

ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
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The Spiritual Life

Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH



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Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord

Jesus Christ is Lord of all. And that because He is the Creator of all: All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3). Thus, He is Lord of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Though not everyone currently recognizes Him as Lord, the day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When Jesus Christ first came to this earth, He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (*Phil. 2:7, 8, NKJV*). His second coming will be with power and great glory. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (*Rev. 1:7*).

To those who have received Him as Savior and Lord, the second coming of Jesus will be a time of rejoicing! We will exclaim, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (*Isa. 25:9, NKJV*).

Every tongue will then confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but for many it will be eternally too late to make a saving confession. For the wicked, confession that Jesus Christ is Lord is simply a recognition of an undeniable truth; it’s not a heartfelt surrender to His love and divine authority.

The Word of God appeals to us to accept the grace of God so freely given through Jesus. Now is the accepted time. Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sins. We can, at this moment, stand perfect in His righteousness, which is freely bestowed upon every willing sinner, “even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (*Rom. 3:22-24*). Or, as Ellen White said in *Steps to Christ*: “Since we are

sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous.

Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."—Page 62.

***We must claim Jesus,
not only as our Savior
but as our Lord.***

When we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we not only confess Him as Lord of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; we also confess Him as Lord of every aspect of our lives. As Christians, it's our duty, out of love for God, to show that we truly believe in that Lordship. We do this not just by confessing He is Lord of our lives but by allowing Him to rule there, as well.

In this series of lessons, we will consider what it means to experience Jesus Christ as Lord in every aspect of our existence. It's not enough to claim Jesus just as our Savior; we must claim Him as our Lord, as well. Because He's our Lord, He was able to be our Savior. And nothing reveals more that we have recognized Him as Savior than how we live, and how we live depends upon the degree in which we allow Him to be Lord of our lives.

Let's now take a look at what it means to experience Jesus as the Lord of our lives.

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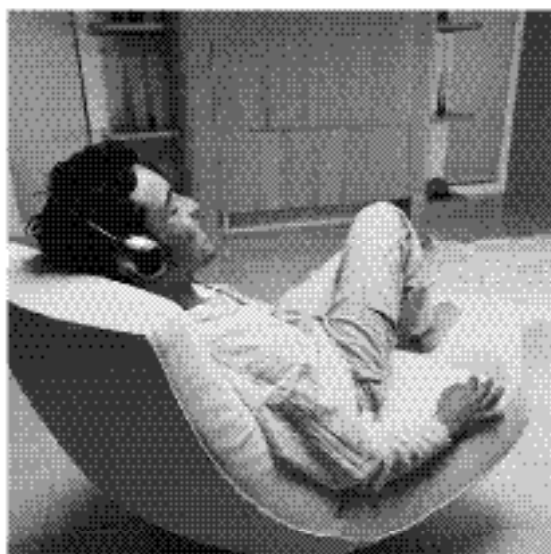
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The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on September 24
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Our Lord *and* Savior Jesus Christ



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18, Acts 9:1-19, Rom. 3:9-26.*

Memory Text: “Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:10, 11, NKJV*).

Key Thought: The New Testament calls us to receive Jesus, both as Savior and Lord.

Savior and Lord. Many Christians today are looking for a “no strings attached” Savior. They want deliverance without obligation. They may profess the name of Christian but end up with a savior of their own making. Though it is true an angel counseled Joseph to call the miracle Child “ ‘Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins’ ” (*Matt. 1:21, NKJV*), an angel also announced to the shepherds on the hills near Bethlehem that “ ‘there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:11, NKJV*).

More New Testament texts refer to Jesus as Lord than as Savior. It is impossible to receive Jesus as Savior and reject Him as Lord. Peter refers to Jesus as “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (*2 Pet. 1:11, NKJV*), and Paul encourages us to look for “the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Phil. 3:20, NKJV*). This week we will explore both the importance and the consequences of the crucial question: Have you received Jesus, both as Savior and Lord?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 2.*

Our Need for a Savior (*Rom. 3:9-26*).

The apostle Paul warns the Romans that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (*Rom. 1:18, NKJV*). Rebellion against the will of God and the Word of God has consequences. “The wages of sin is death” (*Rom. 6:23, NKJV*).

Read Romans 3:9-26. What important point is Paul emphasizing? (If you have never read Paul’s epistle to the Romans, you may want to begin with Romans 1:1 in order to follow his whole argument.)

Have you noticed the human tendency to compare ourselves with others in order to make ourselves look good? We point to others who are worse sinners than ourselves, forgetting that we ourselves also stand condemned. Even the act of self-justification is an evidence of our fallen condition. The apostle Paul leaves no room for excuses. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all stand condemned before a holy God. This is not hard to see. All we have to do is look at the world around us, and we see so much evidence of our sinfulness.

What are some of the evidences you see of human sinfulness? How far do you have to look to see them?

