

cq

Collegiate Quarterly

2010
January–March



the fruit of the spirit

A Devotional Bible-Study Guide for Young Adults

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Collegiate Quarterly

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The Fruit of the Spirit

January–March 2010

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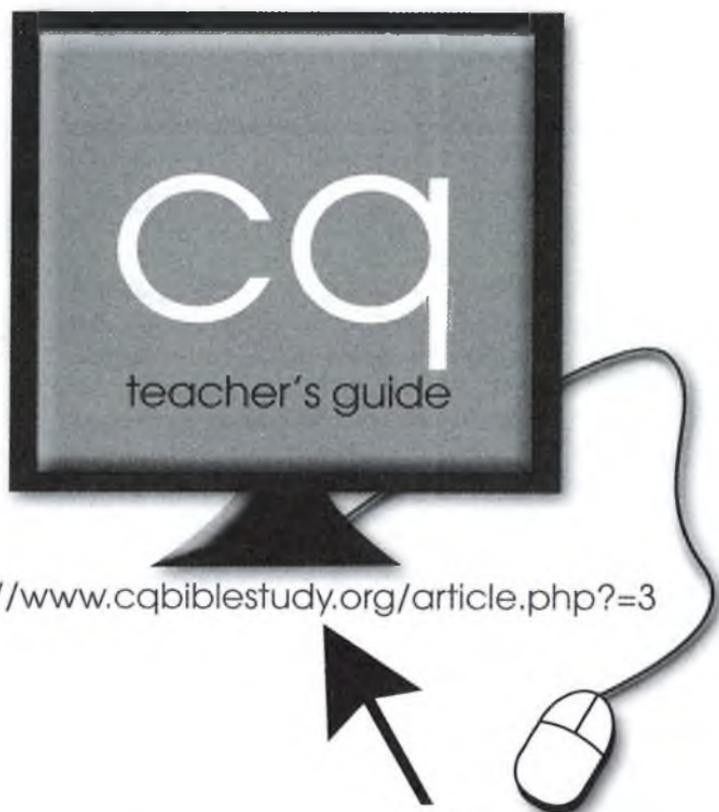


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*This Quarter's **Illustrator***



Tanya Fowler was born in the Midwest portion of the United States. As a member of an evangelist family in the Adventist Church, she has traveled all over the United States. In 1988, she graduated from Highland View Academy in Hagerstown, Maryland. Currently she is the project manager for the advertising department of Affiliated Foods Southwest in Little Rock, Arkansas. Tanya writes, "I'm thankful every day for the Lord's blessings, and that I have a career I love. Our world is fast changing, and we know time is short. For me to be able to use my talents to help bring awareness to the responsibility that we as Christians have toward each other and our world in sharing our faith gives me great pleasure."

Getting the Most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the *Adult Bible Study Guide* find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

About four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflect the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 72,500.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.

3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.

4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:

"Introduction" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.

"Testimony" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"How-To" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

"Exploration" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.

lesson one
DECEMBER 26–JANUARY 2

*“By Their
Fruit . . .”*

“Therefore by their fruits you will know them”

(Matt. 7:20, NKJV).



Ps. 34:8;
Matt. 7:16

Introduction

What Fruit Do You Display?

The banana is one of the most widely eaten fruits in the world. But how many of us could identify a banana plant on a tropical plantation? This might not be difficult for someone living in the tropics. However, how many people living in Britain, the United States of America, France, or Canada could distinguish between the fruitless plants of a banana and a plantain?

We are all known by our fruit.

It wouldn't be difficult to identify the plant if you were to see bananas growing on one. One recognizes a plant by the fruit it bears. The banana plant is not trying to prove its identity by yielding bananas. It just cannot bear fruit other than bananas.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, "You will know them by their fruits" (NKJV). Have you wondered how quickly you can determine your comfort level in the company of strangers? You tag them based on their behavior—the fruit they display the first half hour or so you are in their presence.

A plant generally bears one type of fruit. However, if a branch from a Granny Smith apple tree were to be grafted onto a Golden Delicious apple tree, that tree could yield two different kinds of apples. The tree would still produce apples and would still be known as an apple tree because of its fruit.

On the other hand, it would be difficult for the ordinary person who saw the dual apple tree for the first time to say it had a grafted branch without seeing it during harvesttime. Likewise, it is difficult to distinguish between trees that produce bitter and sweet oranges. But once the fruit has been formed and tasted, the distinction is easy.

Psalms 34:8 says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The tree that yields sweet fruit can yield only sweet fruit of that kind. Similarly, we can rely on Jesus because He can do only good for us. But because humans deal in wickedness and "have eaten the fruit of lies" (Hosea 10:13), they are untrustworthy. We would, therefore, be wise to check out the fruit of a person before taking them into our confidence.

We are all known by our fruit. This means that the same way I am assessing others by their fruit, they are assessing me by my fruit. As you study this quarter about the fruit of the Spirit, ask yourself, *What fruit do others see in me?*

Perception and Anatomy of Your Spiritual Fruit

Luke 13:6–9;
John 11:1–4;
12:28; 15:1–16;
2 Tim. 3:1–5

Promises: Living in Hope and Faith (Gen. 15:14–16)

A fruit is a “seed and its envelope,” a result, benefit, product, yield, advantage, harvest, consequence, outcome, a “realization of hope.”¹ Jesus utilized this symbol of fulfillment and reality to help us understand how we are to grow as Christians, how we are to be transformed into His likeness. The fruit we produce is a result of spending time with Him through prayer, Bible study, service, etc.

Like dried or dormant seeds, our lives are full of possibilities.

Fruit describes the specific tree, vine, or bush it represents. We say an apple tree, a grape vine, or a blueberry bush. Fruit maintains and promotes offspring and helps to sustain and preserve the lives of humans and animals. Thus, when people see us, they should know we are Christians by our fruit.

Read and Think (John 15:1–16)

What other significant examples can you identify with fruit? What is your assessment of a fruit-bearing or non-fruit-bearing Christian? Why does it matter whether or not other people see the fruit of the Spirit growing in us? How would you illustrate the concepts in John 15:1–16 in a nonagrarian sense?

The Fruitless Tree (Luke 13:6–9)

In the parable of the fruitless tree, Jesus warns us against being hypocrites. He is saying that we should practice what we preach. This parable also echoes the warning given to us in Revelation 3:14–22. To bear the fruit of the Spirit is to really be who we say that we are.

Christ is the Vine, and believers are the branches—not the fruit. Yet, His reference to fruit bearing (John 15:1–10) points to an unspoken fact—the purpose of growing branches. Fruitless branches lower the overall productivity of the fruit tree. Consequently, they are pruned to make way for healthier branches. However, the farmer certainly must be interested in the fruit. He even supports fruit-laden branches to help them bear the weight of the fruit. Is the fruit in this parable an end in itself or a means to an end, even though the emphasis is on branches that bear fruit?

Bearing Fruit as Corporate Action (John 15:1–16)

Read John 15:1–16 again and think about the significance of how branches become fruit bearers. Where does the fruit actually come from—the tree or the branches—and why? If the branch could bear its own fruit by choice, why would it still need the tree trunk and roots? What does this teach us about the role of the church in helping its members to bear fruit?

Making the Connection (John 15:1–16)

What sense can you make from Jesus' comparison of Himself as the Vine and us as the branches? As you read the following verses, try to identify other ways fruit bearing is manifested (a) Matt. 28:19, 20; (b) Rom. 15:25–27; 2 Cor. 8:1, 2 and 9:12; (c) Gal. 5:16, 22, 23; 2 Pet. 1:5–8; (d) Heb. 13:15.

How does misunderstanding the need to bear fruit affect our liberty in Christ? There is great emphasis on unlimited liberty among many Christians today. But it is an irresponsible liberty, a freedom without accountability. In Luke 13:6–9, Jesus reveals the intimate love that both the farmer and the caretaker possess for the fruitless tree. Yet, both agree the tree must be uprooted if it remains fruitless.

As individual believers, our individual motives for first seeking Christ were most likely quite different. However, the closer we get to Him, our motives become one—to become like Him. This is what spiritual growth is all about. Bearing spiritual fruit is expected of every Christian. It indicates the process of ongoing spiritual growth. There is a positive relationship between growing in Christ and working for Him. "While it is true that our busy activities will not in themselves ensure salvation, it is also true that faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity."²

Reflection (John 11:1–4; 12:28)

We are always influencing someone, even if we don't realize it. Normally it's rather difficult to recognize our own potential. Yet, like dried or dormant seeds, our lives are full of possibilities, that when lived appropriately, could enhance and hasten God's work. Remember, branches can never survive without the vine; but the vine can always grow new branches.

"Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unrestrained surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character."³

1. *Collins Shorter Dictionary and Thesaurus*, s.v. "Fruit."

2. *Our High Calling*, p. 121.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

Testimony
*Step Up and Be
Counted*

Ezek. 36:26, 27;
John 3:1-21;
2 Cor. 5:17

How can people be born again when they are old? Jesus revealed to Nicodemus the fact that the natural man receives nothing spiritually eternal except through the Spirit of God. Review John 3:5, 6.

“Our words and actions are the fruit we bear.”

“By nature the heart is evil, and ‘who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.’ Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ ‘Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.’ Rom. 8:7; Matt. 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.”¹

“The faithful Christian will bear much fruit; he is a worker; he will not lazily drift, but will put on the whole armor to fight the battles of the Lord. The essential work is to conform the tastes, the appetite, the passions, the motives, the desires, to the great moral standard of righteousness. The work must begin at the heart. That must be pure, wholly conformed to Christ’s will, else some master passion, or some habit or defect, will become a power to destroy. God will accept of nothing short of the whole heart.”²

“If all who profess to be followers of Christ would improve the time out of meeting in conversing upon the truth, in dwelling upon the Christian’s hope, in searching their own hearts, and in earnest prayer before God, pleading for His blessing, a much greater work would be accomplished than we have yet seen. Unbelievers, who falsely accuse those who believe the truth, would be convinced because of their ‘good conversation in Christ.’ Our words and actions are the fruit we bear; ‘wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.’”³

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

2. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 118, 119.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 598.

Luke 13:6–9;
John 15:1–10

Evidence

What's Your Fruit Bowl Showing?

A fruit bowl is normally placed in a prominent area of the home in order to effectively display the bananas, kiwi, mangoes, apples, grapes, and other fruits. If the bowl contains only a few fruits or is empty, that too will be observed.

Each one of us has a responsibility to strive to increase the contents of our own fruit bowl.

There is something common about the education of young people in almost every country—the examination results are made public. In England and Wales, for example, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results of 16-year-olds are published every year in late August. During September, a league table of schools, based on the number of their students achieving five or more subjects at grades, is also published. The public can then see how each school has performed and where their children will receive the best education.

While many schools perform with greater than 80 percent of their students achieving more than 5 A*–C, there are some schools in which fewer than 30 percent gain 5 A*–C. Yet among those poorly performing schools, often one or two students gain 10 or more subjects with A*–C grades. For them, the fruit bowl of their school gives a poor picture, but their individual fruit bowl tells a different story. In John 15:1–10, the emphasis is on the individual: “every branch.”

In Christ's eyes, students who did not study diligently or who wasted their time should be given a chance to improve. In Luke 13:6–9, the nonproducing fig tree was ordered to be cut down because it was wasting space. But the gardener said, “Sir, let me dig around the roots and fertilize it for another year. Then if it doesn't bear fruit, we can cut it down” (paraphrased).

God expects us to do all we can to help each other bear fruit. But individually, each one of us has a responsibility to strive to increase the contents of our own fruit bowl. The kingdom of heaven will be occupied by people who bear fruit. Individual production rates will vary, with some producing 30 percent, some 60 percent, and others 100 percent (see Matthew 13:8). Yet they will all be there together, because with the Holy Spirit's help, each of their fruit bowls will display the maximum for their individual situation.

REACT

Review Luke 13:7, 8. For how long should a second chance be extended?

How-to Living Like Jesus

John 15:1–10;
Gal. 2:20

If we live in Jesus, it will be evident to others, and we'll want to speak about His love, kindness, and mercy. The truly fantastic thing is, if we abide in Him, we may ask Him for whatever is good for us, and He will provide it. The unfortunate thing is, if we do not abide in Him, we won't bear quality fruit, and in the end, we will be "cut off."

How can we prevent ourselves from being cut off? In John 15, Jesus gives us three serious pointers, which if we adopt, will keep us firmly attached to Him.

Our habits—the fruit in our bowl—will show that we belong to Him.

"Live in Me." (*Listen to Him.*) In John 10, Jesus stresses that His sheep should hear His voice and follow Him. He also reminds us that He knows who is following Him (verse 14). He further assures us of eternal preservation—that no one can take us away from Him. Therefore, we are expected to live a life of obedience to His Word.

"Let Me live in you." (*Invite Him in.*) When we invite Jesus into our lives, He will live in us. Review Galatians 2:20. Inviting Jesus into our lives means that we will want to live in a way that pleases Him. Then others will see the difference in the way we live. When we surrender to His will, life may not always be easier; but through trust and faith in Him, we can be sure He will guide us through the storms.

"Obey My commandments." (*Stay in touch with Him.*) Obedience to God's Word is necessary for the qualities of Jesus to be evidenced in our lives. It isn't enough to simply believe in Him. Read John 14:15. When we obey Jesus' commandments, our habits—the fruit in our bowl—will show that we belong to Him.

How do we live like Jesus? Decide to follow Him and accept the help He offers.

REACT

1. In addition to the ways mentioned above, how else can we maintain a meaningful relationship with Jesus?
2. Do you think that people see the fruit of the Spirit demonstrated in your life?
3. Keeping the commandments are important/not important. What do you think, and why?

John 15:1–10

Opinion
The Source

I had traveled from England to West Africa and was now standing beneath a tree at Aburi Botanical Gardens in Ghana. Above me were large green grapefruits hanging from the branches, and beside them were what I thought to be smaller orange grapefruits. I asked our guide why those grapefruits were different in color and size. He replied, “Oh, those are oranges!”

This was the first time I had seen one fruit tree bearing two types of fruit. I enquired how this could be. I was told that by grafting two varying species of the same type of fruit onto one rootstock, such a tree could be produced.

Christ uses the image of bearing fruit to encourage us to abide in Him. Read John 15:5. Like the orange and grapefruit, we cannot bear any fruit unless we are “grafted” into Christ’s rootstock.

Christ uses the image of bearing fruit to encourage us to abide in Him.

Although the tree I saw bore two different fruits from the same family, all the fruit received its nutrition from one rootstock. Similarly, the “food” to grow a variety of spiritual fruits comes from one Source—the power of the Holy Spirit. During the growth of the tree, branches that do not bear fruit are cut off so that new branches can be grafted to the tree. Read Romans 11:1–24.

The ability of a tree to produce fruit is influenced by the health of the tree roots, its environment, its fruiting habits, and the cultural practices of the gardener.* These factors cannot be controlled by the branches (you and I) of the tree, but rather are controlled by the Gardener (God). Bearing good fruit involves surrendering to God. We are to remain in Christ, thus glorifying God and becoming disciples strengthened by His power. Read Paul’s proclamation in Philippians 4:13. This verse gives us confidence in the Source of our spiritual nutrition. The fruit that we bear is testimony to our full surrender to Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to change our lives.

REACT

1. How does one become “grafted” to Christ?
2. In what ways does your life indicate that you are bearing fruit?

*Esteban Herrera and Darrell Sullivan, *Why Fruit Trees Fail to Bear: Guide H-308* (Las Cruces, N. Mex.: College of Agriculture and Home Economics, New Mexico State University, 1994).

Exploration
*What Kind of Branch
Are You?*

Matt. 7:20;
John 15:1–16

CONCLUDE

Christ says in John 15:5 that He is the Vine and His followers are the branches. If they stay connected to Him, they will be able to produce good fruit. Matthew 7:20 says that “by their fruit you will recognize them” (NIV). True followers of Christ (those who remain connected) will be known to all around them by their actions, their words, and their good deeds. They will not have to advertise, “I am a follower of Christ! Look at me!” Their connection to the Vine will be evident to anyone who comes in contact with them through simple, daily activities.

CONSIDER

- Creating a poster or picture of a bowl of fruit. On each piece of fruit in the bowl, write an attribute that you possess by which others will identify your connection to Jesus.
- Analyzing your own personal strengths and weaknesses when it comes to your “fruit.” Focus on your areas of weakness and devise a plan to strengthen those areas.
- Paraphrasing John 15:1–16 for a children’s Sabbath School class. Create a small activity or craft for them to take home to reinforce the lesson.
- Composing a short song to help you remember the main idea in either Matthew 7:20 or John 15:1–16. Teach the song to your Sabbath School class or to a group of children.
- Interviewing several friends about people whose “fruits” have blessed their lives. Reflect on how you might be able to apply those fruits to your life.
- Observing how different types of trees, plants, and bushes produce fruit. Notice what kind of trees produce good fruit and what kind of trees produce bad fruit.

CONNECT

The Sanctified Life, chap. 10, “Christian Character.”

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Love

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NKJV).



The town of Gilgil, in the Rift Valley of Kenya, was the home of British colonials. It is north of Nairobi and has a population of about nineteen thousand people. Economic activity in Gilgil consists mainly of medium-level business enterprises and of mining diatomite, “a powdery, non-metallic mineral composed of the fossilized skeletal remains of microscopic single-celled aquatic plants called diatoms.”¹ Agriculture contributes little to the local economy, as most of the land in this part of Kenya is arid and infertile.

The letters and the order in which they appear in the name *Gilgil* can be thought of as an anagram.

Gilgil is further known for the following tragic story: “Alice de Janzé (1899–1941), also known as Alice de Trafford, was an American heiress who spent years in Kenya as a member of the Happy Valley set of colonials. She was connected with numerous scandals, including her attempted murder of her lover in 1927, as well as the 1941 murder of Josslyn Hay, the Earl of Erroll in Kenya. Her tempestuous life was marked by promiscuity, drug abuse, and several suicide attempts. She died of a self-inflicted gunshot in 1941.”²

Ironically, the letters and the order in which they appear in the name *Gilgil* can be thought of as an anagram for the following: God Is Love, God Is Love. This week, we are studying love as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which we are to develop as we grow in Christ. We shall see, from the subsequent subtopics of our lesson, that this love is central to our Christian character as we grapple with sin. The subtopics for this week’s lesson show us that Godlike love is an essential element of the Holy Spirit’s fruit. Given that the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity (John 4:24), God is, therefore, also love. To learn how you can develop the fruit of love, be sure to read each daily article of this week’s lesson.

1. IMA-Europe, “What Is Diatomite?” Wikipedia, <http://www.ima-eu.org/fileadmin/downloads/minerals/Diatomitefactsheet.pdf> (accessed November 12, 2008).

2. IMA-Europe, “Alice de Janzé.” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_de_Janze (accessed November 12, 2008).

Gal. 5:13

Evidence
A Fruit of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Godhead, is our Teacher, Instructor, and Comforter. God requires that we, as His children, live an honorable life free from sin. Such a life gives Him glory. To help us live this life, He gives us the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enables the believer to develop many excellent qualities. One of these is godly love. Where there is this type of love, there is peace, tranquility, and joy. If love had not been part of the fruit of the Spirit, the other fruit would not exist, for godly love encompasses all the other fruit.

Paul warns that a lack of godly love can make us behave like wild animals.

Paul spread the gospel during his ministry to the Galatians, and he worked hard to explain to them the fruit of the Spirit. Galatia was a Roman province in Asia with non-Jewish inhabitants. They were uncertain whether or not to follow Christ. Many of them believed that observing the law of Moses was the key to becoming a Christian. However, Paul refuted that belief and convinced them that only faith, accompanied by good works, could make one a true Christian.

In today's society, we can witness a number of cases in which the lack of godly love has led to horrible destruction. Take, for example, Rwanda in the mid-1990s, Iraq in the early 1990s and again in the first part of the twenty-first century, and even my home country of Kenya in 2008. The absence of godly love leads to hatred, destruction, and death—all of which Satan delights in.

In Galatians 5:15, Paul warns that a lack of godly love can make us behave like wild animals, the results of which he enumerates in Galatians 5:19–21. However, in verses 22–24, he outlines the Spirit-grown qualities that are the complete opposite of the qualities that sin develops.

Let us remember that Paul was not addressing the Galatians alone. He was laying a strong foundation for true Christians for generations to come. Therefore, we, too, are responsible for exercising godly love. Such love is the first step in developing a Christlike character.

REACT

In what ways do you serve as an agent of godly love in your school, church, community, and country?

Logos
Faces of Love

Deut. 6:5;
Matt. 5:43–48; 7:12; 22:35–40;
Luke 10:25–37;
1 Cor. 13:4–8

Today, people think that love means many different things. We love certain foods. We love certain sports. We love a certain color or favorite piece of clothing. However, the Bible defines love quite differently.

We need the love of God and the support of friends and family in order to excel.

Love for the Creator (Deut. 6:5)

During His earthly ministry, Christ had many encounters with the Pharisees, who were always looking for ways to trap Him. One day, they asked Him which was the greatest commandment. Rather than argue with them, He referred them to the law that was given to their ancestors when Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy. Review Deuteronomy 6:5. This was the voice of Christ, through Moses, to the Pharisees. The Pharisees' failure to heed the voice of God through His messengers caused them to grow in hatred toward Christ. Love for our Creator must engulf our minds and hearts, lest we become like the Pharisees who considered themselves teachers of the law, but who failed to acknowledge the greatest of all laws.

What does it take to love God with all our hearts and minds? "Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god."¹

Our love for God should be consistent with the principles provided in the Decalogue. Read how 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 outlines this love. The Pharisees took none of this into account. Even now people are more concerned with their personal interpretations of love. They neglect the true love due their Creator, which involves keeping His commandments. Read John 14:15.

Love for Your Neighbor (Matt. 22:39; Luke 10:25–37)

The Ten Commandments are in complete harmony with one another. Taken together, they highlight the importance of the relationship between humans and God, as well as the relationship between humans. The commandments urge us to love God and our fellow humans. Read Leviticus 19:18. These were the same words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees when He declared the greatest of the commandments—love for God and love for humans. Human coexistence

implies interdependence. We cannot succeed without one another. We need the love of God and the support of friends and family in order to excel. The story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) asks an important question: Who is my neighbor? Christ told this story to illustrate that we should help people in need, and that it doesn't matter if such people do not belong to our family, school, church, or town.

