's many parables.

On what basis would you decide whether or not an individual is a miser? Is he a covetous person?

Further Study: *Christ's Object Lessons*, “Gain That Is Loss,” pp. 258, 259

**Part 3
Pride,
a Form of
Covetous-
ness**

What did Lucifer gradually come to covet when he was in heaven?

“Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14).

The desire of Lucifer differs from a normal desire among human beings for promotion. He clearly knew his position and his relationship with God. He was already the chief of angels; he was directly under God. Despite all the glory he had, he coveted the special position, the power, and the glory of the Son, who, as God, was with the Father from all eternity. Satan forgot that he was a creature and not the Creator. He coveted something that he was not and never could be, and that covetousness developed into a rebellion in heaven.

What was and is the result of the rebellion that took place in heaven? Eze. 28:14-17.

“Pride of position is a deep-seated evil which has ruined thousands. Yes, tens of thousands, full of ambition for distinction and display, have been ruined because they have lost sight of principle. They have measured themselves among themselves, and compared themselves with themselves. Their eager grasping for credit and reward has resulted in diminished spirituality. This is a lesson all should study carefully, that they may be warned against selfishness and avarice, against pride which destroys love for God and corrodes the soul.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 184, 185.

“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.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 60.

Are you often being tempted to be proud? In what way?

There is a second cousin to pride that is really a most important and desirable character trait. It is that form of pride which we speak of as self-respect. There are those with a tragically negative kind of modesty. They take pride in looking poor, unkempt, and even dirty. Some continually put themselves down to the point that they fail to do what God would call them to do. Perhaps this is a coveting of humility! In any case, it is not good or Christlike.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 155; vol. 4, p. 491

Part 4
Why
People
Worry

From the teachings of Jesus, what clues can we find as to why people worry?

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin” (Matt. 6:25-28, NIV).

From time immemorial, people have worried. They worry about their money, the security of their money, and the growth of their money. Some worry about their health. Others worry about what to eat and what to wear. For some, eating becomes gluttony or extravagant display.

Some ladies, as well as some men, worry about what to wear. They worry about what to wear every day—not only to concerts, parties, and ceremonies. Some covet being something they are not. They have nonessential plastic surgery done, wear various wigs over their quite acceptable natural hair, make up their faces extravagantly, paint fingernails and toenails to distraction, “starve” themselves to preserve “the figure,” and wear garments that offend Christian sensibilities of modesty. All these activities exhibit forms of covetousness.

If one is grateful to God for what nature has given him, even the crippled person can accept his lot. With the hope and assurance that someday soon he will be given a perfect body, he does not need to covet something which he is not. Trusting in the Lord frees him from worry.

Before seeking food, clothes, and the necessities of life, what should we seek? Matt. 6:33.

“There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world’s standard. . . . In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience, and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. . . . In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

Worry is a form of diffused fear. How can we stop worrying?

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “True Motive in Service” (Matt. 6:34), p. 101

Part 5
Thou Shalt
Not Steal"

The inward law is brief and explicit on God's view of stealing.

"Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:15).

"Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. The eighth commandment condemns manstealing and slave dealing, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. . . . It declares that every attempt to advantage oneself by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the books of heaven."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 308, 309.

What may we have stolen perhaps without being conscious of it?
Mal. 3:8.

If one forgot that he is but a steward of the Lord, he would claim as his own that which God has entrusted to him as a steward. He certainly would find it difficult to return to God the tithe, which is God's. This attitude could lead one to cheat his fellowmen, cheat the government, cheat his customers, his boss, his wife, and just about everybody around him.

Some people seem to find it impossible not to steal. To them stealing is a compulsive behavior that they cannot seem to control. They even steal from their friends or from the department store worthless little things that they do not need.

In the tenth commandment there is another item God forbids us to covet—the neighbor's wife. If one stole a cow, he could return it to its original owner. If he cheated his neighbor and took over his house, he could still return it to him. But if he steals his neighbor's marital partner, it is hard, if not impossible, to recompense the damage.

When, in the broader sense of coveting, we add to our consideration gamblers, tax evaders, shoplifters, dishonest manufacturers and merchants, we may surprise ourselves by the number of people who have violated the eighth and the tenth commandments.