There’s no question: Sin and the results of sin exist all around us. And in us. We don’t have to point the finger at others; we can find all the evidence of sin by looking within ourselves. And that was part of Paul’s point. Every mouth is stopped before God, including our own!

Look at your own life. Do you see anything within yourself that could commend you to God? Why is looking at yourself the best way to realize there is no hope, unless hope comes from a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God?

Heaven's Greatest Gift *(Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18).*

Sunday's lesson left us with the realization that, unless there was divine intervention in our behalf, we would have no hope. The good news, of course, is that God has intervened in our behalf: through Jesus Christ.

While many followers of other world religions admire Jesus Christ as a holy prophet or a great teacher, few recognize the true significance of Jesus Christ's entrance into humanity.

What message did the angel Gabriel deliver to Mary, the mother of Jesus, about the identity of the Child she would conceive? *Luke 1:26-35.*

The New Testament writers boldly declare that Jesus Christ was conceived by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit of God. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" *(Luke 1:35, NKJV)*. Born of a human mother, Jesus could call only God His real Father. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Consider the testimony of the apostle John at the beginning of his Gospel record. What important message does he convey about Jesus Christ? *John 1:1-18.*

Jesus Christ is more than a holy prophet. He is more than a great teacher. He is the Word made flesh. He is God's thoughts made audible. One with the Father from eternity past, the only begotten of the Father became human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is Immanuel, God with us, and yet He was "with us"—not in the thunder and lightning and clouds of Sinai—but as one of us; that is, He was as fully human as we are. What an amazing condescension for Him who "was in the beginning with God"!

It has been said a desperate situation calls for desperate measures. What should it tell us about what sin has done to us that it would require God Himself becoming a human being and then dying in order to save us from the penalty of sin? How should this realization help us trust that, however desperate our own personal situation, the God who would do this is able to save us from whatever challenges we face?

God's Perfect Plan *(Isa. 53:3-7)*.

When Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptized, John the Baptist exclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (*John 1:29, NKJV*). In this brief declaration, John the Baptist provided a succinct summary of God's perfect plan of salvation. Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God.

Review the following portions of Scripture. How do these passages help you to understand God's perfect plan of salvation?

Gen. 22:6-14:

Isa. 53:4-7:

Rev. 5:1-14:

We have all gone astray. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the wages of that sin is death. We all deserve to die. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly took our punishment upon Himself. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (*Isa. 53:5, NKJV*).

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He was laying down His life as the Lamb of God. He was fulfilling God's perfect plan of salvation in every detail. “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (*1 Cor. 15:3, NKJV*). “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (*2 Cor. 5:21, NKJV*).

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. Read this famous quote aloud, but put yourself in there: “Christ was treated as I deserve, that I might be treated as He deserves. . . .” Read it aloud over and over until the wonderful truths it portrays hit home and you realize—for yourself—what Christ has done for you.

Responding to God's Grace (*1 Cor. 1:18-31*).

Our gracious heavenly Father has made a perfect provision for everyone to be saved. We who were dead in our sins can be made alive in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul proclaimed the good news: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (*Rom. 10:9, NKJV*). So, when Paul and Silas were asked by the Philippian jailer what he needed to do in order to be saved, their answer was simple and to the point: " 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household' " (*Acts 16:31, NKJV*). Salvation is available for all who accept God's perfect plan. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved.

Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to accept God's perfect plan. Some view the message of the Cross and blood atonement as a remnant from humanity's barbaric past. Others would rather trust in their own wisdom rather than the wisdom of God.

How does the apostle Paul describe the varying responses to God's perfect plan of salvation? *1 Cor. 1:18-31*. **How** are some of these same responses manifested today by those who hear the gospel?

In apostolic times, there were some who viewed the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as a scandal, a stumbling block. How could Someone who was executed as a criminal be the Messiah? Others viewed the message of the Cross as foolishness. How could one Man's death affect the destiny of the human race? Both groups rejected God's perfect plan of salvation and scorned His grace, some because it went against their own personal religious views, others because it just didn't seem reasonable, logical, and "scientific." However, some embraced the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. They accepted the death of Christ for their sins as the power of God and the wisdom of God. In spite of opposition to the gospel, the apostle Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (*Rom. 1:16, NKJV*).

What has your own response been to the gospel? Go back over your own experience with Jesus and your response to His saving grace. What, more than anything else, moved you to accept His salvation? Or are you still making excuses?

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord *(Acts 9:1-19)*

The apostle John records the sad news that Jesus Christ “came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (*John 1:11, NKJV*). Because He was not the Messiah they were looking for, many rejected God’s perfect plan for their salvation. But the apostle John also records the good news: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (*John 1:12, NKJV*). Many read this testimony and fail to grasp its true significance. When we accept God’s perfect plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, we not only receive Jesus Christ as Savior. We receive Him as Lord.