Love for Your Enemies (Matt. 5:43-48; 7:12)

In order to attain the perfection characterized by our Father in heaven, we need to adopt His point of view. At the foot of the cross, the ground is level for everybody. There, all have equal opportunity. Read Matthew 7:12. This law urges each of us to develop godly love, which "does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6, NIV).

When we show love to those who hate us, we go beyond the boundaries of selfish love to love the way God loves. "In the story of the good Samaritan, Jesus gave a picture of Himself and His mission. Man had been deceived, bruised, robbed, and ruined by Satan, and left to perish; but the Saviour had compassion on our helpless condition. He left His glory, to come to our rescue. He found us ready to die, and He undertook our case. He healed our wounds. He covered us with His robe of righteousness. He opened to us a refuge of safety, and made complete provision for us at His own charges. He died to redeem us. Pointing to His own example, He says to His followers, 'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' John 15:17; 13:34."²

REACT

1. Of the three facets of love discussed above, which one have you failed to observe?
2. Whom do you consider your enemy? What can you do to show that person godly love?
3. Examine yourself to discover what takes away your love for God. What can you do to rid yourself of these things?
4. When did you last act like the good Samaritan? What prompted you to do so? Be prepared to share your story in your Sabbath School class.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 503, 504.

“Man’s destiny will be determined by his obedience to the whole law. Supreme love to God and impartial love to man are the principles to be wrought out in the life.”¹

Such love requires that we recognize the magnificence of our Creator and walk according to His divine laws. Impartial love implies selfless service to our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as to our enemies. Christ told a story to illustrate this point.

“He persuaded himself that the case was no concern of his.”

“In journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho, the traveler had to pass through a portion of the wilderness of Judea. The road led down a wild, rocky ravine, which was infested by robbers, and was often the scene of violence. It was here that the traveler was attacked, stripped of all that was valuable, wounded and bruised, and left half dead by the wayside. As he lay thus, the priest came that way; but he merely glanced toward the wounded man. Then the Levite appeared. Curious to know what had happened, he stopped and looked at the sufferer. He was convicted of what he ought to do; but it was not an agreeable duty. He wished that he had not come that way, so that he need not have seen the wounded man. He persuaded himself that the case was no concern of his.”²

The most important aspect of this story is the lack of concern shown to the sufferer by the Levite and the priest. “Both these men were in sacred office, and professed to expound the Scriptures. They were of the class specially chosen to be representatives of God to the people. They were to ‘have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way’ (Heb. 5:2), that they might lead men to understand God’s great love toward humanity.”³

In our time, we are called to practice the type of love as required by the Spirit of God. The Levite and the priest heard Jesus teaching about love, but they did not practice what He taught. Similarly, we often have misinterpreted the word *love*. However, “the love of God in the heart is the only spring of love toward our neighbor. . . . ‘If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.’”⁴

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 498.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 499.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 499, 500.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 505.

1 John 4:18

How-to What's Love Got to Do With It?

I remember well the day someone brought us word that our mother, who was traveling, had died. This unexpected news was a bitter pill to swallow as we wondered how we could ever face the world without her. Hours later, we learned that the news was based on mistaken identity. However, it became difficult for us to erase the feelings and thoughts which had developed in our minds as a result of this incident. We sought counseling to help us return to a normal state of mind. All of this because of the love that exists between our mother and us!

When we grow in godly love, our words will encourage others.

But what about godly love, the fruit of the Spirit? As Christians, we should know what constitutes this love. Following are some of the areas in which we will grow as we begin to understand and experience firsthand this fruit of the Spirit.

Actions (1 John 3:18). Godly love transforms our actions from worldly behavior to a more Spirit-led way of conducting life—with hope, faith, and patience that never fail (1 Cor. 13:7). Godly love will inspire us to love even our enemies the way Jesus loved His enemies, and it will urge us on to good works for those in need.

Words (Eph. 4:29). Words can both destroy and build. When we grow in godly love, our words will encourage others and lift them to God.

Relationships (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that growing spiritual fruit entails a change of being, a transformation of lifestyle, whereby old things are phased out as new things take over (2 Cor. 5:17). Therefore, the love of the Spirit helps us to walk away from harmful relationships and to develop healthy relationships with people who will help us draw closer to Christ.

REACT

1. In what areas of life do you need to have more godly love?
2. How can genuine love help us with daily life activities such as dating, studies, and household budgets?

Opinion
*Love Beyond the
Borders*

1 Tim. 1:5

God has not changed the Ten Commandments. They remain unchanged from the time He gave them to the Israelites. They stand immutable against the forces of evil. In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes that “the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (NIV). Here the word *commandment* refers to the commission Paul gave to Timothy in verse 3. However, we can say that the goal of the Ten Commandments is also love—love for God (the first four commandments) and love for others (the last six commandments). The commandments affect us on a personal level, calling on each of us to exercise love from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith. Most of us know that it is always easy to love those who are within the circle of our influence. These may be family members, relatives, and friends. However, most people also know that extending godly love to our enemies is quite difficult.

The commandments affect us on a personal level.

The Bible teaches that if we want to truly witness for Christ, we should “not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:9, NIV). Loving one’s enemy is an exercise that requires a lot of sacrifice; but with God’s help we can do so. We want to follow in the footsteps of Christ, who was our Pioneer in this exercise.

“The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can. Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man; and whoever turns men away from Christ is turning them away from the source of true development.”*

Our main goal as Christians is to exercise our faith in Christ with a sincere heart, so that we can be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22). The only way to love God is according to His Word. When we extend godly love to family, friends, neighbors, and even our enemies, we can do so only in ways that are detailed in Scripture. May God help us all.

REACT

1. Can you love your enemies without forgiving them? Explain your answer.
2. If you were to choose between God, yourself, family, friends, neighbors, or enemies, whom would you love first, and why?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

Rom. 13:10

Exploration

*All You Need Is Love***CONCLUDE**

“All you need is love” are the words to a well-known Beatles’ song; and it’s true, love is all you need. However, it’s often quite hard for us to accept that truth, because we understand that love is not natural to our sinful human nature. The apostle Paul wrote that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10, NIV). Thus, when you love, you are fulfilling (obeying) the law. We express our love for God by how we express our love for our neighbors, our enemies, our friends, and our family.

CONSIDER

- Memorizing 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.
- Praying 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 for seven days and journaling changes you see in your relationships with others as a result.
- Reading some of Pablo Neruda’s *100 Love Sonnets* and writing a paragraph on his definition of love.
- Joining Prints of Hope, a service agency that sponsors a project called “Dress a Child.” Check out their Web site at <http://www.dejandohuellas.org>.
- Volunteering in an AIDS out-patient clinic for at least a month.
- Teaching English to immigrants in your community. Your local public library most likely will have information on how to get started.

CONNECT

Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash the Power of Authentic Life in Christ* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2006); Mother Teresa, *No Greater Love* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2002); Dick Tibbits, *Forgive to Live* and the *Forgive to Live Workbook* (Orlando, Fla.: Florida Hospital Publishing, 2009).

lesson three
JANUARY 9-16

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Joy

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full”

(John 15:11, NKJV).



Gal. 5:22

Introduction

*The Source of Joy:
A Parable*

Every day, two friends toiled from morning to dusk. Most of the time tired to their very marrow, they managed to earn enough to keep roofs over their heads and bread and stew in their stomachs.

The clink of coins being counted . . . took over their days.

Though life was a challenge, they enjoyed the sun as it cast its rays over the fields. They enjoyed both rain and sun, because both nourished the earth. Bird-song filled their ears, and each season brought unique blessings. During spring, flowers began blossoming, and grass and trees gradually greened. Summer saw the swelling of a variety of fruit trees and vegetables drawing near maturity. Harvest dominated fall and faded into quietude as the growing season wound down. Though winter chilled them, it brought a sense of rest and renewal. Like the quiet before the dawn, winter made the advent of spring even more amazing.

One evening, while returning from their labors, they found a bag of treasure under a bush. After notifying authorities, they waited two months for the treasure to be claimed, then another month just to be sure. When no one stepped forward, the authorities awarded the treasure to the two friends. They praised God and threw a party for the community. Needless to say, they gave notice that they no longer had to work. Life was good!

As time passed, the novelty of providing every want of their families wore off. Daily life returned to a different pattern than before, but a pattern nevertheless. They still welcomed each season with its special highlights. They returned tithes and continued to praise God at church. The clink of coins being counted, however, took over their days. Mind you, it wasn't hard labor. It was just that the pleasure had faded into routine.

Happiness bloomed again, however, when they began to make surprise gifts to others. It was great fun leaving a bag of groceries on a widow's front step or making a mortgage payment for someone about to foreclose. But they noticed an increase in the number of causes needing "extra help." Gradually, happiness seeped away again.

One week, the Scripture lesson at church was Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (NIV). Suddenly, their perspective shifted. Joy based in the core of their souls could not be earned or attained by their efforts. Real joy was part of the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives—evidence of Christ's transforming love.

As you study this week's lesson, ask yourself how real joy can transform your life.

Our God Loves a Party

Psalm 139;
Luke 15:4–24;
John 15:10, 11;
Heb. 11:16

Luke 15 contains three familiar stories: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and two lost sons. We can identify with all three because, at one time or another, we all have felt lost. In this chapter, Jesus describes people as lost, not as sinners. The emphasis is on lostness, not actions. He looks at the person, not the deed.

Taking a Closer Look

How is each protagonist different? The straying sheep wandered off. In search of greener grass, it lost track of the flock. Perhaps it slipped and got stuck in a thorny brush. When it cried for help, it was surprised to find itself alone. As daylight waned, wild beasts began to roam.

Why does God spend so much time celebrating the retrieval of the lost?

In the second story, the coin is lost through no fault of its own. It didn't run off to a corner and hide under a basket or some other household object. The person who was supposed to protect it handled it in a careless manner or lost it accidentally. Regardless of why, its guardian failed.

The third story is about two lost sons—one who deliberately defied culture and family and sought his independence in a far country, and one who strayed in attitude while staying home.

All three stories are about separation—from the shepherd and comforter, from the guardian, and from the father. They also reflect loneliness—of the shepherd with ninety-nine sheep, of the guardian of nine coins, and of the father who waited and watched while beloved sons struggled to work out relationships.

Action is a key theme. In each story, the lost are looked for. The shepherd and guardian actively sought the lost, while the father eagerly watched for his son to return. They cared about the lost and experienced a profound void that could not be filled until the lost were found.

The Ending

Each story concludes with a party. Luke 15 paints a picture of joy. "We do not easily think of God as joyous, and consequently our theology is stiff, stilted, and stuffy. Yet the picture Jesus gives us in all three stories is of a God who

loves a party! It is Jesus who throws the parties for the sinners and the rejects. It is God who initiates the festivities. More space is given in the text for joy, the rejoicing, and the partying than for any of the other three concepts [being lost, being sought, and being found]. How could it be otherwise with such untiring love? Is not the second fruit of the Spirit, joy, the result of love?"¹

Why does God spend so much time celebrating the retrieval of the lost? "It is the owner of the sheep, the owner of the coin, and the waiting father who suffer most. It is God who suffers most when we are lost, but it is also God who rejoices most when the lost is found. . . . God loves a party!"²

How many times have we read Luke 15 and missed this insight? I would venture to say that the majority, if not nearly all, of the words written about Luke 15 reflect the narcissistic perspective of humankind. Very few have thought about how God must feel about His sons and daughters wandering in a wilderness of a country far, far removed from the Garden of Eden, and reduced to consuming what the pigs refuse to eat. God provided abundance. We choose dregs. How His heart must ache! He so longs to give us the gift of joy, and we stubbornly insist like a two-year-old that we want it our way!

C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) wrote about his journey from atheism to Christianity. He remembers the strong but fleeting feeling of joy when he was a boy and his brother showed him a replication of a garden in a tin box. There were other times when he experienced longing for something he could not name. Looking back, he was convinced that God was using these "arrows of joy [that] had been shot at me ever since childhood" to pierce his self-absorption, to inspire him to look beyond the immediate to see the source of eternal joy—God.

His conversion took place over a period of years. Despite his mixed feelings, joy dominated. "In a sense the central story of my life is about nothing else . . . it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure."³

REACT

1. How do we become worthy to receive the fruit of the Holy Spirit?
2. If it's God's party, why are we constantly grumbling about the details, such as who is invited and whether they worthy?
3. How have "arrows of joy" in your life pointed to God, the Source of joy?

1. Caleb Rosado, *What Is God Like?* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1988), p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

3. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1955), pp. 214–219.

“Joy Revealed in Our Lives”

Gal. 5:22, 23

“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. It is ‘long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ [Galatians 5:22, 23.]”¹

“Is it possible to have joy in obeying Christ?”

“It was the joy of Christ in His humiliation and pain that His disciples should be glorified with Him. They are fruit of His self-sacrifice. The outworking in them of His own character and spirit is His reward, and will be His joy throughout eternity. This joy they share with Him as the fruit of their labor and sacrifice is seen in other hearts and lives.”²

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These graces will be seen in every stone that helps to compose the temple of God. All the stones are not of the same dimension or shape, but every stone has its place in the temple.”³

“Working with unselfish heart, ennobled by being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, sharing His sympathies, they help to swell the tide of His joy, and bring honor and praise to His exalted name.”⁴

“‘And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.’ Is it possible to have joy in obeying Christ? It is the only real joy that any soul can have. You may have what you call ‘a good time,’ and laugh and joke; but your joy will be only a foolish gratification of a mind that is not well balanced by the Spirit of God.”⁵

REACT

1. Above we read, that “all the stones are not of the same dimension or shape, but every stone has its place in the temple.” How is this concept similar to the spiritual gifts as described in Romans 12:6? How is it different?

2. How do you know that you are filled with Christ’s joy and not simply deriving pleasure from fellowship with other Christians?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 287.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 624.

3. *Reflecting Christ*, p. 273.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 306.

5. *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 3, 1895.

Isa. 35:1, 2, 10

Evidence

"Joy of the Redeemed"

Often titled "Joy of the Redeemed," Isaiah 35 begins, "The desert and the parched land will be glad; / the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. / Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; / it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy" (NIV).

Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress when approached by an an-

Joy is larger than a person's experience. It can't be arranged or coerced.

gel (Judg. 6:11). Threshing usually was done on a high place that had its dirt packed hard, but because of Midianites raiding the area, Gideon was trying to hide his work. Turn to Ruth 2 for an account of harvesting practices. Note that the harvesters left wheat around the edges of the fields so that poor people could glean enough to feed themselves.

With most of our food produced by large agribusinesses, we're out of touch with what the production of food involves. We know the concepts in general, but most of us don't grow our own food or fear real hunger.

During Bible times, hard physical labor was required to produce food—whether it was hunting or working the fields. Every person spent much of every day scratching out sustenance. Herds were moved seasonally around the area between the Judean foothills to the north and the desert below the Dead Sea, with lurking wild animals and harsh climatic conditions. Survival was a daily struggle.

However, in verses three and four of Isaiah 35, strength is restored to feeble hands. Fearful hearts are reassured, " 'Be strong, do not fear; / your God will come, / he will come with vengeance; / with divine retribution / he will come to save you' " (verse 4, NIV).

In verse six, we read about concrete reasons for joy: "Water will gush forth in the wilderness / and streams in the desert" (NIV). By the end of the chapter, imperfect lives are transformed, "They will enter Zion with singing; / everlasting joy will crown their heads" (verse 10, NIV).

Clearly, joy is larger than a person's experience. It can't be arranged or coerced, for it is God who crowns us with joy.

REACT

1. How will a crown of joy make your life different?
2. Is it hard to accept God's deep and constant joy? Justify your answer.

How-to Experiencing Joy

John 14:14–17; 17:13;
Acts 2:1–4, 46;
1 John 1:3, 4

Joy is one component of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is evidence of the Holy Spirit in us. How do we become filled with it?

First John 1:3, 4 provides a good thesis statement. “We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete” (NLT).

So how can our joy be complete?

You get a personal tutor in this class known as Life 101.

First, recognize that without Jesus we have nothing (John 6:63). It is He who gives you eternal life because He paid the penalty for your sins. No matter what you do, you can never measure up or meet all the requirements. Zip. Zero. Nada.

Second, ask in His name (John 14:14). Leave the *I* attitude behind you. This seems counterintuitive, because our culture is built on personal achievement. But you cannot complete this assignment on your own, no matter how hard you try.

Third, obey His commandments (John 14:15). This means you have to study, study, study. Daily review the syllabus known as the Bible, especially focusing on the life of Jesus. As a result, He will ask God the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, the Counselor who will lead you into all truth (John 14:16, 17). You get a personal tutor in this class known as Life 101. By the way, Jesus tells us these things so we can be filled with His joy (John 17:13).

Fourth, study with other Christians (Heb. 10:25). You have to meet regularly if you are to complete this assignment—a group project demonstrating friendship with God (Acts 2:1–4, 46; Rom. 5:10). It is intense work. It leaves no time for petty bickering or one-upmanship. All for one, one for all—Go Team!

REACT

1. Compare and contrast the world's expectations of your behavior with God's expectations for you. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

2. How do you handle a situation in which some people in your Bible study group are not demonstrating Christian attributes or have a different interpretation of a biblical passage?

3. How can you cultivate better team spirit in the church?

John 15:11, 16

Opinion
No Joy for You!

Colleges and graduate schools are governed by rigid structures. Each syllabus contains course requirements, parameters for all assignments, required textbooks, grading details, etc. Such structure is all encompassing, involving every action of both professor and student. Its goal is learning that is measured through various forms of testing. Not surprisingly, students are concerned about how they measure up—not just in the academic setting but in the wider world. Their feelings dance up and down. If they get a good grade, they're happy. If they're late with an assignment, they panic. And so it goes, semester after semester.

Life is full of random events, anxiety-filled moments.

A classic *Seinfeld* episode featured a popular take-out restaurant offering soup. With the line of waiting people stretched out the door, they began to notice that not all customers emerged with soup containers. Those nearing the counter saw that the chef-owner would order some people out the door, refusing to allow them to buy soup. The Soup Nazi (as the chef was known) would bellow, "No soup for you!" and refuse to serve a customer for random reasons. Talk about anxiety!

Life is full of random events, anxiety-filled moments. They snatch away our happiness, often without warning. Think of the attacks on Mumbai, India's financial center; the bombing of London's subway system; and 9/11 in the United States. Picture cataclysmic natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Or what about the collapse of the subprime mortgage market that led to the nearly fatal demise of banks, investment houses, and stock markets, which, in turn, caused many people to lose their jobs. The destabilization has rippled throughout the world, affecting nations large and small. No joy for you! But wait! Read the good news in John 15:11, 16.

This is good news indeed. Unlike the negative messages of this world, God promises to share His joy with us. An all-powerful, all-knowing God casts a safety net around us. No matter what collapses, we can lean on Him who understands us. Joy is not random.

REACT

1. Think about a time when it felt like someone was shouting, "No joy for you!" How did you feel?
2. What is the difference between lifestyle and transformation by the Spirit?

Exploration
*A Gift That Surprises
the Giver*

Luke 15:4–24;
John 15:10–16

CONCLUDE

Joy is not something we can produce under our own willpower. In the stories of the lost sheep, coin, and sons, Jesus explained that God demonstrates joy when a lost soul returns to Him. Reciprocated love produces joy. In John 15, Jesus explained that love originates from God. We love Him because He first loved us. In the same way, living in His love transforms us so that we love others unselfishly. The act of loving others brings everlasting joy. Like the older brother, we can join God's party only when we enjoy the company of His children.

CONSIDER

- Reflecting on the last time you felt true joy. Write a journal entry examining the feeling and the source of true joy. Does the remembering bring back the joy?
- Making a list of ways you can pass on your joy this week. Choose one item from your list and act on it. How did acting on your joy make you feel?
- Practicing something you enjoy doing. Then share that talent with someone else this week.
- Asking someone who does something better than you do to share that talent with you. Let that person know that you value him or her.
- Enjoying God's nature this week, responding to His creation by creating a poem, song, music, painting, or photograph.
- Finding a photo in your collection or a magazine that personifies joy for you. Or find a song that gives you joy. Bring the photo or song to your Sabbath School class to share with others.

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, "That Your Joy Might Be Full," *The Signs of the Times*, August 11, 1909.

Carolyn Arends, "Surprised By Joy" from the album *This Much I Understand*.

Brennan Manning, "A Touch of Folly," in *The Ragamuffin Gospel: Embracing the Unconditional Love of God* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 2005); Henri Nouwen, *Turn My Mourning Into Dancing: Finding Hope in Hard Times* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Peace

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27, NKJV).



Introduction
*What Jesus Meant by
"My Peace"*

John 14:27

A heartrending story is told of a South African woman named Ellen Tipnar. One cannot count the many tragedies that occurred in her life. She lost her eyesight at a young age, when she had undergone an examination due to a slight pain in her eyes. The nurse put acid in her eyes instead of eye drops. After a few days, one of her legs was cut off due to some excruciating pain. And later, she contracted leprosy. While she was living in a center for people with leprosy, her son died of polio. Immediately after that, her beloved husband died of cancer.

Yet despite it all, no one had ever seen her sad.

By the time she was released from the center, she was so disfigured that nobody could recognize her. By the time she was fifty-five years old, she had undergone fifty-six major operations. What a discouraging life she had. Yet despite it all, no one had ever seen her sad. She never missed a chance to share the love of God and all the good things He had done for her.

The Bible talks of an innocent man called Jesus. "He was despised and rejected by others; / a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; / and as one from whom others hide their faces / he was despised, and we held him of no account" (Isa. 53:3, NRSV). Also read Isaiah 53:7. Only the worst criminals died the way Jesus did. He was powerful enough to pray to the Father for legions of angels to protect Him and know that these angels would come (Matt. 26:53) and within seconds dispose of His enemies. Instead, He submitted Himself to the will of God, thereby showing us, not just telling us, what real peace is all about.

The same Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27, NKJV). If we follow His example when trying situations come, we won't say, "Why me?" but rather, "Try me."

This week, as you study peace as a fruit of the Spirit, always think about how this peace can make a difference in your life.

Rom. 5:1–11

Evidence

Reconciliation and Peace

At the completion of Creation, God saw that everything was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). There was absolute peace everywhere. Humanity was in constant communion with God. But peace did not last. When the serpent struck, antagonism and alienation replaced peace (Isa. 59:2).

The work of returning us to the original relationship of peace with Himself was His top priority.