In the setting of strict integrity, the principle of restoration comes into play. (See Eze. 33:14, 15.) Some things can never be fully repaid—such as stolen reputation or stolen affection—but most of them can and must be. Where possible, even incomplete restitutions will be made by those seeking forgiveness from man and God.

If one has neglected to prepare a will to direct the care for his properties after death, is it possible that he has violated the eighth commandment by so doing?

Further Study: *Steps to Christ*, "Confession," p. 39; "The Test of Discipleship," p. 59

**Part 6
Humility and
Self-denial**

In utter contrast to the slightest whisper of covetousness, what example in humility and self-denial has Jesus given us?

“Jesus . . . , being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

The opposite of covetousness is unselfishness, the giving of one's possessions and self in service to others. In this respect also Jesus is our perfect Example. Instead of coming to rule as a king, He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men to live among the poor and to die for us willingly as though He were a criminal. Such self-denial we have never seen in anyone else. Meditating upon this theme would prompt us to shout praises to Him and love Him as we have never loved before.

How should the Christian use his money? (See Luke 10:30-37).

Money is a trust from God. It is not ours to expend for the gratification of pride or ambition. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, and clothing for the naked.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 287.

Instead of looking for what He can get, what does God freely give? Acts 17:24, 25, 28.

Even though nature is marred by sin, its parts are complementary to other parts, and the parts serve the whole. For example, water, oxygen, and nitrogen have their cycles and so do the sun and the moon, the tides and the seasons. Without these cycles, the earth would soon become a place full of poison and rubbish, unfit for human habitation.

Unceasingly, God uses His power to uphold the universe and work for our benefit. And He gives us the power to gain wealth (Deut. 8:18). The angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). In God's family everyone exists to serve others. By serving one another we can help make the universe a paradise.

Many believe that there is nothing free in the world and that somehow we end up paying for everything ourselves. Can this be true of salvation (John 3:16)? the water of life (Rev. 22:17)? the bread of life (John 6:51)?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 649

Natural Law and Moral Law

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

God is the Author of both natural law (the realm of science) and moral law. Since both are created by the same Author, there is complete harmony between the two. Only in modern times have scientists discovered the influence of the psychological functions of the body on the physiological, and vice versa. God tells us that “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov. 17:22). Nature—God’s other book—cannot disagree. When rightly understood, the book of nature is in complete agreement with God’s primary book, the Bible.

In health principles, it is now common knowledge that a man’s health—which is as much psychological as physical—is involved with “abstract” feelings such as peace, joy, love, and a sense of security. For the Christian such assurance grows from a knowledge of things eternal.

The spirit of prophecy clearly states: “The laws of nature are the laws of God—as truly divine as are the precepts of the Decalogue. The laws that govern our physical organism, God has written upon every nerve, muscle, and fiber of the body. Every careless or willful violation of these laws is a sin against our Creator. . . .

“The influence of the mind on the body, as well as the body on the mind, should be emphasized. The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system, and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease. This should be made plain. The power of the will and the importance of self-control, both in the preservation and in the recovery of health, the depressing and even ruinous effect of anger, discontent, selfishness, or impurity, and, on the other hand, the marvelous life-giving power to be found in cheerfulness, unselfishness, gratitude, should also be shown.”—*Education*, pp. 196, 197.

**Part 1
God, the
Lawmaker**

In Psalm 19 who is declared to be the author of the two sets of laws, the natural (physical) and the moral?

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:1, 7).

When God created our planet, part of His plan was the creation of man. Since man's body is governed by natural law and his behavior by moral laws, these two laws must reflect the harmonious will of their Author. Adam not only had high intelligence, a beautiful body, and extraordinary vitality; he also reflected God's love. The motives of his behavior were good and pure, and he lived happily because, in perfect trust, he observed God's laws.

“The whole natural world is designed to be an interpreter of the things of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home, nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. To their attentive ears it was vocal with the voice of wisdom. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart, for they communed with God in His created works.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p.186.

When the Ten Commandments were announced to the Hebrews, what natural phenomenon accompanied the pronouncement? Ex. 20:18.