Examine the account of Saul’s conversion and his interaction with Ananias, recorded in Acts 9:1-19. What are the implications for your own life when you receive Jesus as Savior and Lord?

When Saul realized he was encountering the risen Christ, the first thing he said wasn’t “Lord, what do You want me to believe?” or “Lord, what do You want me to say?” but it was “Lord, what do You want me *to do*?” Saul, here, by calling Jesus “Lord,” recognized that because of who Jesus was, Saul needed to obey Him. And when the Lord said “ ‘Arise and go,’ ” Saul arose and went. We see the same response from Ananias. At first he argues with the Lord Jesus Christ, questioning His judgment. But when the Lord said “ ‘Go,’ ” Ananias went. The message is clear: When we confess Jesus Christ as Lord, we recognize His absolute authority over our lives.

What word of reproof did the Lord Jesus Christ give to those who confessed Him with their lips but not with their lives? *Luke 6:46-49*.

When we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we will obey Him, and, as a result, our lives will be radically transformed. It’s in the doing, the obeying, and the living the life of faith that we are changed.

If Christ were to suddenly appear to you, as He did to Saul, and you said “Lord, what do You want me to do?” what do you think He would say to you, and why?

Further Study: Read the Second Epistle of Peter. Notice the numerous references to the Lord Jesus Christ. This epistle begins and ends with references to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Think of some individuals in Scripture who struggled with the implications of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Here are some examples:

Nicodemus—*John 3:1-21, 7:50-53, 19:39-42*

The rich young ruler—*Matt. 19:16-26*

Zacchaeus—*Luke 19:1-10*

Thomas—*John 20:19-29*

As you look over these examples, what appears to be the reasons for their struggles? Are there any common elements to each situation?

Discussion Questions:

- 1** How can we encourage one another to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in every aspect of our lives without sounding legalistic or judgmental? How can we be sure to avoid the trap of legalism as we seek to have Jesus rule in every area of our lives? Why is a proper understanding of salvation by faith alone the only way to protect yourself against legalism?
- 2** As a class, what could you do to help members in your local church realize the importance of allowing Jesus to be Lord of their lives? In other words, what could you do to encourage members to make a total commitment to Jesus?
- 3** What encouragement would you give to a friend who wants to experience salvation but who is afraid to totally surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord?
- 4** Go around the classroom and ask each member to answer the following question, “What is the gospel?” After each person has a turn, analyze the answers. What are the differences and the similarities in the various views of the gospel?

Priska's Tithe

Priska Chepkwony

Priska lives in Kenya. Even before she became an Adventist, she was a faithful tither.

One day Priska placed her tithe in an envelope and wrapped it in plastic. She asked her daughter to take the envelope to the church treasurer's home nearby.

Priska's daughter delivered the tithe to the treasurer's house. But the treasurer was not home, so the girl left the envelope with the treasurer's daughter, who placed it in a cupboard for safe keeping. But in the busyness of life, the daughter forgot to tell her mother about the tithe.

At the end of the month the treasurer was writing out tithe receipts and noticed that Priska had no tithe. Knowing that Priska would never withhold her tithe, the treasurer asked Priska about it.

Priska told the treasurer that her daughter had delivered the tithe to her home and given it to the treasurer's daughter, who had put it into a cupboard for safe keeping. But the girl could not remember in which cupboard she had placed the money.

The treasurer searched for Priska's tithe envelope but found nothing. Feeling responsible for God's funds, she determined to repay the missing money herself. But Priska told her, "There is no need to replace God's money; it is God's, and He will take care of it."

Several months passed, and the church prepared to host a district meeting. The deaconesses cleaned the church, and members cleaned their homes. The litter was gathered and burned. After all the trash had burned, the ashes were spread out.

At the bottom of the ashes lay a small packet wrapped in plastic. A child found it and took it to the church treasurer. She opened it to find Priska's missing tithe and offerings. All of the money was there; none of it had burned. The church members rejoiced that God had protected His tithe.

Priska never doubted that God's tithe would one day appear. God protected that which was set aside as His property.



Priska Chepkwony (left) is a primary school teacher in western Kenya.

Lord of Our Priorities



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:24, Exod. 19:5, Job 1:1-5, Rom. 3:24, Eph. 1:7.*

Memory Text: “ ‘But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you’ ”
(*Matthew 6:33, NKJV*).

Key Thought: The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask to be first among equals in our lives. He asks to be first without equal.

The radical claim of Jesus. Jesus asks us to give Him unrivaled first place in our lives. To all who would be His disciples, He says “ ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple’ ” (*Luke 14:26, NKJV*).