The God of peace, whom we worship, was neither caught by surprise nor unprepared. He already had established a plan from the foundation of the earth (Eph. 1:3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:17–20; Rev. 13:8). The work of returning us to the original relationship of peace with Himself was His top priority. So, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NKJV). In dying on the cross, Jesus not only redeemed us, but He also reconciled us with God.

God reconciled us to Himself. It therefore makes sense that He expects us to reconcile with one another. It is not possible for us to be reconciled only to God and still grow the fruit of peace when there is animosity between us and other people. Read John 4:11, 20, 21. Here is a powerful command of God. Hebrews 12:14 presents the concept clearly and directly, “Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (NRSV). When reconciliation exists between God and humans and between humans and humans, then the fruit of peace is manifested in our lives.

Jesus revealed another aspect of peace, which completes the description of the fruit of peace. Read John 14:27. Peace is from God. Peace is of God. Peace is a gift that God gives to us. Peace appears in our lives only when we are in the presence and in the holiness of God (Matt. 11:28).

REACT

1. Why does God always insist on the human component as a condition for spiritual relationships?
2. How durable is God’s peace? How effective is it?

Logos
*Peace That Protects and
Transforms*

Ps. 34:12–16;
Matt. 8:23–27;
11:28, 29;
Mark 4:35–41;
John 14:27;
Rom. 5:1–11; 12:9–21;
Col. 3:13–15;
Heb. 12:14

Our Lord is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), and His presence in our lives creates a state of spiritual tranquility. Many times, this presence helps us in difficult situations, and that is the main focus of our study this week.

**The peace of Christ is not a static virtue.
It is an active power.**

Calm Follows Storm (Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41)

Some experiences in life create fear in our minds. Take, for example, what happened to Jesus’ disciples as they were crossing the Sea of Galilee. When their boat was swamped by the waves, they were terrified they would drown. Recognizing the power of nature to destroy, they cried to Jesus, who created all that there is (Col. 1:16).

“Their cry arouses Jesus. As the lightning’s glare reveals Him, they see the peace of heaven in His face; they read in His glance self-forgetful, tender love, and, their hearts turning to Him, cry, ‘Lord, save us: we perish.’”¹ Jesus was as calm as ever, and He commanded the sea to be still. The Lord, who called His disciples to go with Him in the boat, also calls us to be with Him; and He accepts His responsibility to take us safely to the other shore. So don’t lose faith like the disciples did, because He can calm any storm we may encounter (Ps. 107:29). Knowing that He will safely guide us to a place of rest gives us peace (Ps. 107:30).

Rest for the Burdened (Matt. 11:28, 29)

Jesus extends an invitation to all of us to go to Him so that we can receive rest. In Matthew 11:28, 29, Christ is not talking about physical labor, but rather about rest for the soul and mind.² This invitation had a special effect on those who heard Him, because the Israelite religion had degenerated into a meaningless round of effort to keep the Pharisees’ rules and regulations in an attempt to gain salvation by works.³

Sin is our heaviest burden, and only the yoke that Christ offers us can lighten the load. By “my yoke,” Christ meant His way of life to which we are to submit. His way of life is summarized in God’s law.⁴ When through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we keep God’s law, we will find rest for our souls and peace of mind from our burdens.

Having Peace With God Through Jesus (Rom. 5:1–11)

Paul begins Romans 5 by affirming that “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1, NKJV). When we have such peace, there is nothing that stands between us and our relationship with God. We rest on God’s grace, which we have accessed through faith in Christ. This doesn’t mean that our problems or suffering will come to a halt. It does mean that even though we will experience difficulties, we can find peace in the fact that Jesus remains by our side. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. What love! When we accept that love, we are justified by His blood and saved from eternal death. We are reconciled to God. Then we can confidently rejoice because we have peace with Him through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:9–11).

Peace With Others (Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:9–21; Ps. 34:12–16)

Having peace with God through Jesus Christ is reflected in our relationship with others. Thus, Paul admonishes us to “pursue peace with everyone” (Heb. 12:14, NRSV). When we pursue peace under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our love will be without hypocrisy; we will give preference to one another, we will readily serve the Lord, and we will meet the needs of others (Rom. 12:9–13).

Once we’re reconciled with God, it seems that we have more trials; and in our human weakness, we may tend to curse those who cause us problems. However, Paul admonishes us to bless those who persecute us (Rom. 12:14). We also need to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (verse 15). We are to have regard for good things (verse 17); and more important, we are to live peaceably with all people by seeking, actually seeking, peace (Rom. 12:14–17, 21; Ps. 34:14).

The Peace of Christ (Col. 3:13–15; John 14:27)

The peace of Christ is not a static virtue. It is an active power. It helps us to live in tranquility amid the hardest situations of life. When we accept the peace of Christ, He becomes the Captain of our lives, who can guide us to the safe shores of heaven.⁵

REACT

1. Share a tumultuous experience that you overcame with the peace of Christ.
2. What efforts are you making to have peace with God and those around you?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 334.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 389.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 213.

From Pieces to Perfect Peace

Matt 11:28, 29

Whether we know it or not, the whole world is weary and burdened. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden alone, it would crush us. However, there is a Great Prince who is willing to take the load from our weary shoulders.

“Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare.”

“Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare. . . . It is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care. . . . He does not propose to take His people out of the world of sin and evil, but He points us to a never-failing refuge. He invites the weary and care-laden. . . . We may find rest and peace in God, casting all our care upon Him; for He careth for us.”¹ “It is His purpose to impart peace and rest to all who come to Him for the bread of life.”² “The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife.”³

“Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.’ Isa. 26:3. Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory.”⁴

REACT

1. What makes a fruit-bearing Christian? Why is it that we often yield unholy fruit?

2. Compare the symbols of the cross and the yoke. Why is it true that we cannot follow Christ without wearing His yoke and lifting the cross?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 294.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

3. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 28.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

Matt. 11:28, 29;
Heb. 12:14;
James 2:14–26

How-to
A Peaceful Christian Life

It's not easy to lead a peaceful life on one's own. However, by clinging to the Fountain of peace, a believer can achieve perfect peace. The following steps may help you:

If you were walking alone with heavy baggage and someone offered to help, how happy and relieved you would be.

Act on faith. A dynamic faith is essential for us to face the problems of life. When Jesus called His disciples to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they faithfully set upon the journey. But when the fury of nature tested them, they failed to act on faith. Jesus, however, came to their rescue, but not without asking them, “‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’” (Matt. 8:26, NIV). This question teaches us that in difficult situations, we don't have to lose faith. Instead, we need to truly act on faith. Read James 2:14–26. Here we learn that faith without works is dead (verse 26). Therefore, for a peaceful life, act on your faith every moment.

Trust the Burden Bearer. If you were walking alone with heavy baggage and someone offered to help, how happy and relieved you would be. It's the same in our lives as Christians. We're carrying heavy baggage—the burden of sin. Jesus, however, offers to carry the entire load Himself (Matt. 11:28, 29). His yoke refers to His way of life.* And His way of life was to subject His will to His Father's will.

Practice peace. Practicing the peace we receive from Jesus is a lifelong process. That's why the apostle Paul tells us to “pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, NRSV). In order for us to have a peaceful life, we need to practice peace with our fellow beings through our words and our actions.

* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 389.

No Christ, No Peace

Col. 3:13–15

There is no peace in the world without Christ. People worry, wait, doubt, and long for things they covet. They want. They need. They demand. Without direction from God, they allow to take root in themselves false needs and hopes that are outside of the will of God. Then they complain to Him and doubt Him when their self-centered prayers go unanswered. The result is a lack of peace. To solve this problem, people often try to create a false peace with alcohol, drugs, sex, or other addictions. Sometimes, they deny their sins and push away the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They no longer feel God's correcting touch in their hearts. So they are left to their own ways.

Can you imagine God being anxious?

True peace can only be found in doing the will of God. True peace is a gift from God found only through Christ. When God lives in you, true peace will always be yours. With such a wonderful Friend ever thinking of us, ever caring for us, there can never be any need to worry. The Bible says that God is a "God of peace" (Heb. 13:20). Nothing ever disturbs Him. No earthborn storms invade the holy calm of His presence. He is always at peace. With perfect vision, He sees the end from the beginning. Can you imagine God being anxious? Impossible! There is no problem for which He does not have a solution. "There is nothing too hard" for the Lord (Jer. 32:17). The Son of God is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7, NIV). Such peace is one of the rich gifts of His love. All of us may have it if we seek Him and practice it.

REACT

1. God is always at peace. With perfect vision, He sees the end from the beginning. But world peace is lacking in places where Christians are being persecuted. Do you still think that peace, as a fruit of the Spirit, can prevail in such places? Be able to explain your answer.

2. What could you do as an individual or as a family when you have a situation at home where there is no peace?

Phil. 4:7

Exploration

A Peace That Passes Understanding

CONCLUDE

As the world encourages us to seek continual excitement, Jesus invites us to come apart and enjoy His peace. Peace, like the other fruit of the Spirit, is possible only when we are being led by the Holy Spirit. Peace is not dependent on our surroundings or circumstances, but on our willingness to give God control over every aspect of our lives.

CONSIDER

- Drawing or sculpting a symbol that best represents the idea of peace.
- Photographing scenes that illustrate the concept of peace.
- Researching the effects of stress—a lack of peace—on the body.
- Looking through the Joy and Peace section of *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* and choosing one of the hymns that focuses on peace. Sing or repeat the words of the song.
- Sharing with a friend or coworker how God has given you peace for these unsettling times.
- Thinking back to a time when you felt no peace in your life. Analyze why peace was absent. Then consider a time when you felt total peace. What can you do to live a more peaceful life in the coming week?
- Spending at least 30 minutes in nature. While you are there, identify what it is about being out in God's second book that diffuses stress and increases a sense of peace and well-being.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, p. 49.

Luis Palau, "A Priceless Gift That Costs Us Nothing," in *High Definition Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2006); A.W. Tozer, "Let's Cultivate Simplicity and Solitude," in *The Best of A. W. Tozer* (Camp Hill, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1981).

lesson five
JANUARY 23-30

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Patience

*“For you have need of endurance [patience], so that after
you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise”*

(Heb. 10:36, NKJV).



Exod. 34:6;
Isa. 40:31;
Hab. 2:3;
1 Cor. 13:4;
Heb. 12:1, 2;
Rev. 14:12

Introduction

Patience! Patience, I Say!

“I want it—and I want it now!” “Hurry up. I can’t wait all day.” Even little children can be heard repeating these expressions. These are words we hear, think, or speak regularly as we go about our daily lives. Patience doesn’t seem to resonate with our generation, perhaps because we’ve grown up with instant cereal, microwaves, instant messaging, and cell phones. It isn’t that having quick access to things is wrong. It’s just that when we ask for something, we want it immediately, whether it comes from our parents, our teachers, or even from God. Because He has all the answers and resources, He should be able to get it to us really fast. In the same way He shut the lions’ mouths in the den where Daniel was thrown, or went into the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew boys, we want our answers just as quickly. But think of it. Do we really need our answers that fast, or were those quick answers appropriate for those circumstances?

It’s just that when we ask for something, we want it immediately.

Do we forget the following verses? “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isa. 40:31, NKJV). “Here is the patience of the saints” (Rev. 14:12, NKJV). “Love suffers long and is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4, NKJV). “Wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab. 2:3, NKJV). God taught Moses to take care of sheep because He knew that Moses would need that 40-year experience to handle the challenges he would face with the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings. He passed before Moses and proclaimed that He was “merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Exod. 34:6, NKJV). The Lord was often gracious and long-suffering to the children of Israel throughout their journey to Canaan. He also was patient with David through his spiritual “wanderings,” so that eventually this king of Israel was called “a man after [God’s] own heart” (Acts 13:22).

Christ showed us by His example that we can be like the Father. Let us also “run with endurance [patience] the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2, NKJV). As you study this week’s lesson, seek the answers to the following questions:

1. Why do we as Christians often lack patience?
2. What plan or determination do we need in order to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit?
3. Are we to assume that God’s patience and long-suffering will one day run out?

Logos
*Salvation Secured
Through Patience*

Exod. 34:6;
Mark 4:26–29;
Luke 21:16–19;
Rom. 5:3; 15:5;
2 Cor. 6:3–10;
Eph. 4:1, 2;
Col. 1:9–11;
James 1:2–4

Gaining Your Soul (Luke 21:19)

In speaking of the difficulties, trials, and tribulations that His disciples were to expect before His return to earth, Jesus declared, “ ‘You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls’ ” (Luke 21:16–19, NKJV).

The agent of digestion is endurance.

For the Christian, patience is not just a requisite virtue for bearable human relations; it is the difference between life and death. One’s eternal security is safeguarded by patience. Patience can be defined as the possession of, or the demonstration of a quiet, uncomplaining endurance under distress or annoyance. It is also equated with tolerance, tenderness, and forbearance in the face of provocations. It is the capability to tranquilly await results.¹

This gives us a comprehensive view of what it means to be patient. Christ extols this virtue as preserving the Christian experience. To endure hardships and setbacks and to maintain a confidence in God’s faithfulness requires patience. To exercise forbearance toward oppressors, abusers, and persecutors calls for patience, especially when you are the object of abuse or oppression. To remain calm and contented when it seems as if you have been left behind as a result of upholding God’s Word demands patience to remain confident and optimistic about the future. When you’ve been seriously wronged or cheated out of that which is justly yours, it takes patience to submit your rights into God’s hands and to trust that in due season He will restore what is yours. A godly life—the Christian life—requires patience.

The Right Soil (Rom. 5:3)

Patience can be cultivated only in the right soil. That soil must be rich in certain elements: inconvenience, distress, annoyance, injustice, unfairness, oppression, persecution, and tribulation. These elements must be absorbed in the presence of an agent that is essential to the growth of patience. That element is endurance. We must learn to endure, to tolerate, to bear, to wait. One nineteenth-century preacher, A. B. Simpson said, “Beloved, have you ever thought that someday you will not have anything to try you, or anyone to vex you again? There will be no opportunity in heaven to learn or to show the spirit

of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering. If you are to practice these things, it must be now.”²

The Key to the Cultivation of Patience (2 Cor. 6:3–10; Col. 1:9–11)

Thomas à Kempis declared, “He deserves not the name of patient who is only willing to suffer as much as he thinks proper, and for whom he pleases. The truly patient man asks [nothing] from whom he suffers, [whether] his superior, his equal, or his inferior. . . . But from whomever, or how much, or how often wrong is done to him, he accepts it all as from the hand of God, and counts it gain!”³

In light of this statement, consider what the apostle Paul had to say about the cultivation of patience in his letters to the believers in Corinth and Colosse in 2 Corinthians 6:3–10 and Colossians 1:9–11.

Assimilation Completed (James 1:2–4)

God gives to all Christians opportunities to cultivate patience. He provides the right soil (circumstances) with the right nutrients (difficulties). Then He asks that we ingest (receive/accept) them and then digest them so that we may grow in patience. The agent of digestion is endurance. We must learn to wait until God is satisfied that the object of His purpose (permitting difficult circumstances in our lives) is fulfilled. Jesus declared that it is in patience that we possess our souls. God has made many promises to us, and all of them are secured to us in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). We inherit these promises through patient faith (Rom. 8:24, 25; 15:4; Heb. 6:11, 12; 10:36, 37; 12:1–8; Rev. 14:12).

Only those who in hope and patience wait upon God will find security for their souls. “The one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:13, NRSV). “But those who wait on the Lord / Shall renew their strength; / They shall mount up with wings like eagles, / They shall run and not be weary, / They shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31, NKJV). “ ‘By your patience possess your souls’ ” (Luke 21:19, NKJV).

REACT

1. How have you been relating to difficult circumstances and people in your daily experiences?
2. Do you have what it takes to be a patient, humble disciple of Jesus Christ?
3. How willing are you to utilize the ingredients and opportunities God has given you to cultivate a patience that will anchor/secure your faith and hope in God?
4. How can you cultivate the right soil for patience to flourish?
5. How does one develop an attitude of patience?

1. *Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary* (1977), s.v. “patience.”

2. Sermon Illustrations, “Patience,” eSermons.com, <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/p/patience.htm> (accessed September 29, 2008).

3. *Ibid.*

Testimony
Patience Through Trials

Phil. 4:6, 7;
James 1:2-4, 12-16

Temptation “comes upon us for the trying of our faith. And the trying of our faith worketh patience, not fretfulness and murmuring. . . . We are to learn valuable lessons from our trials. . . . When we talk discouragement and gloom Satan listens with fiendish joy, for it pleases him to know that he has brought us into his bondage. Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words, and from his long knowledge of the human family he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character.”¹

**“Patience is a plant that will make rapid growth
if carefully cultivated.”**

“Some of us . . . are naturally as quick as a flash to think and to act; but let no one think that he cannot learn to become patient. Patience is a plant that will make rapid growth if carefully cultivated. By becoming thoroughly acquainted with ourselves, and then combining with the grace of God a firm determination on our part, we may be conquerors, and become perfect in all things, wanting in nothing. Patience pours the balm of peace and love into the experiences of the home life.”²

Moses “was to learn patience, to temper his passions. . . . He must be trained to obey. His own heart must be fully in harmony with God before he could teach the knowledge of His will to Israel. By his own experience he must be prepared.

“Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity. . . . But Infinite Wisdom called him . . . to spend forty years . . . [as] a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, . . . would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience.”³

REACT

1. How can youth and older persons learn patience from each other?
2. How can we be happy while being tempted?

1. *That I May Know Him*, p. 279.

2. *My Life Today*, p. 97.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 247, 248.

Num. 12:3;
Psalm 37;
Matt. 11:29;
Heb. 10:36

Evidence
Take My Yoke

Can you imagine having a literal yoke around your neck, teaming you with someone who is slower and either taller or shorter than you? Jesus said, “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29, NKJV), therefore suggesting that He is the example of what it means to be long-suffering. The Bible gives us many examples of just how long-suffering God can be.

Six thousand years after the Fall, Christ is still pleading with us to repent and accept His salvation.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. If they did, they would die. However, it took 930 years before Adam actually did die. Six thousand years after the Fall, Christ is still pleading with us to repent and accept His salvation.

Noah warned the antediluvian world of an impending flood that would cover the earth. But they scoffed at the prophet. After all, there had never been rain before. Noah preached for 120 years, patiently repeating the warning and urging people to accept the way of escape that was being prepared.

Moses learned patience as he cared for sheep. This prepared him to be a “compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel.”¹

We are encouraged by David in Psalm 37:7 to trust God “and wait patiently for Him” (NKJV). This suggests that despite the challenges we face, the desired response may be a long time coming (we need to learn to be patient); but at the end, God will give us the desires of our hearts. Ellen White reminds us that we need to be patient, for God “has a song to teach us” so “we can sing it ever afterward.”²

REACT

1. What are some ways you can show patience at home, school, and the workplace?
2. Why does it seem easier to be patient with persons who are not members of your family?
3. How does Christ show concern for our salvation and His willingness to bear with us despite our unbelief?
4. How can we emulate what God does for us in the area of patience?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248.
2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 472.

Pointers for Patience

Gen. 6:3;
 Exod. 34:6;
 Mark 4:26–29;
 Rom. 15:5;
 Eph. 4:1, 2;
 Heb. 10:36;
 James 1:2–4

In Galatians 5:22, patience is sandwiched between the fruit of peace and kindness. Is this a coincidence? Or is there a natural progression from one to the other? In order to be patient, must we be at peace with oneself and kind to others?

Sometimes, our impatience is seen not only in our dealings with others but also with ourselves. So how can we become patient in our dealings with each other as well as with ourselves?

Pray. Always make your requests known to God. Read Psalm 62:8; Philip-
 pians 4:6; James 1:6, 7. Remember the prayers of Daniel, Joseph, Esther, Ruth,
 and John the revelator.

“Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened.”

Read and study the Bible. The Bible testifies of Christ and teaches us how to have eternal life (John 5:39). Matthew 11:28, 29 remind us that we find rest in Christ. As we wait for the coming of the Lord to relieve us of all the challenges we have in this world, remember such passages as Isaiah 9:2–7; 53; Psalm 22; Matthew 24; and 2 Thessalonians 1:3–2:12. Let these scriptures comfort you as you wait patiently for the Second Coming. Also read about the patience and suffering of those who learned to become patient through hardship.

Meditate on the life of Christ. Think about the times when He showed great patience and longsuffering. Again, read about the lives of other individuals who attained great patience.

“Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces.”* Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1–3, NKJV).

I suggest that we can find ways to be patient as we study the life of Christ, adopt His ways, and remember that He shows longsuffering toward us—in that “while we were still sinners, [He] died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NKJV).

* *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 61.

Job 38–42;
Isa. 40:31;
Rom. 8:28

Opinion

Lord, Give Me Patience!

We might think that patience is for certain types of individuals—perhaps the poor, because they have grown accustomed to their condition and therefore know how to “wait on the Lord” or for people with terminal or chronic illnesses. Do we understand the challenges of seriously ill people and their loved ones?

I have heard people say jokingly, “Patience is a virtue, but too much of it will hurt you.” I wonder if some of us who think that way become frustrated with others and even ourselves. Or can we say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15, NKJV)? Do we truly believe that “all things work

Why do we question God when . . . a car full of promising young adults crashes and all the occupants are killed?

together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28, NKJV) and that He can be trusted to do what is right (Job 38–42)?

Why do we question God when good people suffer, when parents abuse their children, when a car full of promising young adults crashes and all the occupants are killed? Could the answer simply be that we live in a sin-cursed world? Yet somehow, at the very moment we ask, “Why,” it seems that a deeper, greater answer is needed.

We don’t always know why we must face great problems and challenges in life. We don’t understand why tsunamis, hurricanes, and typhoons devastate cities and countries, leaving families homeless and torn apart. We can, however, live with the assurance of God’s continuing watch-care and concern for us as individuals. We can read the Bible—which contains so many examples and lessons—to help us understand God’s compassion.

REACT

1. How can we tactfully advise people in adverse circumstances to be patient?
2. Do you believe that patience is a virtue? Justify your response.
3. Do you believe God really cares about the millions of suffering people in the world? Why, or why not?

Exploration
"Give Me Patience"

Rev. 14:12

CONCLUDE

Too often our prayers include the thought, if not the words, "Give me patience, Lord, and hurry up." Learning to be patient in all kinds of situations is a lifetime study. Just when you think you're getting the hang of it, *bang*—anger flares, feelings are hurt, frustration sets in, and depression descends. "I've done it again. I'm back at the start. I'll never make it." What we forget is how patient God is! His patience quotient is out of this world. He longs to help us. All we need to do is ask—not once or twice or even three times, but every time Satan throws us a challenge. When you succumb to impatience, ask Jesus to pick you back up and help you to continue trying.