The fire, smoke, lightning, thunder, and earthquake created a frightening scene before the Israelites. The power of God was greatly manifested when He descended on Mount Sinai to announce His law. The power of nature and the power of law were demonstrated by the same Author. The reason for making the pronouncement solemn and memorable was to impress the minds of the Israelites with the importance of God's law. In Egypt many of them had forgotten God's law and the sacredness of it. Something extraordinary and dramatic was needed.

However, when God speaks to man, He does not usually appear in the fire or the earthquake. His small voice is heard in quietness.

In what respects does God's law differ from man's laws?

There is never a need to amend the laws pronounced by God. Their application to mankind may vary with changing conditions, but the principles of God's law are as unchangeable as God Himself. (See Mal. 3:6.)

Further Study: *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 114

Part 2
Natural
Laws

In the light of modern science, consider the claim that nature is governed by natural laws alone.

“God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so” (Gen. 1:24).

In this short verse is hidden the genesis of zoology, entomology, animal husbandry, veterinary medicine, taxonomy, genetics, paleontology, and other disciplines of science. The short phrase “after his kind” governs the laws of genetics and rules out the possibility of a process of evolution that denies the creatorship of God. Regardless of how one looks at nature, he cannot find enough convincing evidence to support the conclusions of the evolutionary theory. God cannot contradict Himself.

“The Saviour in His miracles revealed the power that is continually at work in man’s behalf to sustain and to heal him. Through the agencies of nature, God is working, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to keep us alive, to build up and restore us. . . . All life-giving power is from Him.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 112, 113.

Natural science is the knowledge of nature known to men. However, the total body of knowledge known to men today does not constitute all knowledge of nature. Otherwise there could be no new discovery. Similarly, nature-related points difficult to understand and even seeming contradictions with the Bible may become plain in the near future. It would be presumptuous for man, with his very limited knowledge, to conclude that the Bible is wrong on origins.

In one of the practical aspects of natural law, how does Bible-related dietary counsel affect human well-being?

“The dietary principles of Lev. 11, together with other sanitary and health regulations, were intended by a wise Creator to promote health and longevity (see Ex. 15:26; 23:25; Deut. 7:15; Ps. 105:37; PP 378). Based as they are upon the nature and requirements of the human body, these principles could in no way be affected either by the cross or by the disappearance of Israel as a nation. Principles that contributed to health 3,500 years ago will produce the same results today.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 757.

If natural law changed once in a while, what would happen to the universe?

Further Study: *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 346

Part 3
Moral Law

What is the most complete guide or standard for our behavior?

“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12).

Every increase in the amazing growth of scientific knowledge in our day only adds to our wonder over the intricate and unfailing laws under which God has placed every atom of His creating. Not one detail has escaped the attention of the divine mind and hand. But while everything in this creation, animate and inanimate, is under law, only man is under moral law. His intelligence and his capacity to distinguish right from wrong, under divine tutelage, make him responsible to this law. The conscience again is the agency or channel used by the Spirit in a mind capable of finding the law holy, just, and good.

“God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy. When at Jesus’ birth the angels sang,—‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Luke 2:14), they were declaring the principles of the law which He had come to magnify and make honorable.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

Where is the assurance that the moral law and the total Old Testament message are in no way belittled by the gospel of Jesus? Matt. 5:17, 18.

“While the Saviour’s death brought to an end the law of types and shadows, it did not in the least detract from the obligation of the moral law. On the contrary, the very fact that it was necessary for Christ to die in order to atone for transgression of that law, proves it to be immutable.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 365.

How does a man’s thinking, regarding God and His law, affect his personality and behavior? Prov. 23:7.

It is commonly known that by beholding we are changed. When we behold the glory of the Lord—His law translated into a perfect life—we are changed into His image. But if we let our minds dwell on wicked thoughts, we will become wicked in character.

Does the moral law simply reflect the changing norm of human behavior? Or is it, like the laws of nature, changeless?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 207

Part 4
Health Laws

What is the divine motivation for us to take care of our health?

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

What could be the experience of a people who would happily follow the laws written in man’s whole being? Ex. 15:26.

Man should enjoy good health and a happy life if he observes the natural law. Sunshine, pure air, exercise, rest, wholesome food, and a peaceful mind are necessary to good health. But modern men are plagued by polluted air, physical inactivity, lack of sleep, tension, indulgence of appetite, and the use of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. Only as we return to a simple life can we enjoy life in abundance.