Obviously, this statement of Jesus cannot be taken literally. If we are called as followers of Jesus to love our enemies (*Matt. 5:44*), we should certainly love those closest to us, such as our immediate family. Jesus is not asking us to hate our family members; instead, using powerful and exaggerated imagery, He's saying that we must give Him first place in our lives. He wants to be our top priority, the recipient of our highest devotion. After all, considering who He is—not only our Creator but the One who redeemed us with His own blood (*see 1 Pet. 1:18, 19*)—we owe Him everything, and He's asking us to acknowledge that debt by making Him first in our lives. How could we do any less?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 9.*

The Earth Is the Lord's

Read the following texts. How do they help us understand the claims Jesus has over our lives?

Gen. 1:1

Exod. 19:5

Ps. 24:1

Ps. 50:10, 11

Isa. 45:18

Col. 1:16

The whole idea of the Lord having priority in our lives is dependent upon who He is in contrast to who we are. It's in the context of this relationship that we can understand why the Lord should be given complete priority over our priorities. The leader of one nation doesn't have the moral or legal right to make rules for the citizens of another country, does he? The president of France, for instance, doesn't have the authority to tell people living in Paraguay how they must live.

The Lord, as our Creator, is the sovereign Ruler of the universe. Whether we acknowledge it or not, He has authority over us, in much the same way a ruler in a particular land has authority over the citizens of that country. Though the Lord has given us stewardship and responsibility over the things on the earth, whatever we possess, whatever gifts we have, we have only because God first created these things and then gave them to us.

It's crucial to keep this realization before us because God does not force us to use, for His glory, the gifts He's given us. He's made us free, free to prioritize as we wish. We can acknowledge His claims over us, not just in words but in how we live and how we prioritize, or we can go our own way, doing what we want and, of course, reaping the sad results of our wrong choices.

Whatever you have, whatever you are, dwell upon how everything comes from God. How should this realization help you understand how you should set your priorities?

Redeemer God

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isa. 44:22).

Yesterday’s lesson looked at the claims God has over us by virtue of the fact He is our Creator. In that sense, He is our Owner. And yet, in and of itself, in a fallen world, that might not be enough to get us to want to serve Him, to want to surrender our lives and priorities to Him. It might oblige us to, in the sense that someone working for his or her employer is obliged to work for that person. But God wants us to serve Him, not out of some cold, hard obligation but because we love Him for what He’s done for us, not just as our Creator but also as our Redeemer.

In your own mind, recall the situations where you did something for someone because you felt obliged to, as opposed to when you did something for someone because you really loved and appreciated this person. How does this contrast help you better understand the way the Lord wants us to relate to Him?

The Bible makes it clear the Lord is not only our Creator but our Redeemer. Numerous verses talk about Jesus in the role of our Redeemer, of having done the work of redemption in our behalf. Indeed, it’s impossible to understand His death on the cross apart from the notion of redemption.

Read Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18,19. How do these verses about Christ’s work of redemption in our behalf help you want to serve the Lord and surrender your God-given gifts to Him?

The word for “redeem,” or “redemption,” both in the Old and New Testament, comes from various words that mean things like “to buy back,” “to ransom,” “to deliver.” These ideas convey the truths of what Jesus did for us. Thus, not only is He our Creator; He is our Redeemer. He ransomed us from the power and, ultimately, the final legal consequences of sin (*see Rom. 6:23*). When we begin to grasp what this redemption means for us personally, when we experience for ourselves the joy of freedom of this redemption, then it becomes so much easier to make Him the Lord of our priorities.

The Example of the Lord Jesus Christ

Doing His Father's will was the number one priority of Jesus. His plan for life was simply this: To discover the Father's will and do it.

LOOK up the following texts. What is being said in each case? What's the common theme found in them all? What do they tell us about Jesus and the example of obedience He presents for us?

Luke 22:42

John 4:34

John 6:38

John 17:8

Phil. 2:8

Heb. 10:9

“So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

What a powerful example is Christ's life of complete surrender that not only His deeds but His words were from the Father.

Go back over the texts for today. Put the basic thoughts together and ask, What's the message they have for me? What do I need to change in order to move better toward this ideal as personified in Jesus?

First on Your Agenda *(Luke 6:46).*

What question does Jesus ask His hearers at the end of His Sermon on the Mount? *Luke 6:46.* **How different would your life be if you did everything Jesus told you to do?**

Obedience is the ultimate evidence that we have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. His will becomes our will. His plans become our plans. As a loving response to His saving grace, we yield ourselves completely to Him as Lord of every aspect of our lives.

We must avoid at all costs the fatal delusion of calling Jesus “Lord” but failing to recognize His lordship over our lives as we plan our daily schedules. We can easily become preoccupied with working out our own agendas. Instead of asking the Lord to rule and overrule in every activity of our day, we ask God to bless the plans we have already made. Ellen White suggests a different strategy for those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord: “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.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

Consider the stories of the following Bible characters. **Where did God’s plans for them conflict with their own personal plans?**

Exod. 2:11-15

Jer. 1:4-10

Matt. 19:16-22

2 Tim. 4:10

Who can’t see himself or herself, to some degree, reflected in these stories? Some of the stories (as far as we can tell) had a good ending, some bad. What made the crucial difference?