CONSIDER

- Making a list of the type of situations that try your patience the most. Ask Jesus to help you find better solutions for dealing with the anger, frustration, or whatever feelings these situations engender.
- Role-playing with a friend various situations you both experience that try your patience the most. Then discuss how you can handle them creatively.
- Researching Bible people who tried fixing things their way rather than waiting patiently for the Lord. Answer the questions, What was the Lord's response? In what way did their relationship with Him change?
- Making a collage of picture "opposites." On one side, show people who are not exhibiting patience, and on the other side, people who are. Answer the question, "Would you have acted any better than the impatient people?"
- Learning a hymn or praise song you can sing to yourself or out loud (depending on the circumstances) each time you find your patience dribbling away.
- Observing some bird feeders and nests. What are birds like around a feeder? What are they like when they are building a nest? When the nest is full of babies? How can you relate this to patience you do or do not have?

CONNECT

Proverbs 14:29; 16:32; 19:11; 25:15.

Charles Swindoll, *Encouragement for Life* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Kindness

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering”

(Col. 3:12, NKJV).



Kindness: For Better or for Worse

Prov. 15:1–5;
Col. 3:12–14

Many stories have been told about how acts of kindness have saved souls. I experienced firsthand one such story. While a student at Spicer College, I spent one summer as a colporteur in a farming area of Norway. I was going from door to door in Hallingdal Valley to present my books when I met Amund Granli, a band owner, who shouted from a distance, “I don’t believe in God. *Nei Takk.*” *Nei Takk* means “no thank you.” These words can be a sign of unfriendliness, especially to anyone who might be a door-to-door salesman, or even worse, if you have dark skin like mine. I stood at the gate, looked at him, and innocently asked in my broken Norwegian, “Kindly spare me a minute to tell you what brought me all the way from Kenya to your door.”

“Kindly spare me a minute to tell you what brought me all the way from Kenya to your door.”

Many people in Norway do not believe in God. So it was my response to their unbelief that made the difference. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger” (NKJV). The wise man continues to say in verse 4, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life” (NKJV). Any word or act impacts the life of the recipient for better or for worse.

Mr. Granli later told me that he let me into his home because of my kind response. We shared experiences. Mr. Granli purchased some books, and he taught me how to play guitar.

It is a privilege to give people joy through deeds and words of kindness. Kindness links families with the Divine. It can even bring about peace. God’s people are to spearhead peace through kindness. Paul says in Colossians 3:12 to put on kindness, just as when we get up in the morning, we put on clothes. Anyone who has been called to eternal salvation is called to kindness. As you study this week’s lesson, think about what acts of kindness Christ is calling you to do. But be sure to do more than just think. Be kind, also.

REACT

How have you experienced the power of kind words as one who gave them and as one who received them?

1 John 3:17-19

Evidence

Love in Any Language

Those people who notice the beauty of roses more than their thorns would most likely appreciate the heights to which kindness can lift the human race. The title for today's article refers to behavior as opposed to language. According to many dictionaries, kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Kind actions generally do speak louder than kind words alone.

“No amount of talk of Christian love will take the place of a kindly action to a man in need.”

Galatians 5:22 says that kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. Does this mean that only Christians can practice this virtue?

One answer may be that God created us in His image (Gen. 1:26) and that despite sin, as we draw closer to Him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to become kinder, gentler people.

On the other hand, one may argue that God can use anyone or anything to meet the needs of His people. Scripture shows us that He used people who did not profess belief in Him and even animals to care for and protect His people. Read 1 Kings 17:1-6 and Joshua 2:1-22.

First John 3:17-19 makes it clear that God expects us to talk less and act more. “When we love in deed and truth, we receive an assurance of the reality of our conversion. Thus our own fruits inform us as to the genuineness of our profession even as the lives of others witness to their sincerity (Matt. 7:16-20).”¹

“Fine words will never take the place of fine deeds; and no amount of talk of Christian love will take the place of a kindly action to a man in need, involving some self-sacrifice, for in that action the principle of the Cross is operative again.”²

REACT

Meditate on Philippians 4:13. How does this verse give you hope regarding living a life of kindness?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 656.

2. William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 84.

Kindness: A Weakness or a Virtue?

2 Sam. 9:1–13;
Prov. 15:1–5; 25:11–15;
Matt. 5:43–48;
Luke 6:35, 38;
Eph. 4:32;
Col. 3:12–14

A woman constantly complained to her husband about the untidiness of their next-door neighbor. Through their glass-paned window, she often saw dirty laundry hanging on the neighbor's veranda whenever the neighbor woman washed the family's clothes. One fine morning, this perturbed woman looked across the way and was shocked to see a clean wash hanging on the veranda. "Here! Look!" she called to her husband. "They must have learned how to do laundry the proper way. I wonder who taught them?"

**Our lives should be Christ-centered. Our characters must speak
of Him who called us.**

The husband smiled and whispered to his wife, "I woke up early this morning and cleaned our windows."

A Noble Trait (Col. 3:12–14)

Many people in the world today view kindness as a weakness. However, the Bible teaches us that this is not the case. Kindness is a noble trait. It is love in action, for love cannot exist long without expression. Therefore, we are right to conclude that kindness is a practical love.

The Greek word for "kindness" is *chrēstotēs*, which translates as "goodness," "gentleness," and "excellence" (see Romans 3:12; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 2:7). "This word expresses love in action (1 Cor. 13:4). It is descriptive of gentle, gracious, kindly consideration, both in disposition and action, toward the needs of one's neighbor."¹

Approximately two years ago in Kenya, we faced the most difficult time in our country's history. Consisting of more than 40 distinct tribes/dialects, Kenya had long been a haven of peace in Africa. However, in late December 2007, the people elected new political leaders. Poll results were disputed, and many turned against their neighbors. During the first part of the new year, neighbors killed neighbors and wantonly destroyed each other's property. Fear and panic spread like a tsunami.

In one area, a church building sheltered scores of people seeking safety, after many other supposedly safe places had been set on fire. However, this church also was set ablaze. One woman, who managed to come out of this burning church building with her child, was confronted by a waiting mob, whose members slashed her and her child with swords and threw them back into the fire. Rather than finding the peace and love of the God that this building represented, the people inside died a savage death.

In Colossians 3:12, Paul wrote, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” Here the apostle stresses the need for a voluntary act by which Christians take upon themselves the likeness of Christ and His character. In calling us “the elect of God,” he is saying that we are subjects of the kingdom of heaven. All who have accepted Christ, irrespective of national, religious, racial, and social distinctions, are God’s elect. Paul urges us to put on “bowels of . . . kindness.” In Greek, “bowels” is *spagchna*, which means “the inward parts” or “the seat of emotions.”² Our lives should be Christ-centered. Our characters must speak of Him who called us.

The Measure of God’s Kingdom (2 Sam. 9:1–13; John 13:1–30)

Second Samuel 9:1–13 contains a story that shows us what it means to be kind. King Saul wanted David dead. Yet after Saul’s death, and for the sake of Saul’s son Jonathan, David asks if there is any one left of Saul’s family to whom he can show kindness. The answer was Yes—Jonathan’s crippled son, Mephibosheth. Read this touching story if you haven’t already done so.

We also should remember Jesus’ kindness toward Judas, the disciple who betrayed Him. Christ knew what Judas was going to do. Yet in washing Judas’s feet, Jesus kindly performed the task only a foreign slave was assigned. If this lowly act could not convince Judas of Jesus’ love, nothing else would. Perhaps he viewed Jesus’ behavior that night as a sign of weakness—an action unbefitting someone who claimed to be his King.

More often than not, many people in the world today view kind deeds as signs of weakness. However, we need to remember that kind deeds performed as a result of our relationship with Christ are recorded in the books of heaven. Let us never engage in a cost-benefit analysis to help us decide if we should do this or that act of kindness. Being kind should never be about how we can benefit by our deeds of kindness, but about how others might benefit, regardless of what it might cost us.

As Christians, we are to make sure that our words and deeds reflect our Savior’s character. Learning from Him daily helps us to be aware of His character and of His expectations for us. Being kind is one of His expectations. Let us always remember that love and truth are the foundation of His kingdom. Sincere kindness is the measure of that foundation. It is the practical aspect of our religion.

REACT

1. Which acts of kindness cause you to engage in cost-benefit analysis thinking, and why? What if Christ had considered His acts of kindness in such a way?
2. Heaven maintains a record of our kind deeds. If you, too, kept such a list, would it match the one above? If not, what reason can you give for the variance?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 212.

2. *Ibid.*

“Kindness on Your Lips”

Prov. 31:26;
Matt. 5:43–45

Once I came across a stalled public-service vehicle. The passengers were reluctant to leave the vehicle and push it so that the driver could jump-start it. So he requested me and some other pedestrians to help, which we gladly did.

Acts of kindness should be a normal part of our daily lives. This is possible only so far as the Holy Spirit lives in us. When we are filled with His presence, we will not wait for people to ask us for help. Instead, we will show kindness at every opportunity that presents itself without being prompted to do so.

We should not be selective about whom we show kindness to.

Ellen G. White wrote, “Your influence reaches the soul; you touch not a wire but that it vibrates back to God. . . . It is your duty to be Christians in the highest sense of the word—‘Christlike.’ It is through the unseen lines that attract you to other minds with which you are brought in contact that may, if you are in constant connection with God, leave impressions that will make you a savor of life unto life. Otherwise, if you are selfish, if you are self-exalted, if you are worldly-minded, no matter what your position, no matter what your experience has been, or how much you know, if you are not having the law of kindness on your lips, sweet fragrance of love springing from your heart, you can do nothing as it ought to be done.”*

We should not be selective about whom we show kindness to. Read what Jesus had to say about selectivity in Matthew 5:43–45.

We should also be kind to people whom we really have no obligation to help. In 2 Samuel 9:1–13, we read about David wanting to be kind to any one left of Saul’s family, even though Saul had wanted David dead. Also, Jesus talks about the man who was attacked by thieves and left on the roadside. The priest and the Levite, supposedly godly people, left him unattended, while a Samaritan, a member of a hated people, took him to an inn, paid for his care, and was willing to pay more should the need have arisen (Luke 10:30–37).

REACT

1. How many times have you gone out of your way to show an act of kindness to someone to whom you had no obligation?
2. In what ways are you emulating the types of kindness described in the Bible?

* *My Life Today*, p. 178.

Eph. 4:32

How-to A Sincere Expression

As a fruit of the Spirit, kindness must be manifested by all Christians. Kindness is seen through the Christian's speech and conduct, and like all the other spiritual fruit, it cannot exist independently.

All night long, the angry mob went door to door searching for the Kikuyus.

During the 2007–2008 postelection violence in Kenya, many people died. The worst hit areas were the home bases of the Orange Democratic Party (ODM) of Kenya. Kibera, one of the bases, experienced the worst form of violence. One of the estates had a sizable population of Kikuyus—members of the Bantu-speaking people of Kenya. When the violence erupted late one evening, most of the Kikuyus were trapped and could not escape the members of the ODM party, who bayed for their blood. The angry mob broke into their houses to destroy their lives and property. Many Kikuyus were hidden by their neighbors, who were themselves enemies of the Kikuyus. All night long, the angry mob went door to door searching for the Kikuyus. But the kindness of their enemy neighbors saved them!

How can we forgive people who want to hurt us, or, even worse, kill us?

Without kindness it is impossible to forgive. Those whose family members were killed in Kenya cannot forgive those who hurt them by their own might. Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. So they need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help them fulfill Jesus' command in Matthew 5:43–48.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, speaking kind words about those who dislike us can help us to forgive them. Speaking kindly to people who are angry can help them to be calm. Read Proverbs 15:1; 25:11. Whenever we speak, our words should encourage others.

The promise to us is that if we are kind to those who are not kind to us and to those who are in need, He will reward us. Read Matthew 10:40–42.

REACT

1. Think of someone you need to forgive. Based on today's article, prayerfully plan how you can do so.
2. Consider events that have occurred in your country. How were acts of kindness shown during the course of these events?

Opinion
Love's Checklist

Eph. 4:32;
Col. 3:12–14

“Kindness is love walking the extra mile even for the undeserving. It is another dynamic facet of love. There is no such thing as passive kindness. It is that part of love that is always engaged in doing good. Kindness is practical love. God always expresses His unfailing kindness to His children. Kindness is always ready to go the extra mile. It is that way because it stems from the fruit of the spirit. People who have spiritual strength are naturally kind. One cannot love and not be kind; neither can one be kind and not love. Because kindness is love in action; it is also unconditional. Love exhibits kindness under all circumstances of life, whether friendly or unfriendly. Kindness is a thermometer by which love is measured.”*

“Kindness is a thermometer by which love is measured.”

If we are kind, we will do good things for other people with no thought of reward or recognition. It is difficult to be kind to people who do bad things to us, who speak harsh words to us and about us. But when the Holy Spirit grows kindness in us, we will find it ever easier to be kind even to those who mistreat us. To a Christian, kindness has no demarcation line. We will be kind to believers and nonbelievers, to our enemies as well as to our friends.

This reminds me of a story about a manager who did not like one of his workers because the worker was a Christian. The manager demoted this worker, unfairly citing that the worker was not qualified for the job and that he often missed work and did not attend important meetings.

One day the manager's wife needed to visit some relatives in a city that was unfamiliar to her. The only person who knew the city well was the particular worker the manager did not like. This worker learned that the manager's wife needed to go to this city, so he asked the manager if he could be of some help. The manager was embarrassed to think that even after he had unfairly treated this man, the man would still offer his assistance. Humbled, he accepted the worker's offer to help.

What was it that made the worker act kindly to his manager? Unconditional love. He knew that when his Savior lived on earth, He was kind to all—even to those who were unkind to Him.

* George Brown, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (U.K.: Stanborough Press, 1998), pp. 60–64.

Zech. 7:9;
Gal. 6:10

Exploration

Creating a Kinder World

CONCLUDE

If you listen to any newscast or read any newspaper, it is evident that kindness is in short supply on planet Earth. The type of kindness Christ demonstrated involves friendliness, generosity, and gentleness in both speech and conduct. It is the practical aspect of Christianity, and therefore, it should involve all aspects of living. We are to be kind not only to people we like, but also to people whom we find objectionable; and we are to be kind without expecting anything in return. Imagine what the world would be like if more people, even Christians, were truly kind. How might newspapers read then?

CONSIDER

- Designing a poster or using modeling clay to depict the way the paragraph above defines kindness.
- Counting the number of references in a biblical concordance that have to do with kindness. Look under the words *kindness*, *lovingkindness*, *kind*, and *kindly*. Read a few of the verses listed under each word, analyzing the context of each situation. What do they teach you about this particular fruit of the Spirit?
- Researching the effects that being kind has on one's physical and mental health. If you use your computer to do this, key in the phrase "the effects of kindness on health" and the name "Allan Luks."
- Singing the song " 'Tis Love That Makes Us Happy" (no. 579 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*). Consider how love helps us to be kind.
- Organizing a Smile Group with your friends. For ideas on how to get started, go to HelpOthers.org at <http://www.helpothers.org/story.php?sid=10369>.
- Doing one intentional act of kindness each day for a week, even if it's only something small, like picking up something that someone else dropped. Keep a journal of what you did each day, noting the response of the person(s) involved and how you felt.
- Reading the book *Random Acts of Kindness by Animals* by Stephanie Laland.

CONNECT

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, pp. 539, 540.

Allan Luks, *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others* (Bloomington, Ind.: iUniverse, 2001).

Pay It Forward Foundation at <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/educators/index.html>.

lesson seven
FEBRUARY 6-13

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Goodness

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10, NKJV).



Titus 2:11-13

Introduction
Do Others Know?

It's eight in the morning. I've eaten my oatmeal. My shoes are more or less shined, and I've got my Bible. I start the car, and we all pile in. It's Saturday, and we're on our way to church. Before I got in the car, I noticed our neighbor looking at us with a mixture of curiosity and surprise. I wonder what he thinks of us. Who are we to him? We don't really cause problems. And just last week, I returned a package to him that he had left in the parking lot of our apartment complex.

On what does "being good" depend? What is its source?

But the question goes beyond that. Does he realize we're going to church? Does he know that we're Christians? *Of course he knows*, I tell myself. But if he does know that we're Christians, how is it that he knows? Is it because we carry a Bible when we leave the house on Sabbath morning? Is it because of our actions? Is it because I'm a nice guy or a good person? Who defines what makes a person "good"? Because, in fact, he is a very good neighbor, maybe the best in the neighborhood; but as far as I know, he doesn't attend church at all.

As I drive away, I wave my hand his way to say hello, and I ask myself, *Does he know that I'm truly looking to have a special relationship with God?*

It seems obvious that there's a close relationship between goodness and external behavior. However, we should question whether we have the correct concept. On what does "being good" depend? What is its source? What is the motivation behind being good? Is ours based on worldly concepts? Or is it close to the goodness of Jesus? This is especially important, because the goodness of Jesus always showed His intimate relationship with the Father.

In summarizing, we should ask ourselves whether our "goodness" speaks to our actions, our religion, or our actual relationship with God. "It is not only by preaching the truth, not only by distributing literature, that we are to witness for God. Let us remember that a Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity, and that a cheap Christian character works more harm in the world than the character of a worldling."* As you study this week about goodness, ask yourself what motivates you to cultivate this fruit of the Spirit.

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 21.

Conquering the Enemy

Ps. 51:10, 11;
John 14:9;
Rom. 3:12–20; 7:7–12;
Titus 2:14;
Heb. 1:2, 3

Heart Problems (Ps. 51:10, 11)

When David found himself “outed” by the prophet Nathan for his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, he did something that would be quite unusual for any government official caught in similar circumstances today. He admitted his sin. I imagine he did the equivalent of looking into the cameras and confessing the whole sordid affair.

[David] didn't even check himself into rehab to get over some substance that had clouded his mind.

When David was confronted with his sin, he admitted to what he had done rather than try to excuse it as a mistake or a lapse in judgment. He didn't even check himself into rehab to get over some substance that had clouded his mind. Therein lies a clear manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit. When the fruit of God's redeeming love begins to blossom in us, we are enabled to see clearly what we are, and we are then able to confess without fear. Furthermore, we are able to recognize that our sins are more than offenses committed against others. Ultimately, they are sins against God Himself.

That David recognized this is evidenced by his confession, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, / And done this evil in Your sight” (Ps. 51:4, NKJV). He didn't confess that he had sinned against Bathsheba, whom he had seduced and impregnated, or against her husband Uriah, whom he had arranged to have killed in battle. He cried out to God and asked for His forgiveness.

When David requested a new heart, he used the Hebrew word *bara*, which means “create” (Ps. 51:10). This is the same word used in the Creation narrative of Genesis 1. In a sense then, David is asking God to create something altogether new out of nothing, just as God created the world. He didn't want God to just take the corruption that was there and dress it up. He wanted a new heart that would follow God.

When confronted with the reality of our sinful hearts, we don't need to run and hide in shame. We can freely confess our sins without lamenting, “What's God going to do with me?” We can freely allow the Holy Spirit to transform us, to create a new heart in us that looks a lot like Christ's heart.

Seeing the Father, Seeing Ourselves (John 14:9)

On one occasion, the disciple Philip asked Jesus to show him and the rest of the disciples the Father. Read Jesus' response in John 14:9. This point is later emphasized by the writer of Hebrews who described Jesus as the exact Representation of God and the Sustainer of all things. See Hebrews 1:1–3.

We need to understand that in order to know Jesus, and thereby know the Father, the Holy Spirit must be working within us. The Spirit plays an indispensable role in revealing to us the way of God, and thereby the character of God (John 16:5–15).

We're All in Trouble (Rom. 3:12–20; 7:7–12)

If we could just accept the fact that we are all sinners, it would be easier for us to develop a greater spirit of grace toward one another. Most Christians readily acknowledge that they are sinners. The problem is that too often we look with great disgust and contempt upon others because we assume that their sin is worse than our own (Matt. 7:1–6).

We excuse ourselves and imagine that what we are caught up in can't be nearly as reprehensible as the other person's situation. The Scriptures, however, categorically deny this fallacy (Rom. 3:12). We naturally respond this way when we face our sins. Adam and Eve were quick to shift blame when God confronted them. All people have been doing the same ever since. But the Spirit is able to break this cycle and give us the fullness of life that Jesus promised.

Consider the fruit of goodness, and think about how much better your life would be if God's goodness transformed your heart. Don't fall off the path as some do when they think that you are so bad God can't do anything with you. When we accept that we are saved by the grace of God, demonstrated by Christ, and worked out in us through the Holy Spirit, we can begin to experience the peace of Christ promised in Matthew 11:29, 30.

REACT

1. In what ways might you still be hiding a bit of yourself from God?
2. How would life improve if you were to give that part to Him?
3. How differently would you treat others if you gave that part to Him?

Goodness Is Not “Oh, My Goodness”

John 14:9

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

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion.”

“Christ desires His followers to reveal in their lives this same character. In His intercessory prayer for His disciples He declared: ‘The glory [character] which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me’ (John 17:22, 23).”¹

“The church is very precious in God’s sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience.

“Christ hungers to receive from His vineyard the fruit of holiness and unselfishness. He looks for the principles of love and goodness. Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ’s representatives. It is the atmosphere of grace which surrounds the soul of the believer, the Holy Spirit working upon mind and heart, that makes him a savor of life unto life, and enables God to bless his work.”²

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.”³

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1. *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 322.
 2. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 298.
 3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.

Eph. 2:19–22

Evidence

*Doing What Is Right
Because It Is Right*

“The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. . . . True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.”*

Your parents’ efforts to teach you to brush your teeth were not intended to stifle your freedom.

True respect cannot be commanded. It must be earned. Likewise, true obedience cannot be compelled. Doing the right thing must come from a place where one knows that doing a particular thing is the right thing to do and is in the best interest of the “doer.” To get to that point requires the development of a critical precursor—trust.

Any parent of a small child faces a critical task—teaching the child to brush his or her teeth and teaching that child why brushing one’s teeth is a good thing. If a child doesn’t develop good oral hygiene early in his or her life, it’s hard to make up that ground later. Ideally, one day the child realizes that brushing his or her teeth is simply the right thing to do.

Ask yourself why you brush your teeth every day. I’m confident that the answer is not “because my parents told me to.” Your parents’ efforts to teach you to brush your teeth were not intended to stifle your freedom but to ensure you had a mouthful of teeth well into your mature years.