But it is easier to say this than to do it. We all tend to be slaves of our environment, our jobs, and our ambitions. It takes real determination and a strong will to change the pattern of our behavior. That is why some people pay hundreds of dollars to go to conditioning centers to have their pattern of behavior altered.

However, not everybody can go away to another place to change his life. For those people the change must begin at home. Members of the family must help one another and remind each other of the importance of adhering to health principles. We must be willing to earn fewer dollars, look for recreation instead of entertainment, withdraw from frivolous social fraternization to have more time with the family. Then the family may function as a personal health club. In so doing, the family will find it natural to stick together and to get closer to God.

“Life is a gift of God. Our bodies have been given us to use in God’s service, and He desires that we shall care for and appreciate them. We are possessed of physical as well as mental faculties. Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body, and therefore we must do nothing that would defile this entrusted possession. Our bodies must be kept in the best possible condition physically, and under the most spiritual influences, in order that we may make the best use of our talents.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 41.

What reason did God give for His people to be holy? Lev. 11:44.

The word *holy* connotes deepest reverence, spiritual purity, sacredness—that which is set apart, different from things common or ordinary.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 267-271

Part 5
Mind and
Body

Is there any relation between a cheerful outlook—doubtless related to a good conscience—and good health?

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov. 17:22).

“The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

Man was made as a whole person. The psychological and the physiological functions are interrelated. Many get sick and die because of a lack of desire to live on. On the other hand, many who cannot abstain from sinful habits are that way because of their physical condition. An example is the cigarette smoker who knows the harmfulness of the cigarette but is unable to stop smoking. If one is plagued by disease and sin, in order to break the vicious circle, he must first return to God as he is. His sins will be forgiven. Only then would he have the regenerated willpower to fight the forces of darkness.

When we see or hear about hale and hearty souls who have lived to be a hundred or more and we learn that they have been lifelong smokers, drinkers, and loose in their living, we cannot but wonder about the health principles we have been taught. How can one who indulges himself live so long when conscientious observers of every health rule suffer and perhaps die young? Are the health principles unsound? Are they only for those with a poor start in life?

Much might be said on this. But when it is said that we are all born equal, that does not apply to the physical endowment with which we enter life. On the other hand, a life of hard work can counter many of the ill effects of imbibing the unhealthful. None of us know exactly what our fate might have been had we lived differently. We can only surmise, based on the law of averages. But it is probable that the mind and soul are more easily affected by our physical habits than we will know in this life. Judgment and eternity will reveal many things. No follower of Jesus can conscientiously ignore the claims of the laws of health.

What did the apostle John wish for the saints as represented by Galus? 3 John 2.

In view of this week's lesson, do you understand more clearly 1 Corinthians 6:15-20?

Further Study: *My Life Today*, p. 134

**Part 6
Promise
of Health**

What promise did God give Israel concerning their health?

“The Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee” (Deut. 7:15).

We often marvel today at the high achievements of the descendants of the ancient people of Israel. Undoubtedly the blessings of their forebears have come down to them. Yet ancient Israel failed in large measure in being to the world the savor of life unto life which Jehovah intended. She could have been the world’s greatest object lesson in good health and every other advantage. What Daniel and his companions were in Babylon, Israel could have been in the world at large. This may illustrate again what was demonstrated in earliest human history—that divinely bestowed physical and mental advantages endure through many generations despite abuse or misuse.

One unanswered and unanswerable question, from our limited human viewpoint, is how long and how well some might live today if they made major efforts from earliest years to live in harmony with the laws of health.

“He [God] has established the laws of nature, but His laws are not arbitrary exactions. Every ‘Thou shalt not,’ whether in physical or moral law, contains or implies a promise. If it is obeyed, blessings will attend our steps; if it is disobeyed, the result is danger and unhappiness. The laws of God are designed to bring His people closer to Himself.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 445.

What kind of cure and peace did God promise to His ancient people? Jer. 33:6.

“To many of the afflicted ones who received healing, Christ said, ‘Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.’ John 5:14. Thus He taught that disease is the result of violating God’s laws, both natural and spiritual. The great misery in the world would not exist did men but live in harmony with the Creator’s plan.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 824.

“Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul. ‘A merry [rejoicing] heart doeth good like a medicine.’ Proverbs 17:22.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

Do my practices reveal awareness of the link between health of body and health of mind?

Further Study: *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 375

Maturity Through Inner Conflict

“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9).

The path of life is never an even, straight line. It goes up mountains and down into deep valleys. The path of spiritual life is likewise often a rough one. The experience of maturing in Christ is seldom a smooth one. A bitter war is fought on the battlefields of our hearts. The forces of good and of evil constantly engage in fierce conflict. It is in this kind of situation that one learns the inner peace of Christ's justifying righteousness, develops character, and learns the power of the Holy Spirit to plant in the heart the inward law.

Torn between two great forces, we of ourselves are powerless. It is impossible to win against Satan if we neglect the offered help of Christ. Worse yet, we are so prone to fall into Satan's snares, we are so inclined to sin, and we are so afraid of facing God that, without intervening influences, our fate is sealed. However, we are not without hope: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3, 4). We are already victors in Christ's victory.

In Romans, chapters 7 and 8, the apostle Paul uses a number of contrasts to illustrate the inner conflict which every Christian experiences. Through these experiences a Christian gradually matures in Christ. It is a matter of life and death. Only the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—provided by His amazing grace—can make us free from the law of sin and death.

It is said that repeated similar choices form a habit, and a collection of habits forms a character. Even though one may have the intention of doing good, yet before he forms a good habit, like a child learning to walk, he must deliberately concentrate all his attention and energy upon performing that task, lest he stumble. This is especially true when evil forces are at work to make whatever we do more difficult.

Part 1
The Versus
Death

What countering power frees man from the law of sin and death?

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

The free gift of life in Christ is the only remedy that saves man from death. “For what the law was unable to do, weakened as it was through the flesh, that God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and on account of sin; He thus condemned sin in human nature” (Rom. 8:3, Berkeley [Modern Language Bible]). When Jesus won the battle against sin on the cross and triumphed over death in the garden tomb, the surety of salvation for the saints was sealed.

The Spirit of life is Spirit-giving life. “He is so called because He exercises life-giving power. . . . The law of the Spirit of life is the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, ruling as a law in the life. The phrase ‘of life’ expresses the effect accomplished, as in ‘justification of life’ (. . . John 5:18) and ‘the bread of life’ (John 6:35). The Spirit brings life and freedom, in contrast with the law of sin, which produces only death and condemnation. . . .

“Sin is no longer the predominating and controlling influence in his life. The indwelling Spirit of life inspires obedience and gives power to ‘mortify the deeds of the body’ (v. 13). Thus the law of the Spirit of life works directly contrary to the law of sin and death in the members, empowering the believer to overcome sin’s destroying influence and freeing him from sin’s bondage and condemnation.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 560.

“The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains ‘remission of sins that are past’ and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: ‘Abba, Father!’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

By what means can we receive life? John 5:24-26.

“In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

Are you serious enough about your salvation to treat it as a matter of life and death?

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 5:48), pp. 77, 78

Part 2
Spirit
Versus
Flesh

Under what condition can the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us?

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

“**After the Spirit.** That is, they regulate their conduct according to the dictates and guidance of the Spirit, the indwelling Spirit of Christ. . . . The just requirement of the law is being fulfilled in them. What the law requires is summed up in Christian love, for ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ ([Rom.] ch. 13:10). Likewise, the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life is love, for ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love’ (Gal. 5:22). Consequently, life according to the Spirit means a life in which the righteous demands of the law are fulfilled—a life of love and loving obedience. That such a life might be made possible for believers was the great purpose for which God sent His Son into the world.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 562.

There must be an intent and a decision of the soul itself to expel, by the power of the Spirit, the natural “inhabitants” that generate all evil works—the works of the flesh. Only then can there be an inflowing of the Spirit to fill the vacancy. Both the expelling and infilling are by the Spirit’s power, but these acts never override the will of the soul itself. There is no spiritual pride in the Spirit-filled heart. Rather, there is growing sense of dependence upon the Spirit for the implanting and outworking of the inward law.