First in Your Day *(Ps. 5:1-3, Mark 1:35).*

Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the importance of seeking God first in the day. Mark records that “in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He [Jesus] went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (*Mark 1:35, NKJV*). “The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient toil.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 90.

We would do well to follow the example of our Lord. While it is important to set the Lord always before us (*see Ps. 16:8*), it also is appropriate to set aside special times of prayer. David prayed in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (*see Ps. 55:17*). Daniel followed a similar practice (*see Dan. 6:10*).

Read the psalmist’s prayer in Psalm 5:1-3. Why do you think the morning is such an important time to especially focus our attention on the Lord? What is it about the morning (or whenever you first wake up) that makes it such an important time to commune with God?

Most Christians agree in principle that it is important to make communion with the Lord the first priority of the day. However, many have difficulty putting this conviction into practice. Late-night activities or early morning responsibilities seem to crowd out easily that special time of fellowship with the Lord. As a result, our time with God often becomes reactive, crying out to Him when things go wrong, rather than proactive, seeking Him first before we face any of the challenges of the day. Many seriously cripple their spiritual life because they don’t take that crucial time to pray, read the Bible, or meditate on the Word. In the same way that if you skip breakfast you can soon run out of physical fuel, by skipping morning devotion you can find the spiritual “fuel” lacking to meet the temptations the enemy is always trying to throw in your path (*see 1 Pet. 5:8*).

What things are you letting interfere with a consistent morning devotional life? Why not, right now, prayerfully resolve in your heart to use this precious time when you begin your day to keep in communion with the Lord?

Further Study: Think of individuals mentioned in Scripture who put God first in their lives and allowed Him to be the Lord of their priorities. For example, consider the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. *Read Luke 1:26-38.* Notice her response to the claim of God.

Note: The idea of yielding our lives under the authority of another is not a popular concept in the twenty-first century. People want to be the masters of their own destinies. They want to be in control. Christians have a different perspective. The One who calls us to live under His lordship is our loving Savior, who gave His life to redeem us. Under His lordship we find freedom, not bondage. We are sons and daughters, not slaves.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** How is it possible to follow the example of Jesus who “made no plans for Himself” but simply allowed the Father to direct His steps? Give some practical suggestions as to how that approach to life might be implemented. Share your ideas with the class.
- 2** Look at two other important areas of your life, family, and finances. What are some practical ways we can acknowledge the lordship of Jesus in these two crucial areas?
- 3** Look up as many texts as you can find that talk about Christ as the Sacrifice for our sins and then write down a paragraph summarizing what they are saying. As a class, have people read aloud what they wrote. How does this great news help motivate you to want to serve the Lord and surrender to Him all He’s given you? What greater motivation could we possibly have to do this?

God Is Faithful, part 1

Maria Tzenova

My dreams were coming true; I was studying at the University of Bulgaria. I was not yet a member of the church, but I understood the Bible principles, and I believed. My parents were not believers, but I had shared what I believe with them. My mother had visited the church, but my father was not interested in this strange new religion.

Then I learned that the required labs for my Latin class fell on Saturday. I was determined to keep the Sabbath, so I decided to talk to the professor, a severe woman who seldom smiled. After the first class I approached her and made my request to miss the labs.

“No!” she shouted loudly. “If you do not attend the labs, you will fail the class. And without this class you cannot major in English. So you might as well leave the university now!” She turned and walked away, leaving me standing alone.

That afternoon I went to the train station to go home for the weekend. I sat wrapped in my winter jacket, not so much from the cold as from fear for my future, which looked as bleak as the sky outside. Fail the course? Leave the university? Lose my dream? Never! I had worked too hard to get this far.

What would my parents say? They had been so proud of me. How would I tell them that my faith in God, my religious convictions, would prevent me from fulfilling my dream? My mother had just begun to accept my new faith. If I left the university because of the Sabbath, what would she think of my faith? Would her fragile faith crumble? Would mine?

I decided not to tell my parents. Not yet. Then I had an idea. I would not have classes on Sabbath forever. I could postpone my baptism until the class ended. This seemed like a reasonable solution. But it did not bring the comfort I had hoped.

I knew the fourth commandment, but I wanted to understand what God had in mind for me in this situation. I took out my New Testament and prayed for guidance. Then I opened it to Galatians 4:9. “But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them . . . again?” (NIV). I closed the New Testament, knowing what I had to do. It made no difference that I was not baptized; I would be faithful to God, no matter what.

The future looked bleak, but I had peace.

(continued next week)

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Lord of Our Thoughts



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 3:1, 2.*

Memory Text: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (*Colossians 3:1, 2, NKJV*).