Developing a good character is exactly the same transaction. Your Father in heaven labors diligently to teach you what you should and shouldn’t do, not to stifle or control you, but to protect you and to transform you into something magnificent—a person who reflects His character and His beauty. When you trust that this is His one and only motive, this transformation can occur.

REACT

1. What are some other practical examples of doing what is right because it is right?
2. How can you use these examples to spread the message of Christ’s love?

* *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 97, 98.

Stop Trying to Be Good

Phil. 2:13

There is absolutely no human recipe that can help us to be good. Being good is simply not a part of our sinful human nature (Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10-12; 7:18-25). Many religious systems are based on the human effort to be good. This is dangerously appealing because we don't have to give up control of our lives to any higher power. However, developing the fruit of goodness is a matter of allowing God's Holy Spirit to work in us (Ezek. 11:19, 20). The secret lies in surrendering to the Holy Spirit. This surrendering requires faith. When you have faith in God, He can begin to develop His character in you. Then goodness will begin to grow in your heart. Following are some actions you can take that will help you to surrender your life to God:

There is a magnificent adventure waiting for you when you become clay in His hands.

Recognize your need. The world teaches us that we must rely on self to achieve success. However, as Christians, we need to admit that our sinful nature controls us more than we think. We cannot rely on ourselves to surrender to God. Dependence on Him is the solution. Make recognizing your need for Him your number one priority (1 John 3:4-7).

Maintain the connection. Following the Pray-Study-Obey-Share-Praise method is the way the Holy Spirit knows you are participating in the "nature" makeover. This is also the means He uses to help us nourish our faith (John 15:4).

Be honest with God. Being transformed into His image can be as upsetting as it can be exciting. Sometimes He takes us in directions we just don't want to go in. Be honest with Him. Tell how you how feel about such times. After all, He is your best Friend (Psalms 77; 88:6, 9).

Give Him your all. Your plans, ideas, projects, and dreams. There is a magnificent adventure waiting for you when you become clay in His hands (Eph. 3:20, 21; Jer. 29:11).

REACT

1. What role does free will play if we give God control of lives in order to transform our inner nature?
2. God has given us all free will. So what should be our attitude toward those who do not practice goodness as we understand it?
3. Do laws that prohibit such things as euthanasia or abortion go against God's gift of free will? Why, or why not?

Ps. 14:3;
Rom. 3:12

Opinion

A Twofold Mission

Many people in this world choose not to have anything to do with religion. They even question the effectiveness of the various religions and of the people who follow them. The fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments for Ethical Atheists states, "Thou SHALT NOT forget the atrocities committed in the name of god."¹ They base this commandment on the horrible deeds perpetrated during events such as the Inquisition and the Crusades. "How," they ask, "can a loving God allow such atrocities?"

Being good is much more important than behaving well.

This makes me think of Psalm 14:3, "All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (NIV). Have we totally failed to represent God's true character and nature?

We need to remember at least two things:

1. "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."² It will not be our rhetoric or our theology but our lives that draw others to God. True religion helps us to be Christlike. True religion is the religion Jesus lived and taught, a religion in which being good is much more important than behaving well, a religion in which we are ambassadors for Christ and open letters that testify to His grace and love.

2. In a sense, the fourth commandment of atheists is right. We shouldn't forget the atrocities committed in God's name. We need to remember them so they are never repeated. Such violence discredits what we believe and the mission and work of Jesus, "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14, NIV).

The mission of being good is twofold. Being good positively impacts a world desperately in need of goodness and makes known the true nature of God, who above all else is love. It is through the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts that we will be transformed into truly good people. As the psalmist wrote so eloquently, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:10, 11, NIV).

Don't you think it is time for us to shake the world with our goodness?

1. Ethical Atheist, "The Ten Commandments," http://www.ethicalatheist.com/docs/ten_commandments.html (accessed December 2008).

2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.

Exploration
Spiritual Cornucopias

2 Pet. 1:2-11

CONCLUDE

Goodness is not defined merely as correct behavior. There can be many explanations for correct behavior. One may act correctly out of purely selfish motivations. Some have acted correctly in order to qualify for an inheritance or to impress the parents of a romantic interest. Others may be good because outside restraints make it easier to behave well than to follow baser instincts. Whenever those restraints are removed, the true character of the person is then revealed, often with surprising, disappointing results. True goodness, however, overflows from a changed heart, a heart transformed by God. It is a change that occurs because the person has experienced God's incomparable love.

CONSIDER

- Praying that God will develop in you the virtues mentioned in 2 Peter 1. Pray specifically for one virtue on each succeeding day of the week until you have focused on each one. Ask God to make you a spiritual cornucopia.
- Taking a Sabbath afternoon walk in nature during which you list the ways in which God expresses His love for our world through His creation. Consider how you can reflect those divine attributes as you care for the corner of God's world in which you live.
- Listening to or singing Kelly Willard's song "Willing Heart." Contemplate what you need to do so that all obstacles to God's work in your life will be removed and your heart of stone can be a heart overflowing with goodness.
- Interviewing a church or civic leader known for his or her goodness with the goal of ascertaining what motivates this person to do good deeds.
- Writing anonymously a series of encouraging notes to people whose acts of kindness have inspired you to be kind.
- Analyzing the impact of a good deed directed toward another person. Contrast their demeanor/mood/attitude prior to and subsequent to the action.
- Drawing or sculpting a cornucopia containing at least seven different fruits. Discuss with a friend which fruit best illustrate the virtues named in 2 Peter 1.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, chapter 9.

Billy Graham, chapters 14-17, *The Holy Spirit* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2000); René Pache, chapter 9, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1979).

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Faithfulness

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9, NKJV).



Introduction
*Faith and
Faithfulness Tested*

Exod. 14:14

The scene is a campsite in the desert near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the Red Sea. The Israelites are escaping from slavery in Egypt, and their masters are agitated. Pharaoh has been stubborn, and he has released his country's army to charge after the fleeing slaves.

The Israelites, realizing the danger that is behind them, begin to blame Moses for their predicament—the Red Sea before them, Pharaoh's army behind them. Moses has to swallow insults from his own people; but he turns to God, upon whom he has relied since the burning bush incident (Exodus 3; 4). In his heart, Moses knows that Yahweh is in control of this situation.

In his heart, Moses knows that Yahweh is in control of this situation.

The Israelites' faith has vanished into thin air. They are incapable of defeating their formidable enemies. Moses, however, though troubled by their restlessness, assures them that all will be well. About this very experience, we read that "Moses was greatly troubled that his people should manifest so little faith in God, notwithstanding they had repeatedly witnessed the manifestation of His power in their behalf. How could they charge upon him the dangers and difficulties of their situation, when he had followed the express command of God?"¹

Faithfulness is a characteristic that makes people true to their promises and tasks. As Christians, we have entered into a union with Christ, and we have vowed to act according to His words. Though we live in a materialistic, self-centered world, our ability to exercise faithfulness in a steadfast, unchanging manner depends on how much we trust Christ.

This week we shall learn about faithfulness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We'll learn about what faith is and what it isn't. As you study each article of this lesson, remember that "we should by faith grasp the hand of Christ, and trust Him as fully in the darkness as in the light. . . ."

"The Christian life must be a life of constant, living faith. An unyielding trust, a firm reliance upon Christ, will bring peace and assurance to the soul."²

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 284.

2. *The Sanctified Life*, p. 90.

James 2:18

Evidence
*Faith + Works
= Faithfulness*

The Bible compares faith without action to a body without spirit (breath). A body without its spirit is, of course, dead (James 2:26). These actions, or works, are the result of one's belief system. They are proof of one's faith. For example, when we pray without faithfulness, our petitions will not yield positive results. However, when we have faith that God will answer our prayers, He will hear us and give us the answers that are best for us.

Our actions show whether our faith is genuine.

"As the sinner's sincere, humble prayers ascend to the throne of God, Christ mingles with them the merits of His own life of perfect obedience. Our prayers are made fragrant by this incense."¹

The Bible records many examples of people who revealed faithfulness against all odds and emerged victorious. One such person is Enoch, who "walked with God" (Gen. 5:24). His small acts of faithfulness qualified him to do so. "Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. . . . In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast, unwavering servant of the Lord."²

Even the demons believe (James 2:19). So our actions show whether our faith is genuine. Before Elijah could succeed against Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), he had to learn to depend wholly on God. He needed to demonstrate through his actions what his belief system consisted of. And like Elijah, all the other champions of faith in the Bible had to employ the virtue of faithfulness in their lives in order to overcome their trying moments.

"Walk by faith in the path He marks out. Trials will come, but go forward. This will strengthen your faith and fit you for service. The records of sacred history are written, not merely that we may read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old may work in us. In no less marked manner will the Lord work now, wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power."³

REACT

1. How does a faith that works help you to witness for Christ?
2. In what ways can you improve your faithfulness as an individual?

1. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 22.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 85.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 175.

The Oil of Faithfulness

Matt. 25:1–13;
Luke 16:10;
1 Thess. 5:23, 24;
2 Tim. 3:1–5;
Hebrews 11

In Matthew 25:1–13, Christ uses the illustration of the ten virgins to depict faithfulness in God's people at the time of Christ's return. Those who are ready for the Second Coming are those who faithfully prepared for it.

Salvation is just a concept until it is put into practice by deeds that are steadfast, dedicated, and worthy of trust.

Loyalty—Undeviating Allegiance (Matt. 25:1–13)

When we enter into union with Christ, we should do so with a sense of loyalty and dependability. These two characteristics not only will help us to grow in Him, they also will help us to have good relationships with our family, friends, and coworkers. If we are not loyal to our heavenly Father and our Savior, we will not be able to worship the way we should. Instead, we will be like the Pharisees and the scribes who failed to demonstrate undeviating allegiance to the God they claimed to serve (Matt. 15:1–20).

Constancy—Freedom From Uncertainty (Luke 16:10; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24)

As the early church grew, believers would at times sell some of their possessions in order to share with members who had little or nothing (Acts 4:32–37). Such behavior exhibited great faithfulness to God's cause and reflected the character of true believers. On the other hand, the character of Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) shows plainly what fruit Satan has desired to plant in the hearts of people since the beginning of time. Often, we are faced with the choice of whether to speak or act the truth or to turn away from the needs of those around us.

Christ desires that we show constant faithfulness, free from uncertainty, just the way He shows real faithfulness to us in times of happiness as well as in times of distress. If we are not faithful, we cannot count ourselves worthy of the blessings reserved for the saints. Faithfulness helps to purify our hearts, replacing evil with Christlike love, which is also part of the Holy Spirit's fruit basket.

"As the Giver of every blessing, God claims a certain portion of all we possess. . . . But if we withhold from Him that which is His own, how can we claim

His blessing? If we are unfaithful stewards of earthly things, how can we expect Him to entrust us with the things of heaven? It may be that here is the secret of an unanswered prayer.”*

Resoluteness—Unwavering Determination (Hebrews 11)

In the Old Testament, faith is regarded as a response to God’s revelation of Himself in human history and events (Gen. 15:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Hab. 2:4). It is for this reason that the patriarchs and prophets kept their hope in God alive. They were determined, beyond any doubt, to rely on His will.

In the New Testament, faith is still based on God the Father, through Christ His Son (Matt. 9:22, 29; John 8:30; Acts 3:16). Even for the disciples, their faithfulness was due to unwavering determination to seek that which they “hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

To all who seek the Lord for salvation, faith accepts the gift of God’s grace (Eph. 2:8). And it is through faith that we better understand His character and become like Him. Like the times of the prophets and the apostles who stepped out in faith, our time also is marked with moral and spiritual decadence, and we, too, are called to show the type of faith that will help us to overcome our battle with sin.

Faithfulness—A Condition for Salvation (John 5:24)

Men and women from all walks of life say they are saved. However, before we go about saying that, we must do a Scripture-based self-examination of ourselves. Will we pass the test? Listening to the words of Christ, we receive the assurance that whoever has faith in His words, as well as in God the Father, has already “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24, NIV).

As the second coming of Christ draws near, our faith must be exhibited in good works. Salvation is just a concept until it is put into practice by deeds that are steadfast, dedicated, and worthy of trust. This is what Paul proclaimed to the Romans, saying, “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23, NIV). And Hebrews 11:6 says that “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6, NIV). There is no genuine faith without acts of faithfulness; and where there is faithlessness, there is disloyalty, uncertainty, lack of determination, and condemnation.

REACT

1. How can we avoid unfaithfulness?
2. What are the requirements for faithfulness?
3. How can we witness in a faithful way to those outside our faith?

**Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 144.

Testimony
Unflinching Belief

James 5:17

“It was because Elijah was a man of large faith that God could use him in this grave crisis in the history of Israel. . . .

“Faith such as this is needed in the world today—faith that will lay hold on the promises of God’s word and refuse to let go until Heaven hears. Faith such as this connects us closely with Heaven, and brings us strength for coping with

“Faith is an essential element of prevailing prayer.”

the powers of darkness. . . . And through faith we today are to reach the heights of God’s purpose for us. ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’ Mark 9:23.

“Faith is an essential element of prevailing prayer. . . . With the persevering faith of Jacob, with the unyielding persistence of Elijah, we may present our petitions to the Father, claiming all that He has promised. The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word.”¹

The above words penned by Ellen White teach us how important faithfulness is. They show that we cannot just study about faith. We must be faithful. In order for our faith to work and to achieve results, acts of faithfulness must form the bedrock of our life. Such acts demonstrate our faith. They are the mortar by which our beliefs and behavior are held together. If we are true to Christ by being faithful in small things, He will make our faith stand out like that of the Jewish nobleman.

“The nobleman had a degree of faith; for he had come to ask what seemed to him the most precious of all blessings. Jesus had a greater gift to bestow. He desired, not only to heal the child, but to make the officer and his household sharers in the blessings of salvation. . . .

“Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it. . . . Then we are to go about our duties [in faithfulness], assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most.”²

REACT

Define *faith* and *faithfulness* in your own words.

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1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 156–158.
 2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 198, 200.

Jackline Achieng, Nairobi, Kenya

Rom. 10:4

How-to
Faith in Its Fullness

Faithfulness is needed for an unchanging, grounded relationship with God and with one another. In order to experience faithfulness that produces good works, we must trust God in good times and in bad. Like a true Friend, He longs to be by our side in times of joy as well as in times of sadness. How do we obtain such faithfulness?

A heart that is used to saying “thank You” in both words and deeds is a blessed heart.

F—Follow God’s Word. The Bible is the best Guide we can have. We cannot experience faithfulness in our lives if we don’t follow God’s Word.

A—Acknowledge the Holy Spirit. As the Third Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is God’s presence in our lives. If we don’t welcome Him into our lives, we will not receive help in our day-to-day work. One of the Holy Spirit’s functions is to help us put our faith into practice.

I—Insist on truth. Christ Himself is the Truth (John 14:6). For us to develop faithfulness, we need to accept Him as our personal Redeemer and allow Him to transform us with His truth. When this happens, our faith will flourish with acts of faithfulness.

T—Thank God for everything in your life. A heart that is used to saying “thank You” in both words and deeds is a blessed heart. We cannot be faithful and ungrateful at the same time. Our Father in heaven longs for us to appreciate all that He does for us.

H—Have faith in Christ. Faith in our Savior and faithfulness in our lives are closely linked. Neither can exist without the other. Faith in Christ will produce a faithful life. And as we learn to live faithfully, our faith in Christ will grow.

By following the above guidelines, we will be able to experience faith in its fullness, which is wisdom to live by, especially in the trying moments of our lives.

REACT

1. Explain how you can become faithful, adding to what today’s lesson has already discussed.
2. What is the fruit of faithfulness?

Opinion
A Life Full of Faith

Heb. 11:23–29

When I was a chap in high school, I signed my letters with the words, *Yours faithfully*. They were simply a normal ending to my letters, nothing more. However, as my knowledge increased, I began to learn more about being faithful. One of the Bible stories that teaches me the most about faithfulness is that of Moses.

The events surrounding Moses' life are, in essence, no different from ours.

A Levite by birth, Moses' life was full of faith and faithfulness right from the beginning. He was born at a time when Pharaoh's decree to slaughter the male infants of the Hebrew slaves was in full force. During this time, the going was surely tough for the Hebrew women; but faith in God strengthened their hearts "and they were not afraid of the king's command" (Heb. 11:23, NKJV). So it came to pass that Moses survived to deliver God's people from bondage.

Through the faithfulness of his parents, Moses was born—and survived! Through faithfulness, he was adopted by the king's daughter. By faith, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he grew up. Through faithfulness, he chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy the short-lived pleasures of evil. Faithfully, he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as worth more than all the treasures of Egypt. By faith, he attempted the untried, forging ahead until the people of Israel were finally relieved from their bondage.

Through faith and faithfulness, Moses overcame daunting odds. How is it with us? The events surrounding Moses' life are, in essence, no different from ours. We battle evil in several areas of our lives: family, education, finances, employment, and so on. Even in the church we sometimes battle with Satan. We need the faith and faithfulness of Moses to help us cross our Red Sea to the Promised Land of heaven.

REACT

1. Is faith such as Moses' possible in our time? If so, how can we develop such faith?
2. Why do you think that some people who say they are Christians indulge in unfaithfulness? How can you prevent this from happening to you?
3. Explain how you would react to an unfaithful teacher, workmate, or pastor.

James 2:18

Exploration *How Great Is My Faithfulness?*

CONCLUDE

Faithfulness is a gift given by the Holy Spirit to Christ's followers. However, this gift is not one that Christians can just claim to have. They must exhibit faithfulness through their actions. Just as we studied in lesson 1 that "by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:16, NIV), so those who are true Christians show their faithfulness through their lives. Faithfulness is simple when things are good. It is easy to maintain trust in the Lord when life is going our way. It is when things begin to fall apart that our faithfulness is really tested.

CONSIDER

- Writing a journal entry of life experiences when you doubted the Lord and how He came through for you. Focus on your emotions and reactions during all phases of the experiences.
- Creating a lesson for a children's Sabbath School explaining the concept of faithfulness. Design a hands-on activity that teaches about trust or having faith in someone (for example, trust falls or walking with blindfold).
- Composing a short song explaining the idea of faithfulness or putting one of this week's texts to music. Teach the song to your adult Sabbath School class or a group of children.
- Discussing with a close friend times when you find your faith weakening. Share ideas on how to keep your faith strong when you are tempted to doubt the Lord's plan.
- Creating a picture depicting a time when you showed your faithfulness to the Lord during a difficult experience. You might choose to draw, paint, or perhaps use collage or photography.
- Computing the logical results of certain life experiences, then reflecting on the way the Lord worked things out differently from what was logical. Spend some time thinking about your reactions to these events and how you think your faith factored in.
- Reading through the book of Job. Create a list of times where Job's faithfulness could have weakened but did not. Create another list of times when you have been tested. Compare your experiences and reactions with those of Job.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, chapter 6, "Faith and Acceptance."

Max Lucado, *Facing Your Giants* (Nashville, Tenn.: WORD Publishing Group, 2006).

Allison Zollman, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, U.S.A.

lesson nine
FEBRUARY 20-27

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Meekness

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”

(Matt. 5:5, NKJV).



Luke 6:43-45

Introduction

What Do They Think Of?

One Sabbath after church, a group of Seventh-day Adventists on their way home encountered a police check on a street in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. When the Adventists came close to the policemen, one of the officers said that there was no need to check this group because they were wearing decent clothes and had Bibles in their hands. With gratitude, the Adventists continued on their way.

It wasn't until a bit later that I realized I was wearing scrubs.

As I was leaving work one afternoon, a woman opened a passenger door of a car at a red traffic light. She was not feeling well and was beginning to vomit. Since I was close, I ran to help her. As I drew nearer, I heard people say that she was pregnant and had not eaten well during the day. I was surprised to see how the other people in the car were so grateful for my little bit of help. It wasn't until a bit later that I realized I was wearing scrubs.

Those few seconds under the red light, thinking of it, anyone stopping to help might have been inclined to seek praise and recognition. However, the only praise necessary was the look that the passenger who needed help gave me.

What does the world think when it sees you? How do people classify you? Do they classify you as one who bears Christian fruit or as a barren tree? Performing a simple act of service that you know will reap little or no praise helps the world see in a person the fruit of meekness and will differentiate you from almost everyone else. As Jesus said, "Each tree is recognized by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44, NIV). What fruit do you bear today?

This week's lesson will help us better understand the fruit of meekness and how we can cultivate it.

Logos
*Power Kept Under
Control*

Gen. 50:15–20;
Matt. 5:5; 11:29;
Rom. 12:3;
Gal. 6:1;
Phil. 2:1–3

Understanding Meekness (Matt. 5:5; 11:29)

When most people hear the word *meek*, they have a mental picture of a wet noodle. A friend of mine jokes by saying, “The meek shall inherit the earth . . . if that’s OK with everybody else.” However, when we look at the Greek word for meek—*praus*—we see a truly different meaning. The first meaning describes a balance between emotional extremes. In other words, *meekness* would mean a balance between too much anger and not enough anger. When the Bible tells us, “In your anger do not sin” (Eph. 4:26, NIV), it is saying that there is a righteous and justifiable form of anger. As Christians we may appropriately feel angry at injustice in the world, but we would be off the mark to react in a hotheaded manner at being personally slighted. The first meaning of *meekness* marks this balance between emotional extremes.

Jesus not only advocates for meekness, He personifies it.

The second and more profound meaning of *meekness* describes the dynamic of a horse or an ox relenting to and accepting a necessary degree of control from its master. It is here that we find a powerful animal that could well crush its owner but instead allows itself to be led, trained, and directed by the will of its master. The Bible, in stating meekness as an indicator of the Spirit-filled life, thus shows that a Christian has power but submits that power to God’s will.

Humanity’s Aversion to Meekness (1 Cor. 2:14)

Sinful nature rears its ugly head in the form of self-will. Carnal nature will not allow itself to be tamed or subjugated by anyone or anything. In the Garden of Eden, Eve, in listening to the serpent’s voice, doubted God and exercised her own will against His will. In so doing, she went against the spirit of meekness. She did not remain submitted to God. Most people would agree that as humans, we have a hard time with submission. The origin of sin shows us that God granted the gift of meekness in order for humanity to remain in His will.