“The Spirit that reveals, also works in him the fruits of righteousness. Christ is in him, ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ He is a branch of the True Vine, and bears rich clusters of fruit to the glory of God. What is the character of the fruit borne?—The fruit of the Spirit is ‘love,’ not hatred; ‘joy,’ not discontent and mourning; ‘peace,’ not irritation, anxiety, and manufactured trials.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 287.

What place does the body have in the process of the consecration of life to God? Rom. 12:1, 2.

“With what care should Christians regulate their habits, that they may preserve the full vigor of every faculty to give to the service of Christ. If we would be sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, we must live in conformity to the divine law. The heart cannot preserve consecration to God while the appetites and passions are indulged at the expense of health and life.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 69.

Why is it so important that we live according to the Spirit? By demanding this, is God taking away from us freedom of choice?

Further Study: *Counsels on Health*, p. 69

Part 3
Spiritual
Mind
Versus
Carnal
Mind

What is the underlying reason that prompts our actions so vital to our Christian experience?

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6).

“To be carnally minded. Literally, ‘the mind [or “minding”] of the flesh.’ In this case, ‘mind’ means ‘thought,’ ‘purpose,’ ‘intention,’ ‘inclination,’ as in the clause, ‘he . . . knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit’ (v. 27 [of Rom. 8]).”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 563.

Spiritual losses do not take place suddenly. As a general rule there is a series of small violations of the conscience that has a confusing impact on the mind and judgment. The voice of God is heard less and less distinctly, and the deceptions of Satan come to be accepted as enlightened wisdom. The soul is then in grave peril. And without a deliberate decision as to who is to be master of the soul, there will be inevitable and eternal loss.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God, and it rebels against His will. Let it once throw off the yoke of obedience and it slips unconsciously into the lawlessness of crime.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 13.

“It is the Spirit that causes to shine into darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; that makes men’s hearts burn within them with an awakened realization of the truths of eternity; that presents before the mind the great standard of righteousness, and convinces of sin; that inspires faith in Him who alone can save from sin; that works to transform character by withdrawing the affections of men from those things which are temporal and perishable, and fixing them upon the eternal inheritance.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 286, 287.

In light of the text and quotations above, what new meaning can you derive from Proverbs 4:23?

How can we develop the “spiritual mind” in a negative and adverse setting?

Only he who has lived in a home where two are basically not agreed can have any real idea of the level of cruelty that one who once professed loving devotion can impose on the former object of affection. This is especially true if the “drifter” from God still has a troubling and accusing conscience. Similar kinds of cruelty—mental and physical—will rain down upon God’s true children in the final days of earth’s history. Only the heart kept by the Spirit will retain loyalty to God in that climax of the ages.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 440

**Part 4
Peace
Versus
Enmity**

In the conflict between God and Satan, on what evidence or other basis do you choose sides?

“To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:6, 7).

It is tragic ever to have to think of man as the enemy of God, when he was created in God's image, with every advantage and facility for retaining a position of loving loyalty to the inward law implanted in his nature. But such is the sad consequence of the first transgression of the law of God. Since then the carnal mind has been at enmity with God, for it is not submissive to His law and cannot be.

If man will look into the mirror of the law of God as revealed in the life of Jesus here on earth, he will see himself as a sinner under the doom and penalty of the sacred law. But he need not despair. He has not been abandoned, not left an orphan. The Son of God on the cross of Calvary provided a way of deliverance from sin's penalty and power, having lived a perfect life. For this purpose God gave His only-begotten Son. (See John 3:16.)

Note the steps by which Jesus reconciled mankind to God. Eph. 2:13-16.

“Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. ‘Peace I leave with you,’ He said, ‘My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention. Christ said of Himself, ‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ Matthew 10:34. The Prince of Peace, He was yet the cause of division. He who came to proclaim glad tidings and to create hope and joy in the hearts of the children of men, opened a controversy that burns deep and arouses intense passion in the human heart.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84. (See Luke 21:12, 16.)

In order to make a peace treaty effective, both sides must observe its details. How sincere are you in observing your peace treaty with God purchased by Jesus Christ?

Further Study: John 16:33; 2 Cor. 5:17-19

Part 5
Righteous-
ness
versus Sin

What supreme blessing does righteousness bring to us through the work of the Spirit when Christ is in us?