Key Thought: The Lord Jesus Christ desires to renew our minds and be Lord of our thoughts. It is God's intention that every thought be brought into captivity to the will of Christ.

The battle of the mind. Many new Christians have the mistaken idea that once they have received Jesus as Lord and Savior the battle is over. In reality, the battle has only just begun. As seen in the earthly life of Jesus, it's often after our baptism that Satan intensifies his attacks. The battle is fought in our minds, and one of Satan's primary temptations is the sin of remembrance: He tries to lure us back to the old, forbidden pathways. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in contrast, wants us to forget what is behind and “be transformed by the renewing of [our minds]” (*Rom. 12:2, NKJV*). The Greek verb translated “transformed” comes from the same verb used in Mark 9:2, when Jesus was “transfigured.” What a remarkable ideal the Lord Jesus Christ has for each of His redeemed children. He desires to so renew our minds that the glory of the Lord will shine through us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 16.*

The Power of Thought

Read the following texts: Exodus 20:17, Matthew 5:8, 1 Corinthians 2:16, 1 Chronicles 28:9. What's the one thing they all have in common?

The Bible, of course, has so much to say about our deeds and our words, all of which is understandable, because our deeds and words can have powerful effects on ourselves and others.

Yet, the Bible also makes it clear that the Lord cares about our thoughts. But why? As long as we don't act on our thoughts, what does it matter? Why should God care what we think? Whoever heard of anyone hurting another person with a thought? Thoughts are private, personal things that, in the end, if we don't express them or act upon them, don't hurt anyone.

Right?

Why do you think it matters what we think, as long as we don't act on our thoughts? Or is it possible to not, eventually, act on our thoughts? Or even if we don't act on our thoughts, why does it matter what we think? See Gen. 6:5, Prov. 4:23, Matt. 5:27-30.

Because our thoughts are the foundation of all our words and actions, it matters what we think. Every evil deed ever committed, every evil word, every sin, began first as a thought. How many millions of people first harbored thoughts—nothing more than “harmless” thoughts—that eventually sprouted into words or deeds that have caused incredible damage? Who can know what thoughts will remain only as thoughts, nothing more, and which will bear bitter fruit? We can never know for sure, which is why it's best to control our thoughts before they turn into something painful and damaging to ourselves and others.

Try this rather frightful, and horrific, experiment: Imagine if your thoughts were suddenly projected on a screen for everyone to see! What would be up there? What does this tell you about what's in your mind and what changes need to be made?

Bringing Every Thought Into Captivity

(2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Meditate on Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Read it in different versions (if possible) and then answer the following questions:

1. What kind of battle does Paul say we are in?

2. What does it mean to be in a spiritual battle? How does it differ from a physical battle?

3. What is one of the “carnal” (the Greek word means “fleshly”) weapons that Christians don’t use? See John 18:36. What are the weapons that we need to use? See Eph. 6:10-18.

4. What are some of the “high things” that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God?

The word for “strongholds” in 2 Corinthians 10:4 means “castles” or “fortresses.” Paul doubtless is thinking of the inner fortresses of our hearts, the “castles” of our minds, the habits of sin and self that determine our character. The battle is one of truth against error, the knowledge of God against ignorance and superstition; it is a struggle of true worship against all forms of idolatry. In the end, it’s a great controversy between Christ and Satan for control of the race. All this occurs in the mind, in the heart; and only through the power of God working in our lives can we uproot the enemy.

Keeping in mind the context of what you’ve read today, why is control of our thoughts so crucial in the battle we are facing? Why, in many ways, is keeping control of our thoughts the whole battle?

Setting Your Mind on Things Above

(Col. 3:1, 2).

Even after we have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, it is still possible to become distracted by a multitude of earthly attractions. We easily can become preoccupied with things of secondary importance and forget we are called to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth. After all, we physically live on the earth; we are constantly surrounded by things of the earth. And, indeed, many things of the earth are not, in and of themselves, bad (*see Gen. 1:31*). The key is to learn to know the difference.

What reason does Paul give for setting our minds on things above?

Col. 3:1, 2.

Let's look a little closer at what Paul is telling us here. Because we have been "raised with [Christ]" (*Col. 2:12, NKJV; see also Rom. 6:4*), that we have died to self (*Col. 3:3*) and now have a new life in Him, our thoughts should be on heavenly things, things "above" as compared to "things on earth"—the kind of things we thought about before we met Jesus. But now, because Jesus Christ died for us (*see Rom. 5:6*), has paid the penalty for our sins (*see Isa. 53:6*), has covered us with His perfect righteousness (*see Rom. 4:4-8*), and now is interceding in our behalf in heaven (*see Heb. 9:24*), we must now dwell upon Him and the great redemption He has wrought out for us (*see 1 Cor. 1:30*).

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. We must always remember to focus our attention on our great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens and ever lives to make intercession for us.