Jesus Says, “Be Like Me” (Matt. 11:29)

Jesus, our perfect Example, came into the world to show us the way of salvation. His life is one of total surrender and trust in His heavenly Father. The Bible tells of how He often prayed through the night to obtain the strength

to fulfill His mission. Thus, He invites us to consider His yoke. In His time, a yoke was not something you picked up at the Jerusalem Wal-Mart where all yokes hung together on a rack. Instead, a yoke was a custom-made tool that a carpenter would make to accommodate the animals that would use it to haul a heavy load. The yoke itself was not a burden but rather a tool that made the burden easier to carry. So, in essence, Jesus is saying, “As long as you’re carrying that burden, let Me give you a yoke to help you out. And by the way, My yoke is easy.” Jesus also put it in the following way, “ ‘In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world’ ” (John 16:33, NIV).

Jesus not only advocates for meekness, He personifies it. In His quest to save humanity, His life exemplified meek surrender—the only way we can possibly enter into a right relationship with God and experience true joy and unending happiness. Jesus easily could have used His power to overwhelm His enemies. However, He kept that power under the controlling will of God. It is a deception to think that we can truly be happy outside the will of God. True happiness can be found only in surrender.

“In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with [God]. . . . After his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness. . . . Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. . . . Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for him. The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there . . . would touch no answering chord in his soul. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there.”*

Jesus exemplified this surrender and invites us to follow Him in meekness.

The Promise of the Meek (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 37:11; Matt. 5:5; Gal. 5:22, 23)

If you’ve ever wondered why the meek are the inheritors of the earth, you are not alone. Looking at Genesis, our first parents were commanded by God to fill the earth and take care of it. Sin changed all of that. However, we also find in the Old Testament an appeal to humanity to resubmit their will to God based on the following promise: “But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace” (Ps. 37:11, NIV). Jesus’ life on earth showed us what true meekness is. In Galatians, the promise of the meek inheriting the earth is renewed so that now through the Spirit we can receive this fruit.

REACT

1. What is preventing you from living out meekness?
2. What are the implications for meek Christians that they shall inherit the earth? Does this promise have an immediate impact, or is it only for the future? Explain your answer.

* *Steps to Christ*, pp. 17, 18.

Testimony
Meekness:
“Unmistakable Evidence”

John 3:1–21; 15:1–6

“The abiding presence of meekness is an unmistakable evidence that we are branches of the True Vine, and are bearing much fruit. It is an evidence that we are by faith beholding the King in his beauty and becoming changed into his likeness. Where meekness exists, the natural tendencies are under the control of the Holy Spirit. Meekness is not a species of cowardice. It is the spirit which Christ manifested when suffering injury, when enduring insult and abuse. To be meek is not to surrender our rights; but it is the preservation of self-control under provocation to give way to anger or to the spirit of retaliation. Meekness will not allow passion to take the lines.

“Meekness is not a species of cowardice.”

“When Christ was accused by the priests and Pharisees, he preserved his self-control, but he took his position decidedly that their charges were untrue. He said to them: ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’ ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?’ He knew that his position was right. When Paul and Silas were beaten and thrust into prison without trial or sentence, they did not surrender their right to be treated as honest citizens. When there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, and the doors were opened, and every man’s bands were loosed, and the magistrates sent word to the prisoners that they might depart in peace, Paul entered a protest, and said: ‘They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. . . . And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.’ Through the action of Paul and Silas the name of God was magnified and the authorities were humbled. It was necessary that the honor of God should be vindicated at this time.”*

REACT

Most likely, you are currently facing a situation that requires the type of meekness Christ exhibited while on this earth. How might you react in a meek manner, so that God’s honor will be vindicated and you will not be surrendering your rights, yet all the while maintaining self-control with the help of the Holy Spirit?

*Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 22, 1895.

Meekness does not stand for weakness. If it did, it would be impossible for a weak individual to inherit the earth. At a glance, biblical people who were meek seemed to be submissive and to have cowered at authority. Looks, however, can be deceiving. Meekness is rooted in loyalty to God alone and in obedience to Him as our Judge and King.¹ Christians suffer trials and tribulations for their obedience. People who are meek will have worries, but they will communicate with God and find comfort and strength within His Word. Bible reading and prayer will guide them. Such individuals are able to inherit the earth.

God's strength is perfect, and He will strengthen us if we let Him.

One definition of *meek* means “yielded.” It carries the idea of strength under control. “When a horse is domesticated, it is trained so a rider can sit upon its back or so that it can pull a plow. The proper term for this process is that the animal has been ‘meeked’ or broken. It yields to the rider or the yoke. The animal now exhibits strength under control.”² Abraham was meek. If he had relied on his own strength, he would not have considered the idea of sacrificing his son, nor would he have left his home to go to an unknown place. Job may have had questions and doubts when in tribulation, but with meekness, he was able to say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21, NKJV). If Job had relied on his strength alone, he would have cursed God and died right there (Job 2:9). Meekness led John the Baptist to say, “He must increase, and I must decrease” (John 3:30, NKJV). Isn’t that what meekness is all about? God’s strength is perfect, and He will strengthen us if we let Him.

Peter addressed Christians with this reminder: you “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His [God’s] own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV). People such as Abraham and Peter knew they were royalty. They could rejoice in their privileged status. Before, they had been in darkness, but once they yielded in meekness to God’s will they came into God’s light. They had a desire for the kingdom that was promised to them.

So, my friend, be ye meeked.

1. God’s Word to Women, “What Is Meekness?” <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/Lesson 52.htm> (accessed December 4, 2008)

2. “What Is Meekness?” <http://healtheland.wordpress.com/2007/11/15/what-is-meekness> (accessed December 4, 2008)

How-to A Vowel Makes All the Difference

Phil. 2:3–5;
1 Pet. 3:4

There is a Spanish saying that goes like this: “*Manso pero no menso*” (Meek but not a fool). In Spanish, one vowel makes all the difference between the two words *manso* and *menso*. Yet in practice, there is an abyss between them. For many Christians, Jesus’ gift to be “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29) is one of the hardest gifts to accept and exemplify. Perhaps the reason is not unwillingness but one’s comprehension of what meekness encompasses.

God’s Spirit living in us tips the balance and makes all the difference.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines meekness as “deficient in spirit and courage: submissive” and “not . . . strong.” These definitions are negative. They make it seem that meek people are silent doormats for strong and competent people to walk on. And if we are all honest, none of us would consciously volunteer for a position as doormat.

Nevertheless, in 1 Peter 3, Jesus says that meekness is of great value to God. Therefore, it is imperative that we obtain it. Through Jesus’ example, we can learn that meekness is revealed not only in the things we do, but in how we do them. Our attitude determines whether we are meek or we are fools. Being meek encompasses having the ability to respond harshly yet choosing not to. This can be accomplished only by following Jesus’ example of meekness. Here are ways we can do so:

Submitting totally to God (John 5:30). Though Jesus was an equal Member of the Godhead, He surrendered completely to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. When we face a difficult situation, our relationship with God plays a key role in how we respond.

Putting others before self (Phil. 2:5–7). Jesus offered all He was for our sake. When we see others going through a challenging situation and have the resources to help them, then we must do so, even if doing so puts us in an uncomfortable position.

Walking humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). When we follow the requirements listed in Micah 6:8, we allow ourselves to become agents of change in other people’s lives.

God wants us to be patient and humble yet always ready to fight the good fight of faith. Based on the world’s standards, we might appear to be fools. Yet God’s Spirit living in us tips the balance and makes all the difference.

Matt. 11:29, 30

Opinion

*True Peace Is Found in
Our Humility*

We often hesitate to take the advice of others. And if we were to do so, we'd first want to know about their experience, background, beliefs, and so on. Because, after all, do they know what they're talking about? Have they gone through what you're going through? Will they really understand you?

**We do not find true peace by acquiring possessions,
money, or personal power.**

It's difficult for us to simply believe and follow, to drop all of our life experience and think that someone else could lead us through a crisis or hardship. In addition to that, imagine if the person giving the advice also said, "Do what I say, and carry my burden." That's a lot to ask, isn't it? It requires you to humble yourself and truly believe that the one giving the advice is completely trustworthy, faithful, and, most important, has your best interest at heart.

Jesus Christ—our Savior, Teacher, Friend, and Lord—tells us in Matthew 11:29, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (NKJV). In verse 30, Jesus goes on to tell us that His burden is light. I imagine that Jesus adds this because He knows our hearts. He knows that our first reaction will be, "Take your yoke? No way! I have enough upon my shoulders as it is!"

Jesus knows our "load" and that it is nothing compared to His "load" as Creator and Caretaker. He also knows that when we accept His yoke, our burden becomes lighter. From Him we can learn how to find rest for our souls by being gentle and humble, rather than self-righteous and critical of others.

We do not find true peace by acquiring possessions, money, or personal power. There is proof of that in the life of the average Hollywood celebrity. The world can take material things away from us as quickly as it gives such things to us. Our covetous nature is self-destructive and leads only to more pain and problems. But Jesus leads by example and shows us that only by humbling ourselves can we inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus is our Example for living. The peace He gives to us is a gift. We cannot earn it with good deeds or a hefty bank account. All we can do is humble ourselves, praise Him, and grow the fruit of meekness modeled by our Lord and Savior, King, and Friend. Only then, do we find peace that is everlasting and life that is eternal.

Meekness—A Strong Word

Phil. 2:5–8

CONCLUDE

To be meek is to be many things. It is to be gentle and kind. To be meek is not having to win an argument. To be meek is to be less defensive. It is to think of others first and to be of service to those around you. To be meek is to give up on having to be right. To be meek is to know and to act on the truth that all people are valuable. To be meek is to be Christlike. No wonder meekness is a strong word.

CONSIDER

- Praying “blessed are the meek” for an entire week and reflecting on how being meek can change your life for the better.
- Attending a church of a different culture from yours for a month and making friends there with at least three people.
- Not blowing your car horn for a week. Journal what changes you see in yourself in relationship to other drivers and your own driving habits.
- Spending time weekly for two months with a group of people or with an individual who has special needs. Do this through a service organization that needs help. What did you learn about meekness and how it can change your life as a result of your experience? Ideally this experience will become a regular feature of your life.
- Giving up your views and the need to be right in a family discussion.
- Practicing the discipline of silence for ten minutes daily for a week. What do you hear God telling you during those times?
- Finding ways to defend the rights of the needy and poor in your community.

CONNECT

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 13–18; *Welfare Ministry*, pp. 81–86.

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Self-Control

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”

(1 Cor. 9:27, NKJV).



Introduction
*Christ-Control Is
Self-Control*

Prov. 25:28;
Gal. 5:18, 24, 25

Proverbs 25:28 basically tells us about controlling one's temper. Walls were erected to guard a city against crime. A city that was not protected was exposed to all sorts of things. Likewise, a person without self-control exposes himself or herself to all sorts of evil. Self-control is the power to restrain and direct oneself according to God's will and for His glory.

We learn self-control as we surrender ourselves to the Lord.

Temptation, my beloved guest
That keeps me in denial on my quest
To find fulfillment for this my burden
Which does on my shoulders rest.
It irritates this self that I hesitate to resist
That which satisfies my lustful being. I persist
To think of the consequences of my existence. I exist
Within this weak brand of flesh
That has led me to the rivers of sin, to taste
Of sin wrapped in the desires of still this flesh.
But resistance is now a dream,
A dream that I live for.
As my thoughts travel through time, I see
My mind has driven me to owning a value—
SELF-CONTROL.

Self-control is not gained merely by suppressing lust, but also by controlling lust. It is the manifestation of God's work in us through the Holy Spirit. The lack of self-control is responsible for many of today's problems. Lacking in love for God and His Word results in a lack of self-control (2 Tim. 3:1–4).

How does one gain self-control? "In order to know how to behave ourselves circumspectly, we must follow where Christ leads the way."* We learn self-control as we surrender ourselves to the Lord. To be Christ-controlled is to know that we are His. This week, let your prayer be, "Uphold my steps in Your paths, / That my footsteps may not slip" (Ps. 17:5, NKJV).

* *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 154.

Phil. 4:8

Evidence
*Self-Control or
Self-Destruction*

Details involving Alexander the Great's death are debatable. One account states that while busy with plans to improve the irrigation of the Euphrates and to settle the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, Alexander became quite ill at a function honoring Nearchus's departure for Arabia. This same function also commemorated the death of Heracles. At this affair, Alexander filled a huge beaker with wine and drank it quickly. This caused him great pain and distress. However, no one was able to help him, and it was evident he would die. His friends asked him: "To whom do you leave the kingdom?" He replied, "To the best [the strongest]." These were his last words.

"Control of consciousness determines quality of life."

Before he died, Alexander gave his ring to Predicca. This ring was a symbol of kingship. At sundown on either June 10 or 11 323 B.C., after a ten-day fever, Alexander died in the palace of [Nebuchadnezzar].¹ He was called the Great, but he was not the greatest in exercising self-control. He conquered the world, but he could not conquer his lust. If this account is the true account, then he literally drank his life away.

According to a convergence of scientific evidence and spiritual beliefs, consistent well-being depends more on one's ability to control internal experience than on controlling external events and circumstances. By no means is this a new view. It is an insight found in many cultures and religions. "The simple truth—that control of consciousness determines quality of life—has been known . . . for as long as human records exist."² The control of internal desires determines the outcome of the external experiences.

In the first part of 2 Samuel 11, David intentionally observes Bathsheba bathing and orders that she be brought to him. As a result of his lack of self-control, Bathsheba becomes pregnant, and David has her husband murdered so he can marry her. This murder itself displays further lack of self-control. Joseph, in contrast, did exercise self-control when Potiphar's wife presented herself to him. Even though her lie about what happened landed Joseph in prison, the final outcome of his refusal to succumb to her proposition was that a nation was saved from starvation.

1. "Alexander the Great," <http://w3.usf.edu/~hellenic/FrameMakedonia.htm> (accessed December 12, 2008).

2. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), p. 20.

Logos
Mastery of Self

Judges 13–16;
1 Cor. 9:24–27;
Phil. 4:8;
Col. 3:1–10;
Heb. 12:1, 2;
1 John 2:15, 16

The Meaning of Temperance (Ps. 101:3; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Gal. 5:23; Phil. 3:8, 9)

Temperance is the mastery of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, habits, appetites, desires, and passions. Temperance, or self-control, means dying to self and letting Christ take control of every aspect of our lives. Notice that this fruit describes one's relationship to self.

The Word encourages us to season our speech with grace.

When to Acquire Self-Control (Genesis 37–39; Judges 13–16; Daniel 1; Luke 2:52)

"In childhood and youth the character is most impressible. The power of self-control should then be acquired. . . . More than any natural endowment, the habits established in early years will decide whether a man shall be victorious or vanquished in the battle of life."¹ Proof of this is seen in the lives of Jesus, Daniel and his companions, and Joseph. Many people advise enjoying life while you are young. Then when you are old, you can start living righteously. This doesn't work, however. Consider the lives of Samson, Nero, and Alexander the Great. God teaches us that we must seek Him in the days of our youth (Eccl. 11:9, 10; 12:1). "The youth who finds joy and happiness in reading the word of God and in the hour of prayer is constantly refreshed by draughts from the Fountain of life. He will attain a height of moral excellence and a breadth of thought of which others cannot conceive."²

The Mind and Our Speech (Prov. 4:25, 26; Col. 3:2, 3; 1 John 2:15, 16)

"The mind is the capital of the body. The mind controls the whole man. All our actions . . . have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings."³ What we say and do originates in the mind. How we respond to stimuli in our environment generally originates in the mind. If our minds are focused on the world, we will act and think as the world does. The apostle Peter urges us to be in control of our minds (1 Pet. 1:13). If we want to think a certain way, we need to focus on things that are associated with that way (Prov. 4:25, 26), for by beholding we become changed. We must set our minds on things above, store our treasures in heaven, and love not the world. We must focus on Christ (Isa. 26:3) and learn to think the way He thinks, for He is our perfect Example. Once

we have control over our minds, it will be easier to control our speech. The Word encourages us to season our speech with grace so that others might be led to Christ (Col. 4:6; Rom. 15:18). Pray for God to watch over your lips (Ps. 141:3). And always remember that our words express our thoughts.

Appetite (Heb. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31)

Our bodies are temples of God. Therefore, we must not consume food or drink that will defile our bodies. In Hebrews 12:1, we are urged to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God.

What we eat affects how we think. “No Christian will take into his system food or drink that will cloud his senses, or that will so act upon the nervous system as to cause him to degrade himself, or to unfit him for usefulness. The temple of God must not be defiled. The faculties of mind and body should be preserved in health, that they may be used to glorify God.”⁴ All that we do should be done for God’s glory.

Fruit (Matt. 19:26; John 15:5, 16; Gal. 5:22–25; Phil. 4:13)

On a vine, the branches produce fruit. The fruit and the branches depend on the vine for survival. Christ said that He is the Vine, and we are the branches. If we as branches stay connected to Him, we will bear much fruit. So without Him, we cannot grow the fruit of the Spirit. Without Him, we cannot have self-control. The Holy Spirit’s fruit can only be grown in us to the extent that we depend on Christ (Matt. 19:26; Phil. 4:13).

A branch does not produce fruit for its own consumption, but to serve others. Likewise, we bear the Holy Spirit’s fruit so that we can bless others and lead them to Christ. We “must be able to overcome the desires of the flesh and avoid what is bad, while doing good to others.”⁵ “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves” (Rom. 14:7, NRSV).

REACT

1. Do you ever limit temperance to just health issues? If yes, how can you change?
2. Consider your own habits or lack thereof. Which habits show self-control or a lack of self-control? How can you develop better habits?

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 134.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

3. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 72.

4. *Temperance*, p. 18.

5. Roberto Badenas, “Temperance,” *Adventist Review*, October 26, 1995, p. 19.

Determining the Future

“What can be done to stay the tide of disease and crime that is sweeping our race down to ruin and to death? As the great cause of the evil is to be found in the indulgence of appetite and passion, so the first and great work of reform must be to learn and practice the lessons of temperance and self-control. To effect a permanent change for the better in society, the education of the masses must begin in early life. The habits formed in childhood and youth, the tastes acquired, the self-control gained, the principles inculcated from the cradle, are almost certain to determine the future of the man or woman. The crime and corruption occasioned by intemperance and lax morals might be prevented by the proper training of the youth.

Those who do not overcome in little things will have no moral power to withstand greater temptations.

“One of the greatest aids in perfecting pure and noble characters in the young, strengthening them to control appetite and refrain from debasing excesses, is sound physical health. And, on the other hand, these very habits of self-control are essential to the maintenance of health.”¹

“The walls of self-control and self-restriction should not in a single instance be weakened and broken down. . . . Those who do not overcome in little things will have no moral power to withstand greater temptations. All who seek to make honesty the ruling principle in the daily business of life will need to be on their guard that they covet ‘no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.’ While they are content with convenient food and clothing, it will be found an easy matter to keep the heart and hands from the defilement of covetousness and dishonesty.”²

“You will doubtless meet with things that will ruffle your spirit and severely test you; but self-control may be yours in the strength of Jesus.”³

REACT

1. What practical steps can we take to guard the avenues of our minds?
2. How much damage has lack of self-control caused in our communities?

1. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 13, 1881.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 574.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 501.

Judges 13–16;
1 Cor. 9:24–27;
Phil. 4:8;
Col. 3:1–10;
Heb. 12:1, 2;
1 John 1:15, 16

How-to When No One Is Looking

You're the only person in your parents' room. Guess what you see on the dressing table? Money! It's almost calling out your name. Do you take it and quickly disappear, or do you resist the temptation?

God left a trail for us to follow as we develop self-control.

Resisting temptation can be a battle, especially when there's no one there to witness. Jesus Himself admitted that even though at times our spirits will be willing to do what is right, our carnal nature is like a wind that pushes us back (Mark 14:38). In the hour of trial, when we think no one is watching, God sees us. He desires that we practice self-control and that we control our tempers even when we are deliberately provoked by others (Rom. 12:19–21). He desires that we become temperate in our diets and that we subject even our thoughts to that which is holy and acceptable to Him. God left a trail for us to follow as we develop self-control. The trail is clearly marked with signs. Here are a few:

Buckle up (1 Thess. 5:17). When we do, we're making sure that our hearts are safely fastened to God's throne of grace. We do this by fervently praying and putting our trust in the Almighty, whose arm is not too short to save us. Being in constant communion with Him will keep His words fixed in our hearts. Then the Holy Spirit can deliver us.

Meditate (Phil. 4:8). If we fill our minds with pure thoughts, we will be better equipped to resist temptation. As the seeds of good thoughts germinate and take root in our minds, we will be better able to counter any attacks that jeopardize our self-control. Resisting evil will then become a matter of principle.

Learn to do good (Isa. 1:17). Helping others is one of the best escape routes when fighting temptation. When you're faced with a trying situation, stand up for God, turn full circle, and do what is good instead. Acts of kindness will counter temptation and direct your focus to God's strength rather than your weakness.

Run, friend, run (James 4:7). Fleeing from temptation is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of self-control. God says we must avoid the devil because the battle is not ours, but His. When we run, we acknowledge His saving grace and His ability to save us. Run, and let Him take care of your fears.

Caution: Power of Self-Control Weakened!

Ps. 101:3

Many Christians are not aware of the dangers present to us through various media. Television, radio, magazines, and many Internet Web sites are designed to control our minds without our even being aware of it. "Any information programmed subliminally to your subconscious mind meets no resistance. This subliminal information is stored in your brain with an identification that will trigger a delayed alarm clock reaction capable of influencing your behavior."¹ Such messages are presented to us so rapidly in the form of printed words, pictures, or voices that we are not consciously aware of them. Knowing about information that is programmed to reach us subliminally gives added meaning to our text for today. It's almost as if the psalmist understood fully that the subconscious mind can absorb many things that it's not even aware of.

Media seek to define reality for us.

Media seek to define reality for us. A great deal of it presents sin in exciting ways. It's as if those working in various media take special effort to degrade our mental and spiritual abilities. The danger for us is that the values of the sinful world gradually shape how we think and then eventually how we live. Hence, the struggle for self-control occurs. Media can also deaden our interest and ability to meditate on God's Word. Here is what author and avid reader Nicholas Carr has to say about his personal experience: "What the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles."²

REACT

1. How can you personally avoid the deception of the media?
2. Consider what you read and watch, the music you listen to, and your Internet usage. How might they all be influencing your ability to study the Bible and apply its truths to your life? What might you need to change in order to more effectively study God's Word and practice its teachings?
3. Why does the Bible require us to abstain from the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22)?

1. Steven Jacobson, *Mind Control in the United States* (n.p.: Critique Pub., 1985), p. 7.

2. Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" *The Atlantic*, July/August 2008, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google> (accessed December 12, 2008).