“If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:10).

“Throughout the Scriptures righteousness is consistently associated with life, as sin is with death. When there is righteousness in the life, there is evidence of the presence and power of the Spirit of God, and this means life.

“Some commentators prefer to limit the meaning of righteousness in this passage to the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer for life-giving justification. . . . But the context does not seem to indicate such a limitation. Taking righteousness in the widest sense, Paul’s meaning seems to be that, although the body is dead because of Adam’s sin, in which we have all participated . . . , the spirit is life because of Christ’s righteousness, which has first been imputed in justification and is later imparted in sanctification. This gift of righteousness is accompanied by the gift of eternal life.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 565.

Holiness is being completely for God, making a total surrender to the working out of the inward law by God’s grace. So holiness is not inherited; neither is it the gift of the most capable human. Holiness is the gift of God through Jesus Christ alone. When we receive Him and His righteousness, we become members of God’s family, born again, renewed in righteousness. Our very minds are changed so that we can perceive eternal realities. As adopted children, counted righteous in Jesus, we come to resemble our Father more and more under the Spirit’s transforming power.

How do we have this righteousness? Do we develop it through Bible study and prayer, or do we simply gain it by accepting it as a gift from Christ? Rom. 5:17, 18, 21.

Both in our conversion and in the life experience of transforming grace and power, the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ purchases, through the cross and resurrection, our complete acceptance with God. “The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 532.

How do you define “righteousness”?

Further Study: Isa. 32:17; *The Great Controversy*, p. 467

Part 6 Slaves Versus Children

What undeserved relationship is the reward of those who accept Christ?

“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15).

“The dearest gift that heaven itself had to bestow has been poured out that God ‘might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ By that gift men are uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin to become children of God. . . .

“Brethren, with the beloved John I call upon you to ‘behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.’ What love, what matchless love, that, sinners and aliens as we are, we may be brought back to God and adopted into His family! We may address Him by the endearing name, ‘Our Father,’ which is a sign of our affection for Him and a pledge of His tender regard and relationship to us.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 739, 740.

If we are rightfully to address God as Jesus taught, what impact should it have on our experience? (See Matt. 6:9.)

“Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul. ‘If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’ [John 8:36.]—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

What effect does sonship in Christ have upon the whole life? (See Col. 1:12-14, 19-23; 2:10.)

The righteousness of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death in our behalf, when accepted wholly, justify His adoption of us into the family of God. This remains the only basis—acceptance in and through the divine Substitute. Having been adopted, we prostrate ourselves in joy and gratitude at His feet, crying: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” He shows us and empowers the restoration of the inward law in our whole being by the ministry of His Spirit.

What are the differences between a child and a slave? What identifies you as a child of God?

Further Study: Rom. 8:16, 17, 21-23; Gal. 4:4-7

Lessons for 2nd quarter '82

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1982 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Seeking the Glory of God."

First lesson

CHALLENGE TO GOD'S GLORY

Memory Text, Eze. 28:15

1. *Involves Creation (Rev. 12:9)*
2. *Touches Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27, 28)*
3. *Reflected in Israel (Deut. 32:9, 10)*
4. *Reaches the Incarnate Lord (Luke 1:78, 79)*
5. *Touches the Early Church (Eph. 5:25, 26)*
6. *As He Protects His Own (Ps. 34:7)*

Second lesson

WHAT IS GLORY?

Memory Text, Eph. 1:17

1. *"Glory" in the Old Testament (Ps. 29:1)*
2. *Glory That Passes (Ps. 49:16, 17)*
3. *"Glory" in the New Testament (Matt. 6:28, 29)*
4. *God's Approval (Rom. 3:23)*
5. *"Glory" as Praise (Ps. 50:23)*
6. *Moses and Elijah in Glory (Luke 9:30, 31)*

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Someone told them drugs weren't all that bad.



Someone was wrong.