"Fix your thoughts upon the Saviour. Go apart from the bustle of the world and sit under Christ's shadow. Then, amid the din of daily toil and conflict, your strength will be renewed."—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 62.

Take as much time as possible to dwell upon the plan of salvation, of Christ's taking on human flesh, of His substitutionary death in your behalf, of His ministry in the sanctuary above. Think about what it reveals about the character of God. Think about the hope it offers you. Think about the promises that are ours because of all this. Now, imagine if, day by day, you lived in such a heavenly atmosphere. How different would your life be?

Receiving a Sanctified Imagination

(Rom. 12:1, 2).

Read Romans 12:1, 2. Focusing on the theme of this week, write down what you believe Paul is telling us.

One of the precious gifts we have all received from our Creator is the gift of an imagination. Unfortunately, our imaginations have been corrupted by sinful thoughts and desires. We need our imaginations to be sanctified. Given the importance the Bible places on our thoughts, we should be encouraged to know there is power from above that will help us get control of our thoughts and our imaginations.

How does this renewal of our minds occur? Compare Rom. 12:1, 2 with Titus 3:5.

These two passages of Scripture contain the only references to the Greek noun translated as “renewing” or “renewal.” The radical transformation of our minds promised in Romans 12:2 can be accomplished only by the power of the Holy Spirit working in those Christians who have surrendered themselves to Him. God will work in us, even at the level of our imagination, but only to the degree we allow Him to. This surrender can, at times, demand an excruciating struggle on our part. As everyone has surely experienced, it’s very easy for our minds to wander and focus on forbidden themes, earthly, carnal things that are from below and not from above. No wonder that in Colossians 3:2 (see yesterday’s study) the literal translation of “set your affection” means “continually think of” heavenly things. Perhaps that’s partially why Paul says, too, that we should “pray always” (2 Thess. 1:11), because nothing can lift our thoughts as can prayer.

What are the ways you use your imagination? Is it working for or against your walk with the Lord? What can you do in order to make yourself more receptive to the “renewal” of your mind—that God promises?

Influences

Recently, a nation was horrified. A drunken, bedraggled homeless man in a big city was sleeping in an alley. A group of about three young men, seeing the unfortunate fellow, found a canister of gasoline. As the man was sleeping, they doused him with the fuel and set him on fire. He died a horrible death.

When arrested and asked why they did such a terrible thing, one of the boys answered that they had seen something similar happen in a movie and simply copied what they saw.

Think about this episode. However extreme, what's the crucial principle we see expressed here?

As we've seen this week, God cares about our thoughts; and He has also promised us strength to change our thoughts. But whatever the power promises from above, God isn't going to just change our thoughts supernaturally. We just don't utter a prayer, "Lord, change my thoughts," and instantly we are pure in heart and mind. However nice that would be, it doesn't work that way. We have a definite role in cooperating with the Lord. To a great extent, the things we put in our minds will affect what things we think. The more you read about Jesus, the more you focus on holy things, then the more your thoughts will be about Jesus and holy things; the more you read about earthly, unholy things, the more your thoughts will be about unholy and earthly things. It is that simple.

How does **Philippians 4:8** capture the essence of this week's lesson? Write out each of these words (true, honest, just, pure, etc.), and under each heading list some things that fit in these categories (it would be interesting to compare your answers with others in class). How well are you following Paul's admonition regarding your thoughts?

Having trouble controlling your thoughts? Having trouble thinking of heavenly rather than earthly, carnal things? The answer to your problem could easily be found in what you are reading and watching. Only you can make the necessary changes. Why not, right now, under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, determine seriously to censor the things that come into your mind? Otherwise, you will never have victory in this crucial aspect of Christian life.

Further Study: “The apostle sought to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to forbidden themes or from spending its energies on trifling subjects. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 518.

“The training of the heart, the control of the thoughts, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, will give control of the words. This is true wisdom, and will ensure quietness of mind, contentment and peace. There will be joy in the contemplation of the riches of the grace of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 656.

“Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise. They should shut their eyes, that they may see and learn no evil. They should close their ears, lest they hear that which is evil and obtain that knowledge which would stain their purity of thoughts and acts. And they should guard their tongues, lest they utter corrupt communications and guile be found in their mouths.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 404.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Think about your own home. What things are there that tend to make it difficult for you to have purity of thoughts?
- 2 What crucial role does prayer and Bible study have in helping us have control of our thoughts?
- 3 What can you do as a church to help other members, particularly the young, protect themselves from the kind of negative influences that can make it very difficult to control their thoughts?
- 4 Read Ephesians 6:10-18. In what ways does this help provide a formula for victory in this crucial battle for our minds?

God Is Faithful, part 2

Maria Tzenova

My heart felt at peace as I traveled home that Friday afternoon. No matter what, I was going to follow God's leading. I still wondered what my parents would say if they knew I might lose my opportunity to study at the university. By the time I arrived home, I had decided not to tell my parents what had happened or what I had decided.