Gal. 5:16–25;
Col. 3:1–10

Exploration

Wholesome Choices

CONCLUDE

A temperate life is one of habitual self-control. This is easy if the individual develops healthy habits at an early age. However, with God's grace, all of us can live happy, balanced lives whenever we start a good habit. Temperance is not what you don't do. It's all the good things you choose to do. If we fill our bodies with healthful food, our minds with wholesome study, our ears and eyes with God's blessings, and our leisure time with acts of generosity, our lives will produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

CONSIDER

- Reading Rudyard Kipling's poem *If*, and consider how his advice and Paul's in Galatians and Colossians can help you live a life of self-control.
- Finding a new recipe with healthful ingredients to prepare and share for Sabbath lunch.
- Making a list of the things you did in your leisure time last week. Evaluate each activity for its wholesomeness. Make a list of positive alternatives to the negatives on your first list. Act on your positive alternatives.
- Finding a friend who will help you start a new good habit. Go jogging together; share diet tips, music, books, outreach activities, or anger management or addiction-fighting strategies. Commit with your friend to practice this new habit for 40 consecutive days.
- Asking a close friend to name one thing that you habitually do that is hurting yourself and others. Discuss ways to change this behavior and devise a plan to do so.
- Reading a biography about a person who successfully overcame his or her bad habits.

CONNECT

The Ministry of Healing (There is an excellent abridged youth edition called *Heal the World, Begin With Yourself*, edited by Gary Swanson, 1997.)

Ben Carson and Cecil Murphey, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1990); Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002).

lesson eleven
MARCH 6-13

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Righteousness

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6, NKJV).*



Matt. 23:25–28

Introduction
*Beautiful
From the Inside*

In many parts of the world, a great deal of emphasis is placed on self-improvement and personal appearances. Much of the desire to be youthful and beautiful is fueled by the advertising industry, whose message seems to be, “If you look good, you’ll feel good, and you’ll achieve more in your life.” Consequently, many people invest considerable effort and expense in dieting, cosmetic surgery, gym memberships, and a wide range of self-improvement techniques to ensure that they are always looking their youthful best.

To exhibit righteousness properly involves one’s interior as well as exterior life.

For two weeks in October 2008, I volunteered to participate in an overseas mission trip. We travelled to Aore Adventist Academy in Vanuatu, where we assisted in the maintenance of several campus buildings. It was a tremendous experience to help restore the exterior of those buildings to their former glory. However, our group felt that we benefited far more than the recipients of our volunteer work. Sure, it was hot, hard work to scrub mold and flaky paint off the outside of the buildings before we could paint them. Yet it was not the work that enriched our lives. It was the treasure we discovered on the inside of those buildings—the spiritually sincere and loving hearts of the Aore students.

In Matthew 23:27, Jesus compares the teachers of the law and the Pharisees to “‘whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean’ ” (NIV). In other words, the exteriors of the buildings were brilliantly maintained, but the contents were dead and decaying. Evidently, to exhibit righteousness properly involves one’s interior as well as exterior life.

We cannot hope to develop righteousness as a fruit of the Spirit by merely exercising our personal strengths, resources, and endeavors. At best, our finest efforts can only match the experience of those whom Jesus so pointedly criticized. We will achieve only an outward appearance of righteousness.

Righteousness is a fruit of the Spirit that is beautiful, externally and internally. Jesus is the Author of that righteousness, and it is only as we allow the Holy Spirit to help us grow and nurture Christ’s righteousness within us that our lives can become the treasure we desire it to be for our God—beautiful on the outside *and* on the inside.

Logos
A Righteous Cause

Matt. 23:25–28;
Rom. 3:28; 8:1–4; 10:1–3;
Gal. 3:6;
1 John 2:3–6; 5:1–3

Receiving Eternal Life (Mark 10:17–22)

It's one of the most urgent questions anyone can ask, “ ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ” (Mark 10:17, NIV). The rich young ruler, who asked the question of Jesus, thought he already knew the answer. He thought his careful to-do list of good deeds had already done the trick. And, yes, we read that he went away sorrowful when Jesus added one more item to the list—giving up all his possessions.

**The righteous cause we are about is not
how good we have to be.**

But unless that story is read correctly, it will only deepen the mystery of how we can inherit eternal life. Logically, we must recognize that the rich young ruler would still be lacking in effective righteousness even if he had given away all that he had. He would then have been on the right track to “knowing Jesus”—shorthand for something theologians argue about and make obtuse, but yet the very essence of what the entire issue of salvation centers on.

Jesus spent well over three years with His disciples. But did they really know Him by the time the soldiers took Him by force in the garden? Yes, they recognized Him as a Great Teacher. On one occasion, after Jesus had scared many of His followers away with talk of His martyrdom, Peter actually confessed that he thought Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. How much he understood of his own statement is in Jesus' comment that it came not from man, but an answer given to Him. Certainly Peter resorted rather easily to forbidden force in trying to save Jesus, and then fled the scene of His arrest to perjure his faith by repeated profanities. He knew Jesus well enough to be heartbroken at the loss of a friend; but not until Pentecost did he *know* what knowing Jesus really meant.

What Does Obedience Have to Do With It? (1 John 2:3)

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3, NKJV). Much of the Christian life is not easily self-perceived. In fact, as with the rich young ruler, it almost goes without saying that someone's claim to be good or perfect only highlights his or her deficiency—revealing

pride if nothing else, which was, after all, Lucifer's original sin. Yet, a sign of knowing Jesus is in keeping His commandments.

I sometimes think that we have overexplained the dynamic of obedience, perfection, and righteousness. The legality of our salvation is clear. We lost all because of Adam's sin and our continuing propensity to repeat it. By a life of obedience carried forward even to the Cross, the God-man Jesus Christ redeemed us from the consequences of sin and gave our Creator the moral right before His own creation to reclaim us from the state of disobedience. That much we had nothing to do with. It was unmerited favor from the Creator. It is in the practicality of how we were reclaimed that much of the confusion arises.

In 1 John 5:1, we read that "whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (NKJV). The believing here is more than mental assent. In verse 6, John speaks of water and blood. In this, there is talk of the Spirit. This is, of course, a repetition of Jesus' counsel to Nicodemus that in order to be saved one must be born of water and the Spirit. In 1 John, we are reminded that for us, water means dying to the old life. However, for Jesus it was "blood"—His actual death—that has practical value for our transformation. And all of this is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

There is a wonderful triumphalism in John's words. "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world," he proclaims. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (verse 4, NKJV).

Faith without works is dead, James tells us in his epistle (James 2:17). John has shown us that faith is the actual dynamic of belief and action that proves the righteousness of God in our lives. Without this dynamic, we are not saved. Without it we show that we have never "seen" Jesus. Without it we can never begin to emulate our Lord and vindicate the trust He has placed in us.

Put another way, the righteous cause we are about is not how good we have to be. We are all poor judges of our own actions. We are to be about having the mind of Christ. That is quite a tall character call. Thank God we have the power of the Holy Spirit to inspire and mold not only our actions, but our very state of mind.

REACT

1. Can we say, I am saved—present continuous? How else can we express it?
2. Are we saved because we obey? Or do we obey because we are saved? Can we "be saved" without obedience? Explain your answers.
3. John seems to put much on the emotional relationship established by Jesus' life and death. How is this central?
4. If we are under obligation to God, at what point do we meet His expectation?

Love Is a Doing Word

1 John 4:16

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

Jesus loves practically.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it.”¹

More than merely the absence of sin in our lives, righteousness is God’s love, which is His character and law. Because love is a doing word, righteousness is surrendering to God and allowing His love and goodness to be lived through us. It is trusting that the opportunities, wisdom, talents, resources, and power to love practically come from God. It is listening to the Spirit’s promptings and being a channel through which God can meet needs.

Jesus loves practically. He helped His tired friends catch fish, and He healed entire villages. He befriended outcasts and showed compassion to a woman caught in adultery. He died our death, so that His righteousness would cover us; and now He mixes His righteousness with our prayers and presents them to His Father.

Yet He is not always permissive and softly spoken in His love. Jesus drove money-changers from His Father’s house when they did not honor God, and He spoke the truth in love when it was difficult to hear. Love needs to be clear to be kind, setting boundaries and protecting people from crossing them and hurting themselves. Love is saying “No” when it is not popular to say “No.” Love can be messy, difficult, and tiring. To love this way requires faith, which is also a fruit of the Spirit!

Jesus is our Example and Substitute for righteousness. Let us continue to meditate on His life, and “as we discern the perfection of our Saviour’s character we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness.”²

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Matt. 23:25–27;
Rom. 3:28

Evidence

More Than Appearances

During the time of Christ, the “letter of and spirit of legalism—of righteousness by one’s own works—which in NT times, came to be identified with Jewish religion, accurately reflected the spirit and teachings of the Pharisees.” They “tended to overlook the fact that the disposition of the heart was of greater importance than the outward act.”* They believed that keeping the innumerable laws they had created would prove one was a righteous Jew and would therefore secure one’s place in heaven.

There are still those who believe that what they do is more important than what they believe.

Jesus had been talking with the people about doing what is right. The Pharisees, hearing that the Sadducees were unable to trick Jesus with their questions, decided they would give it a try. Jesus answered their questions in turn and then delivered a powerful rebuttal. “You are hypocrites! You wash the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside they are full of things you got by cheating others and pleasing only yourselves” (Matt. 23:25, NCV). Throughout Matthew 23, Jesus shows these church leaders that they are more interested in appearing righteous, honest, and God-fearing than they are in actually fulfilling these actions.

Romans 3:28 takes the issue further, urging that salvation comes through having faith in God, not by obeying laws. Also read Romans 3:29, 30.

We see in our own churches and schools, and sometimes in our own homes, these same battles. There are still those who believe that what they do is more important than what they believe, and that if they act like a Christian on the outside, they can be what they like on the inside.

However, the verses we’ve looked at today make it clear that we need to be “clean” on the inside and that no amount of work, displays of humility and charity, or acting the way we think a Christian should act will get us to heaven. All we need is faith and to accept the gift of salvation. Read Romans 5:16, 18.

REACT

1. How would you explain to a nonbeliever what Romans 3:28 means?
2. Doing good things is important, but how can we make sure that we don’t turn our faith into a works-based religion?

**Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Pharisees.”

How-to Getting It Right

Rom. 10:3

Whenever a new electrical appliance or other piece of equipment arrived at home, it wasn't long before my mother would become frustrated, because my father, brothers, and I would always try to put it together without reading the instruction manual. Sometimes we'd get it right. I guess it's our human nature. Even regarding righteousness, people have a history of setting up their own procedures and experiments. The plethora of churches and denominations around the world testify to this. We leave God's instruction manual in the box and then wonder why our lives and the church don't look the way they're supposed to. So just how are we supposed to grow the fruit of righteousness? Here are a few ideas from God's Word:

Getting it right isn't about getting anything at all.

Start with yourself. When we think about "getting it right," it's easy to pick at others. But as Matthew 23:26 suggests, it isn't even about getting what's visible in our own lives right, let alone correcting others.

Stop trying. This is not a call to give up, but as the catchcry suggests, "Let go and let God." We can't create righteousness under our own steam. We must let God do it for us (Rom. 3:28).

Be willing to sacrifice. Getting it right isn't about getting anything at all. Rather, it's about giving. First John 2:6 encourages a life modeled on Christ, which at its very foundation was a life of sacrifice.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. When it gets to be too much, we don't have to resign ourselves to failure. Ask for help. Seek answers through the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and people you can trust. Sure it's humbling, but humility might just be the answer you're looking for.

Despite being married for more than 25 years, my father still tackles new equipment without consulting the instruction manuals. And my mother—well, I think she's stopped trying to make him do otherwise. When we come to understand the duality of righteousness—its imputed and imparted nature—it becomes obvious why our own efforts, like my father's, are always going to come up short. There is, and always has been, a plan. We just have to be willing to be led.

REACT

1. In what aspects of life have you struggled to let God take control?
2. Why do we always think we have the best way?
3. In what specific ways can we learn from the life of Christ?

Braden Blyde, Adelaide, South Australia

Rom. 6:23

Opinion

God's Creative Accounting

Creative accounting occurs when accounts are managed in such a way that the resources are reallocated to fit with their requirements, thus absorbing the differences and making the account appear to be balanced. Did you know that God has done some creative accounting? In His case, however, He added only value to the account.

Because God's value of love was pitted against His value of righteousness, something had to give.

The account in question involves our righteousness. When sin entered the world, humanity deserved to die (Rom. 6:23). Sin unbalanced God's divine justice, and a cost ensued. The problem was, and still is, that God not only values justice as part of His character and kingdom, but He also values love. Because God's value of love was pitted against His value of righteousness, something had to give. In His mercy and love, He cried out, "How can I give you up? . . . All my compassion is aroused" (Hosea 11:8, NIV). God's love could not fathom losing humanity. So in order for Him to rectify the sin problem, His creative accounting came into being. Jesus—God incarnate—came to die in our place, living a perfect life and dying our death. Through this process, He absorbed the cost of sin, which is eternal death.

"The grace of Christ and the law are inseparable. In Jesus mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* "The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NIV). This gift is for everyone who will accept Jesus' death for their sins.

We all have an opportunity to follow natural justice or divine justice. In natural justice, the wages of sin are payable by our eternal death. Divine justice came through Jesus' sacrifice, enabling the divine ledger to be balanced. The cost of sin has and will be accounted for. There is, however, a limiting factor. The limitation is not with God (as the cost already has been paid), but with humanity. Provision has been made for everyone to be saved. But God, in order to be truly just, allows us to accept His gift or reject it.

Our righteousness has been paid for, but it will be verified when the accounts are finally audited and confirmed. Our righteousness in and of itself is totally inadequate. It is only as we live in Jesus and accept His righteousness that we can then be made right. God's creative accounting will be the theme throughout all eternity.

* *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 349.

Exploration
*Christ Our
Righteousness*

Rom. 3:21–23

CONCLUDE

Righteousness comes not from obedience to the law but from submission to God. When Jesus lived on earth, He surrendered His life to God and followed His Father's instructions. If we are to live lives of righteousness, we must do the same. Each morning, we have a choice. We can sit on the throne of our heart, or we can step aside and let Jesus be our Master. "Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."*

CONSIDER

- Designing a small poster with the words *Christ Is My Righteousness* or another similar saying. Post it where you can see it daily.
- Writing two headings on a piece of paper: "Righteousness Is" and "Righteousness Is Not." Review this week's lesson. Then write down words or phrases that complete each of the lists.
- Writing a definition of what it means to "know" Jesus.
- Singing or repeating the words to the song "Not I, but Christ," which is no. 570 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. Try writing a fifth verse.
- Asking a number of people to define what it means to be righteous, and then creating your own definition.
- Meditating on what you could do this week that would give you a clearer vision of Jesus and His righteousness.

CONNECT

Joseph Stowell, *Simply Jesus and You* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Books, 2006), pp. 23–29; Ellet J. Waggoner, "The Lord Our Righteousness," *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 58–69; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook, 2008), pp. 112–122.

**Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

The Fruit of the Spirit Is
Truth

*“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with
all your heart” (Jer. 29:13, NKJV).*



Do the Right Thing?

2 Chron. 25:1, 2

As William stared out the window of the train he rode home from work, he noticed how rapidly the telephone poles were flashing across his view. He wondered, “Where have the years gone? I feel like they’ve passed by as fast as these telephone poles are passing by. Now what am I going to do?”

Is this an answer to my prayers? No one will ever know if I take these bags.

“William the Wiz.” Once upon a time that’s what everyone called him. Not too long ago, he had graduated at the top of his class with an MBA from Harvard. Immediately, he landed a six-figure job. Wall Street is where he received his nickname—the boy genius, the financial wizard. William was living the all-American dream—great job, exclusive home, and a loving wife. But then the banks started collapsing. His job and business went bankrupt. He lost all of his money, investments, and the expensive home he and his wife had come to love.

These thoughts raced through William’s mind as he got off the train to walk the rest of the way to the house he’d soon have to leave. He cried out, “Oh, God! Please help me. I’ve been a faithful Christian, and You’ve always blessed me with more than I’ve needed. I haven’t prayed to You in a while, but You know my heart.” What started out as a typical day in William’s world had become his worst nightmare. As he walked through the familiar wooded area to get to his estate home, he discovered an armored truck that had crashed down a small hill. The occupants, nowhere in sight, apparently had gone for help. About five steps from William were two bags, each stamped with these words: *1 million dollars.*

William thought to himself, *Is this an answer to my prayers? No one will ever know if I take these bags. I could pay off my house and get out of debt.* He stood there for what seemed like an eternity, analyzing his peculiar dilemma.

“Hello, 911? I’m reporting an accident. I’ll wait here for the authorities.” As William closed his cell phone, a text in Scripture came to him, which he repeated aloud. “Second Chronicles chapter twenty-five verse two. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal heart” (NKJV). Although he had been sorely tempted to keep the money, he knew that as a professed Christian, he had to do the right thing. This week, how will the fruit of truth grow in your life, as it grew in William’s the day the banks collapsed?

John 8:31, 32;
John 14:6, 16, 17; 17:17

Evidence

*Practice the Truth
to Reveal Fruit*

Jesus proclaimed that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). He also asked the Father to send us the Holy Spirit (the Comforter), which is the Spirit of truth (verse 17). Because we are unable physically to see Christ or speak to Him as His disciples did, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us to guide us in the truth Christ displayed while on earth. History has taught us that knowing the truth is good. However, we must apply the truth to our lives. How do we do this? John 17:17 says, “‘Your word is truth’ ” (NKJV). “The Word of God is declared to be ‘truth.’ The Scriptures reveal to us the character of God and of Jesus Christ. We become new creatures by making the truths of the Word of God a part of the life.”*

**The fruit make up a person's character.
They are what a person does.**

Because God's Word is truth and His Word encompasses the Ten Commandments, we can conclude that truth is displayed by keeping the law. Jesus says, “‘You will know them by their fruits’ ” (Matt. 7:16, NKJV). The fruit make up a person's character. They are what a person does. Thus, our transformation of character when we live by God's law makes evident the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is displayed when we put the Word/law of God into action. Christ's example teaches us how we should keep the law. Let us not be like the Pharisees who knew the truth but misapplied it. We thus need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's Word, as well as to correctly apply it to our daily lives.

If we continue in God's Word and keep His commandments, we will be His disciples, know the truth, and be free (John 8:31, 32). We must apply the truth by keeping God's law. Then we can enjoy true spiritual freedom, along with genuine happiness by being at peace with God and with others. Obeying His Word frees us from guilt, condemnation, and pain, because Jesus will replace the void with His fruit (character), which is composed of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). This fruit is a gift God wants to give everyone. We need to meditate daily on His Word, be obedient to what the Holy Spirit reveals to us as we study, and share the truth we learn with others.

REACT

What are some practical ways we can show the truth to others who do not know about Jesus?

* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1053.

Logos
Can You Handle It?

2 Chron. 25:2;
Ps. 51:17;
Jer. 29:13;
John 7:16, 17; 14:6; 17:3;
Heb. 5:14

Religion can be frightening. Every religious group claims to have the truth. Many individuals have become confused and have decided to go along with whatever truth feels right to them, hence the growth and popularity of spiritualism and the occult. Knowledge, traditions, and life experiences play a major role in what we think is truth. As Christians, what truth do we hold, and how should we respond to it?

**Sometimes we have to wait for our spiritual teeth to grow in
before we can eat the solids of God's truth.**

Christ the Truth (John 14:6)

The best way to find truth is through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thomas found this out when he asked Jesus where He was going (John 14:5). Jesus' response revealed a few things about Himself. In order for Thomas to gain access to the place his Master was going, he had to know that Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). The only way to gain access to the Father is through His Son.

True Proof (John 7:16, 17; 2 Chron. 25:2)

Throughout the Bible, God has validated His words through His actions. God is fair and just and doesn't want us to believe Him without making an educated decision. All of the miracles performed by God and Jesus show that they are truth. Jesus demonstrated this characteristic on earth. When He went to the temple to teach during a feast in Jerusalem, the people asked how He knew the things he taught (John 7:14, 15). He told the people they would have to live what He taught to find out if the doctrine He preached was true or false (John 7:16, 17).

Imagine if, as Christians, we all lived the teachings of Christ. Many people would then be blessed by our lives, and the truth would be stamped and sealed in the minds of the individuals being blessed. Even having the truth as it is in God, we sometimes become anesthetized by our spiritual routines and tradition. It is possible to know God's truth and to do His will with an unwilling

heart. Read 2 Chronicles 25:2. This text is speaking of King Amaziah of Judah, who carried out the law without his heart being in it. If we are willing, the Holy Spirit is able to make our hearts of iron malleable.

Exchange (Ps. 51:17; Jer. 29:13)

In order to learn something new, we have to give up something in exchange. In order to gain the knowledge of a mechanical engineer, it is necessary to give up one's personal time to study a variety of math and science concepts. One would also have to invest money in an educational institute to receive training. What do we have to give up to know Christ? Read Psalm 51:17 and Jeremiah 29:13.

Like a Baby (Heb. 5:14)

Babies are born without teeth. The variety of foods they can eat progresses as they grow—at first liquids, then soft foods, and when the teeth come in, hard solids. When we first receive knowledge of the truth, we are like a baby. It takes time and spiritual maturity to learn everything Christ has to teach us. Sometimes we have to wait for our spiritual teeth to grow in before we can eat the solids of God's truth. With maturity, we may be able to discern truth, and, therefore distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:14). Paul explained this concept so that we may preach the truth to those around us without bombarding them with spiritual things they aren't yet able to understand.

Eternal Life (Luke 4:18; John 17:3)

When our Savior came to earth to dwell as a human, He devoted His life to completing His mission—healing the sick and brokenhearted and preaching the gospel (Luke 4:18). Most of all, He came to give His life for everyone so that we all can live eternally with Him. Jesus revealed the truth about eternal life when He looked to heaven and uttered these words, “ ‘And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ ” (John 17:3, NKJV). Eternal life consists of knowing the truth about the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, who is the Way.

REACT

How did your life change when you found the truth as it is in Christ?

What other things did Jesus say or do to demonstrate His knowledge of the truth?

Testimony
 “The Truth
 That Changes”

John 16:13, 14;
 1 Cor. 2:10, 11

When we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, the truth shall be revealed. This experience has been manifested in my life as well as my wife’s.

Neither of us had any formal Bible studies. We relied on the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truths.