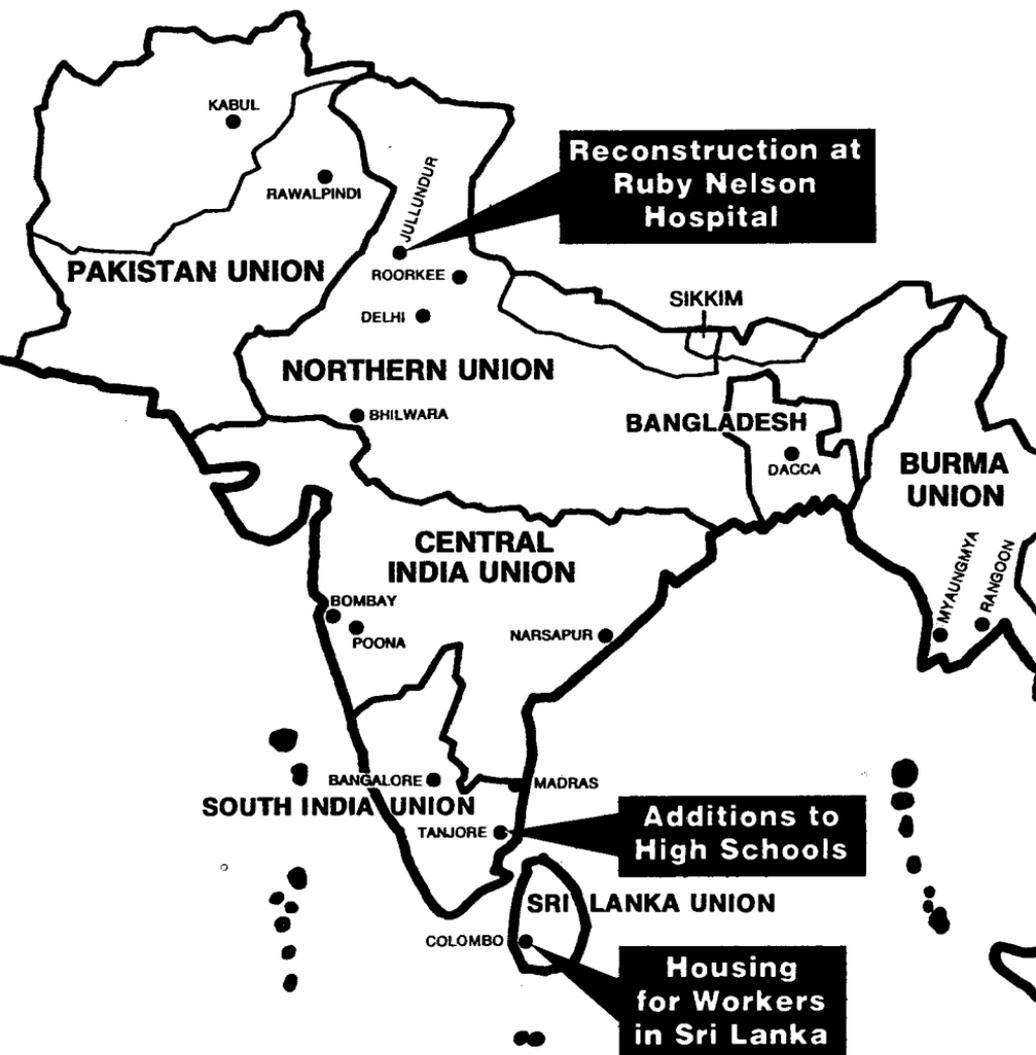
Recent studies reveal that amphetamines cause serious damage to the blood vessels supplying the vital organs. Marijuana can cause damage to the heart, lungs and brain. Alcohol is a factor in 10 percent of all deaths in the United States.

Who knows where people get their information about drugs. TV and radio maybe. Maybe each other. What matters in the end is that they get on bad advice. Advice

You can give the people you care for the good advice they need in making these lifestyle decisions. You can give them good ideas for the choices they are making. You can give them the opportunity to explore some alternatives. You can give *Listen*.

If someone you know is making some important decisions, *Listen* can help.

LISTEN



SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sabbath School Members
Bangladesh section	81,000,000	27	2,323	4,475
Burma	33,884,007	97	7,538	9,956
Central India	148,695,053	142	27,638	34,384
Northern	386,926,990	142	17,720	18,716
Pakistan	76,000,000	41	3,095	5,541
South India	92,021,255	333	44,059	49,404
Sri Lanka	14,000,000	24	1,368	1,627
Division Totals	832,527,305	806	103,741	124,103