Growing up in an Adventist home, Bible study and knowledge of church doctrines were required. These requirements were fulfilled out of obligation rather than a heart-felt desire. As a result, when I grew older, I drifted away. However, at the age of 25, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. Shortly after that, someone bought me the Bible on CDs. I rarely missed a day of listening to them. It was only after listening to God’s Word with a heartfelt desire that a transformation occurred in my life.

My wife grew up in a Catholic home. In her early twenties, situations caused her to seek the Lord beyond the realm of that denomination. So, she began reading the Bible. Feeling something was missing from her church, she began attending a Pentecostal church. After three years of attending that church, she still felt something was missing. So she began praying to God about it. Shortly afterward, she heard the Adventist message. For three months, she studied on her own with the aid of the Holy Spirit. The truth she longed for was finally being revealed to her.

Neither of us had any formal Bible studies. We relied on the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truths.

“God intends that even in this life the truths of His word shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God’s Word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the word was given. ‘The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;’ ‘for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11. And the Saviour’s promise to His followers was, ‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. John 16:13, 14.’ ”*

REACT

What great truth about yourself has the Spirit revealed to you? Is there anything that needs to change? If so, how will you go about making that change?

*Steps to Christ, p. 109.

Pss. 15:1, 2; 119:11;
3 John 4;
Rev. 19:11; 22:6, 7

How-to Christ in Us, Faithful and True

In order to be Christlike, we must seek truth, obey it, and believe in truth's power. The Bible is comprised of truth. Over the centuries, the Word has disproved its many critics, as its prophetic writings have come to pass and continue to come to pass even in our day.

**Whenever we are tempted to tell a lie . . .
let us remember who our Father is.**

John 1 tells us that, in the beginning, the Word was with God, the Word was God, and "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, NKJV). God's Holy Spirit overshadowed a virgin and gave power to the word that He gave to the prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18–23). So then Jesus, whose mother is of human flesh, and whose Father is God, manifested characteristics of His Father's Word. John reveals Jesus' name as Faithful and True. Through personal experience, many Christians have found Jesus to be exactly that. Furthermore, these are the same characteristics of the words in the Bible. Jesus, like God's Word, is faithful and true (Rev. 3:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6).

Because we are God's children, we should also be faithful and true (1 John 3:1–3, 18, 19). Here then are ways we can show our Father's character and can worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Confess. James 5:16 says to confess our sins to one another and to pray for each other. It is good to have trustworthy friends with whom we can do this. However, there are some people we cannot trust, and there are some sins it would be wise to confess only to God. He is always willing to forgive us, to cleanse us from sin, and to help us not to sin again. Read Psalm 32:5 and 1 John 1:9.

Accept God's forgiveness. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and the Holy Spirit has the power to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Tell the truth. Whenever we are tempted to tell a lie (no matter how small), let us remember who our Father is and then choose to tell the truth. God will work out the rest if we trust Him to do so. Read Colossians 3:8, 9 and Revelation 22:14, 15.

REACT

Christ spent time seeking out the Father's truth in what we call the Old Testament. He chose to trust and obey that truth every moment of every day. How is it possible for us to do the same?

Are You an Undercover Christian?

John 17:3

Have you ever found yourself telling a so-called white lie? Maybe trying to make a good impression or avoiding punishment seemed more important at the time. What about that dear friend or relative who consistently fabricates lies to satisfy his or her delusions of grandeur? How disappointing and hurtful this is, when on a daily basis, lie after lie continues to unfold. It is hurtful because lies have the power to destroy relationships. It is disappointing because this person's spiritual condition is revealed.

Knowing truth is not beneficial unless truth is personally applied.

As I ponder the word *truth*, I realize that knowing truth is not beneficial unless truth is personally applied. In the Garden of Eden, God told the first couple the truth about eating the forbidden fruit. However, they chose to believe Satan's lies, and we know the results—pain, destruction, and death that will continue until the end of time.

In His wisdom and out of His love for us, God devised a way to pass truth down from generation to generation. As Christians preparing for eternity, applying truth to our everyday lives is as important as knowing the truth. In order to be truthful, we must have Jesus in our hearts. He will give us the ability to be truthful. “‘You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’” (John 8:32, NKJV). “Every soul that refuses to give himself to God . . . is not his own. . . . He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan.”* How important it is, then, to establish and maintain a personal relationship with God that includes total, daily surrender to Him. Our walk, talk, dress, attitude, and every fiber of our being will then reflect Christ.

Jesus said to His disciples, “‘I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing’” (John 15:5, NKJV). When the flow of nourishment from God is continuous and unobstructed, we will reap a full harvest of truth.

REACT

1. How can you help someone refocus his or her pursuit of self-esteem to the pursuit of knowing God?
2. In what ways could our financially overdrawn lifestyles be a result of insufficient spiritual deposits?

**The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

Prov. 11:3

Exploration

“Truth Has Two Meanings”

CONCLUDE

No matter how you define truth, it boils down to one thing—a lack of falsehood. We face truth as integrity every day of our lives: Should I call in sick so I can catch the gigantic sale downtown? Should I tell my professor I’m late because I was in a traffic jam when I really overslept? Should I tell the insurance company an unknown vehicle hit the back of my car and kept going, or that I actually backed into a trash can?

Just as there are no big sins or little sins, there is no “white lie,” “little fib,” or “just a little exaggeration.” Sin is sin. Integrity is integrity. The same is true of God’s Word. All of it is truth. It’s not for us to pick and choose what we want to believe. Christians will be known by their integrity—how truthfully they live, how truthfully they represent Jesus in their daily lives.

CONSIDER

- Examining and comparing a real flower with an artificial flower of the same species. What makes the real flower different or superior to the fake flower? Relate this to people who exhibit integrity to those who do not. Which one do you want for a friend? Why?
- Inventing a game with some friends in which you take turns telling stories that are interlaced with both fact and fiction. Have the listeners try to determine the truth by observing your body language, facial expression, and tone of voice. What did you learn?
- E-mailing or texting some of your friends, asking them these questions: What do you think *integrity* means? How does it apply to you? Why would you want your best friend to be a person of integrity?
- Reflecting on the week just past by asking yourself these questions: Was I always completely truthful? Why, or why not? Is this a problem I need Jesus to help me with?
- Googling the word *integrity*. How many entries did you find? What did you learn from some of what you read?
- Watching a DVD of a Bible story; then read it from a book and from the Bible. Which was closer to the Bible truth—the book or the DVD?

CONNECT

Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, pp. 437, 438.

Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing, 2001), pp. 104–107.

lesson thirteen

MARCH 20-27

*The Fruit of the Spirit:
The Essence of*

Christian Character

*“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of
the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in
you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27, NKJV).*



Introduction

Matt. 7:18–20;
Eph. 6:6*Forty-five Seconds Could
Determine Your Destiny*

With a dramatic come-from-behind victory in the state finals, Coach Cleveland Stroud and the Rockdale County High School's Bulldogs wrapped up a successful championship season in the Georgia boys' basketball tournament of 1987. Yet there's no record of it in their trophy case, because school officials alerted the authorities that a scholastically ineligible player had played for 45 seconds during their first postseason game. "We didn't know he was ineligible at the time," Stroud reported. "Some people have said we should have kept quiet about it, that it was just 45 seconds and the player wasn't an impact player. But you've got to do what's honest and what the rules say. I told my team that people forget the scores of basketball games; but they don't ever forget what you're made of."¹

Like it or not, we are in the spotlight.

Many of us fake engaging personalities in order to hide our true colors, but our real characters are revealed by what we do when we think no one is watching. I've heard that the main reason people don't believe in God is because so many Christians profess Him with their lips but deny Him with their lives.

Hope, however, is not lost. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we can acquire new characters (2 Cor. 5:17) and become grafted into Jesus (John 15:5). During this quarter, we've studied the essence of Christian character: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, righteousness, and truth. These heavenly attributes, though not brought to fruition through any conscious effort on our part, are perfected when we persevere in doing what's right, whether it be returning extra change received from a cashier or not following the crowd in doing evil.

Like it or not, we are in the spotlight. We are known by our spiritual fruit (Matt. 7:20). "When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world."²

Sow a habit, reap a character; but sow a character and you reap a destiny. People never forget what you're made of. So what are you going to do? You have only seconds to react—45 to be exact.

1. William Schmidt, "For Town and Team, Honor Is Its Own Reward," *New York Times*, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE4D8123FF936A15756C0A961948260> (accessed October 5, 2008).

2. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Glasgow: Fount Paperback, 1977), p. 173.

Restoring His Character: The Fruit of the Spirit

Matt. 6:33;
John 15:8;
Rom. 3:20–26; 14:17;
1 Tim. 6:11;
1 John 2:15

Character Destroyed

Just as the young couple started to enjoy being made in God's image, they cut their lives short by tasting a tempting fruit. By eating of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve lost within themselves God's character. Not only did disobedience tarnish their pure character, it caused them to lose their home, their self-esteem, and their desire to communicate with their Creator. However, God did not put them beyond His reach of forgiveness. He went searching for them, wanting to restore in them His character and a desire for eternal fellowship with Him (Gen. 3:8, 9; Ps. 139:7–10).

Clearly her first evangelistic effort was a success.

The spirit of disobedience that expels the righteousness of God and removes us from His presence must be replaced by the fruit of the Spirit. Herein lies the only possibility to restore His character in us so that we can follow His will. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross makes this all possible.

Restoration (Rom. 5:19–21)

God's character is restored in us through the working of the Holy Spirit, which, in turn, is based on the merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Anyone who possesses God's character is a new creature guided by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3–7). Thoughts and actions are now determined by the Spirit's will. The changed person is not just another person but a peaceful person, a joyful person, a loving person, a patient person, a faithful person, a meek person, a self-controlled person, and a truthful person.

When the woman of Samaria experienced transformation, the perception others had of her perished. "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29, NKJV). The "old" woman was always avoiding the villagers, but the courageous "new" woman approached them with a life-changing message. This was uncharacteristic of the "old" woman in two ways. She hated to see and be seen by the villagers—especially those who knew her sordid past. And she had a message about Jesus even for those who despised her.

Thus, the messenger became a new person with a new mission in life. The Bible didn't say how many came out to see Jesus as a result of this woman's invitation, but clearly her first evangelistic effort was a success. Perhaps Jesus declined to eat the evening meal because He was overwhelmed by this success (John 4:30–34). He was

satisfied with her transformation and felt His own joy as He witnessed the presence of the Holy Spirit bud within her. “The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob’s well had no sooner found the Saviour than she brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples.”¹

A New Creature (2 Cor. 5:17)

One who personifies Christ is transformed by the Holy Spirit. Such a person has chosen that which is righteous rather than the things of the world (1 John 2:15). In order for one to possess a Christlike character, total surrender to the Holy Spirit must be first and foremost.

Butterflies go through four stages of life, but they look like butterflies only in the fourth stage. An adult butterfly lays an egg. Then the egg hatches into a caterpillar or larva. The caterpillar forms the chrysalis or pupa; and, finally the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis. It is not strange for a caterpillar to become a butterfly. However, it would be strange for a caterpillar to behave like a butterfly. So one bright morning, this new beautiful creature flies away into the sunny sky having absolutely no idea of the scientific process or means by which it attained this change. The fruit of the Spirit represents the new creature (butterfly) and not the process. Likewise, when the miracle of transformation is wrought through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Christ, with a desire to soar into the splendor of His righteousness. So it is that we can exemplify Him at home, in school, and in our work. The transformed person is always ready to testify to the Spirit’s restorative power, giving all the credit to God’s grace.

Are You Willing to Be Transformed? (Rom. 12:1, 2)

While Paul sojourned in Corinth, thoughts of Rome occupied his mind. He so wanted to see the gospel of Christ take hold in this city to which much of the world looked. But what a joy it must have been while he rested in Corinth to see that the “Corinthian believers, once so prone to lose sight of their high calling in Christ, had developed strength of Christian character. Their words and acts revealed the transforming power of the grace of God, and they were now a strong force for good in the center of hedonism and superstition.”²

What do your words and acts reveal? Are they a force for good?

REACT

1. Do you think those who have not experienced transformation of the Holy Spirit can effectively witness for the Lord? Why, or why not?

2. Based on this quarter’s lessons, state how you think it is possible to be like Christ.

3. What are some of the things that might be preventing you from totally surrendering to the Holy Spirit’s power?

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 102.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 372.

Testimony

“Love” Your Fruit

Matt. 22:39

Ellen White points out that “wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within.”¹

“The small, simple courtesies, go far to make up the sum of life’s happiness.”

“It is little things that test the character. It is the unpretending acts of daily self-denial, performed with a cheerful, willing heart, that God smiles upon. We are not to live for self, but for others. And it is only by self-forgetfulness, by cherishing a loving, helpful spirit, that we can make our life a blessing. The little attentions, the small, simple courtesies, go far to make up the sum of life’s happiness.”²

In Galatians 5:22, 23, Paul speaks about the “fruit of the Spirit” that we will naturally bear if we are led by the Spirit. A simple analysis of this text shows that the fruit combined is love, the essence of God’s character. Read 1 John 4:7–19.

There is a powerful statement in the book *Education* that says, “The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. . . . Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings.”³

“Our Lord Jesus Christ came to save this world as the unwearied servant of man’s necessity.”⁴

REACT

How do you think Christ can reproduce Himself in your heart?

1. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 337.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 158.
3. *Education*, p. 225.
4. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17.

John 15:1-5

Evidence
Fruitless Fruit Trees

One of the most wonderful things about living in the tropics is the abundance of fruit and fruit trees. We all know that with fruit trees come plenty of fruit, and there is only one thing that beats picking up fresh fruit from the market, and that is picking fresh fruit right from the trees.

It was God's ideal that every tree should bring forth fruit.

Oh, how blessed were our first parents, Adam and Eve, to be placed in the Garden of Eden, where there was an abundance of fruit and fruit trees at their fingertips (Gen. 1:29; 2:16). In this Garden, there was not an unfruitful tree. It was God's ideal that every tree should bring forth fruit. Sin, however, has brought barrenness.

In some cultures, the farmer or husbandman would drive an iron stake through the trunk of a barren fruit tree, and by the next season that tree would be bearing fruit. As Christians, we need not worry about having an iron stake driven through us, for we have been redeemed from the curse of sin and unfruitfulness by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He is the True Vine (John 15:1-5).

"If we do not bear any fruit, the powers of darkness take possession of our minds, our affections, our service, and we are of the world, though we profess to be children of God. . . . By abiding in Christ, we may have His sweetness, His fragrance, His light. Christ is the Light of the world. He shines in our hearts. His light in our hearts shines forth from our faces. By beholding the beauty and the glory of Christ, we become changed into the same image."*

REACT

Make a list of what occupies your mind, your affections, and your service. Based on that list, would you say you are leaning toward the world or toward God? If you are leaning toward the world, what can you do to get yourself leaning in God's direction?

* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

The Genuine Article

John 15:8;
Phil. 1:6

Without money, our basic needs would be almost impossible to come by. Unfortunately, money doesn't grow on trees; and because there's a limited supply of money, it's greatly valued. Similarly, in a world filled with so much misery, unhappiness, and indifference, people who display the fruit of the Spirit are as precious as they can be rare.

The Christian's Engraver is Christ. His character is our template.

Still, with anything of value, there will always be counterfeiters. Such individuals "rip off" originals for personal gain. When innocent people fall prey to counterfeit products, the results can be devastating. In the Christian realm, people who profess to be Christians but then behave inconsistently with regard to Christian principles can do great damage. Two techniques used to spot monetary forgeries are useful in ensuring that, as a Christian, you are the genuine article:

Know how the money feels. The paper upon which legal tender is printed has a unique consistency, so that as you get used to the feel of real money, you will easily recognize the difference between it and money that is forged. It's the same with genuine Christians. They have a uniqueness about them that is easy to detect, especially when they are mixed in with forgeries—people who claim to be Christians but who have failed to develop the fruit of the Spirit.

Know the identifying marks of real money. Legal currency has key features that distinguish it from counterfeits. These features include watermarks, indentations, holograms, and serial numbers. An engraver designs a steel plate with each feature, making it impossible to mimic all of them with any degree of accuracy. When the plate is completed, its unique characteristics are transferred to paper. Thus, the end product is always a replica of the original.

Likewise, genuine Christians exhibit certain features—the fruit of the Spirit. The Christian's Engraver is Christ. His character is our template, and our role is to allow Him to complete the development of the fruit in our lives. As these fruit develop, we will become mighty witnesses to a world in desperate need of God's love.

REACT

What are the dangers of counterfeiters spreading the gospel?

John 4:1-42;
Gal. 5:22

Opinion

The Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The entire experience encouraged her to faithfulness.

This list highlights the mind-set (or heart-set) Christians are to develop. Jesus exemplifies each of these fruit. Therefore, He is our Example; and the Holy Spirit assists us in following His example. There are so many situations in the New Testament in which we see Him exhibiting these gifts as He interacts with those He came to save—for instance, the woman of Samaria, whom Jesus met beside a well while traveling through that country. During that time, the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. Furthermore, it was the custom that men did not talk with women in public. However, Jesus overlooked these entrenched attitudes. He showed her His love, His compassion, His gentleness, and His kindness. He also was patient with her while she presented her side of her situation. Can you imagine the peace she must have experienced when she realized her sins were forgiven? What about the joy she exhibited when she left her water jug and hurried back to the village to tell everyone about having met the Christ? The entire experience encouraged her to faithfulness.

“This woman was in an appreciative state of mind. She was ready to receive the noblest revelation; for she was interested in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit had been preparing her mind to receive more light.”*

We are called to emulate Jesus in the way He reached out to everyone who needed Him. Let everyone with whom we have daily and even occasional contact see a shining light in us. Let the world experience God’s love through the fruit of the Spirit we are growing. Let us love one another, and let us vow that from this week forward, we will give the Holy Spirit permission to cultivate the growth of these fruit in our lives. Let God work a mighty transformation in your life so that others can see Christ in you, “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27, NKJV).

REACT

Notice that the fruit began to grow immediately in the Samaritan woman. What does this tell us about the nature of the fruit and the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives once we desire to be transformed?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 190.

Exploration
Reflecting Christ Fully

2 Sam. 12:1–13;
Acts 13:22;
Rev. 22:11

CONCLUDE

Jesus came not only to die for our sins but to show by example how we are to live. As we have studied this week, when our characters are patterned after the fruit of the Spirit, we will be reflecting the image of Christ. The call for us is to come out of the world and be separate. We must be willing to follow Jesus all the way. Anything less is not enough and will leave us wanting.

CONSIDER

- Using graph paper to plot your spiritual life. Start from the time you were baptized to your present spiritual condition. Note the highs and lows. Set a goal of where you would like to be and where you are now. Then ask the Lord to help you become more like Him.
- Listing the people you have not forgiven and asking God to give you the strength to do so no matter what they have done to you. Remember that forgiveness can be an ongoing process.
- Analyzing famous relationships in the Bible and listing the characteristics that made these relationships weak or strong. Which of these characteristics do you see in your relationships? Which good characteristics do you need to develop? Which do you need to discard? Pray for the Holy Spirit's help in doing both.
- Sharing what Christ has done for you with someone you don't know.
- Listening to the song "People Need the Lord" while sitting in a busy public place. Then read John 14:21; Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20. As you sit there, pray for the people around you.
- Meditating on John 3:16, 17. Then as the Holy Spirit inspires you, journal your thoughts about Christ's death for you and for others—even the most despicable person you know.

CONNECT

Maranatha, chapters 32–60.

W. D. Frazee, *Another Ark to Build* (Harrisville, N.H.: Mountain Missionary Press, 1979); Felix A. Lorenz, *The Only Hope* (Brushton, N.Y.: TEACH Services, 2003).

Health and Healing

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 2010, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1 Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

Logos: Matt. 22:37, 38; Rom. 12:1; Eph. 2:8, 9; 5:2; Col. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 John 4:10

Memory Verse: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" (Ps. 103:1, NKJV).

As the Hubble telescope has probed ever deeper into the universe, the mysteries of Creation have become ever grander. If such limitlessness is incomprehensible to our finite minds, how much more so must be its Creator, who "by necessity" must be more complex than what He has created? If we cannot understand the universe itself, how could we fully comprehend the One who made it?

Lesson 2 Power of Choice

Logos: Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-13; Deut. 30:10-19; Ps. 119:11; Col. 3:2; Heb. 11:8-10

Memory Verse: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan. 1:8).

Jackie and Carol (not their real names) were sisters, separated by two years, who grew up together in a loving home. By the time she reached adolescence, Jackie was applying herself diligently to her studies. She did well and, after graduating from high school, went to university to study business. Today, she is in her mid-thirties, holds a responsible position with an investment company, is married, and lives comfortably in her own home.

Carol chose to party and enjoy herself. She dropped out of high school and began to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Today she is a single mother, is living on government assistance, is in rehabilitation for her drug dependency, and remains slightly jealous though grudgingly proud of her sister's success.

Both girls had the same opportunities, the same chances, and the same set of choices. Jackie chose one way, Carol another. Each now is living with the consequences of those choices.

Choices—we all have them, we all have to make them, and we all have to live with the consequences of the ones we make.

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THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

**“I WILL GIVE YOU A NEW HEART AND PUT
A NEW SPIRIT WITHIN YOU”** (Ezekiel 36:26, NIV).

AUTHOR, PASTOR, AND PREACHER'S KID, Richard O'Ffill, remembers when he was a child, being an Adventist was a lifestyle. We didn't smoke, didn't drink alcohol, didn't wear jewelry, didn't go to dances, and kept Saturday as the Sabbath. In "the good old days," a person could be an Adventist in good and regular standing and not be born again. Unfortunately, that's still true today.

A true Christian is one whose heart is filled in a wonderful and mysterious way with the Holy Spirit. If and when we are able to comprehend this truth, the effect on our personal lives, our families, and, subsequently, on the life of the church, will be immediate.



Richard W. O'Ffill

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In the tiny central African country of Burundi the Adventist Church is growing. But most of the church members live outside the capital city. Few of the nation's leaders know much about Adventists.

One way to reach the people is through the medical work. The one small Adventist clinic in Bujumbura is making a difference. Imagine how much good the church will accomplish when the proposed Adventist hospital is completed in the heart of the capital city.

The hospital will provide more than just health care; it will provide soul care as well. I want to help share the gospel of Jesus with the people of Burundi. I can see how much this hospital is needed and the good it will do, and I'm glad that our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help make this hospital a reality. For me it's personal.

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