On Sabbath morning I went to church. I met a girl there who was studying at another university. After church I told her about my dilemma and asked her how she solved such problems. She told me that Bulgaria had laws to assure religious freedom, and that her teachers worked with her to accommodate her faith. I went home with new courage.

When I returned to the university, I wrote a letter to the dean, asking permission to skip lab classes on Sabbath. I wanted to deliver the letter in person, but she was not in. When I finally found her in, I was happily surprised to learn that the dean was also one of my lecturers. I explained my problem to her and gave her the letter. She gave me permission to miss the labs as long as I could prepare for the exams.

I left her office praising God for the wonderful way He had worked out my dilemma. It was several hours before I could settle down to study.

I returned home often during the rest of the semester and attended evangelistic meetings at my home church. At the end of the meetings my sister, my mother, and I were baptized together. Some time later, after lots of encouragement to step out in faith and let God take care of his job, my father also was baptized.

I think of this trial when I face other problems in my life. I learned how God can work out His will in my life, even when I cannot see how a solution is possible. He just wants me to trust Him and move out in faith, just as the Israelites had to step into the Jordan River before the water stopped flowing. We must step forward in faith.

I realize now that when I sat in that dim waiting room at the railway station, I was not alone. If God had opened my eyes, as He did for Elijah, I would have seen angels ministering to me as I struggled to make my decision.



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Lord of Our Desires



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Genesis 1, 2; Rom. 1:3; 6:1-7; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 2:8; Col. 2:12, 13; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 John 2:1.*

Memory Text: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (*Romans 8:3*).

Key Thought: God created humans with powerful desires for our enjoyment. We, as Christians, need to keep those desires, which we should still enjoy, under divine control.

Submitting our desires to the will of God. The apostle Paul warned that in the last days people would be “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (*2 Tim. 3:4, NKJV*). Talk about a perfect description of this generation! The guiding principle for many today is: Satisfy your own desires. Christian values are discarded as old-fashioned, unreasonable, and hopelessly out-of-date. The basic sentiment is: As long as you desire to do something that doesn't hurt anyone else, then there's no reason why you shouldn't do it.

In contrast, those who live under the lordship of Christ are called to submit all their desires to the will of God. Our Lord Himself declared, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (*John 6:38, NKJV*). Jesus set the perfect example of submission to the will of God when He prayed, “Not what I will, but what You will” (*Mark 14:36, NKJV*). This is our mandate, as well. Our will, our desires, must be surrendered to the Lord.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 23.*

Flesh and Spirit

The Christian faith began and spread amid Greek culture and philosophy. Though the Greek Empire itself had fallen to the Romans (see *Daniel 2*), its influence remained long after its political and military dominance faded.

Sin influences the human body with disease, old age, and so forth. But the body cannot be evil, because Jesus put on a human body when He came to this earth. Greek culture also taught that the spirit is something within us that is always fighting the body. But in Romans 8:4, 5; Galatians 5:24, 25; and Galatians 6:8, the spirit is our attitude of surrender and obedience to Jesus. People who live “in the spirit” are people who have surrendered their sinful natures to the Holy Spirit.

What’s the greatest example we have from the Bible that the human body, in and of itself, isn’t evil? *Rom. 1:3, 8:3, Gal. 4:4, Phil. 2:8, 1 Tim. 3:16.*

Although now affected by sin, the human body can’t be evil, because Jesus Christ assumed a human body. But what about those New Testament texts, especially in the writings of Paul, that seem to pit flesh against the spirit, such as Romans 8:4, 5; Galatians 5:24, 25; 6:8?

The basic issue here is not that our body, our flesh, is of itself bad. Again, Christ’s humanity proves this point. Paul’s emphasis, instead, deals with control of our flesh, the keeping of its desires under the control of God. Ephesians 2:3 helps clarify this point: “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Paul talks about not letting the things of the flesh, that is, the carnal nature of fallen beings, dominate the Christian, who has died to this carnal nature, where passion and lust rule, and who now lives in the “spirit,” that is, in an attitude of faith and submission to Christ.

Part of the problem stems from the use of the word *spirit*, which, in Paul’s writing, isn’t this eternal holy entity that lives in constant tension or battle with the flesh. In the Bible, *spirit* can mean “mood,” “attitude,” or “feelings.” Oftentimes in the New Testament, *flesh* is simply the word used to symbolize the fallen carnal nature, while *spirit* symbolizes the attitude of submission and obedience to Christ. Those who live in “the spirit” are those who have yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit, which brings the desires of the flesh under control.

How can you know if you are walking after the “flesh” or after the “spirit”?

The Creation

Review the Genesis Creation account of humanity (*Genesis 1 and 2*). What evidences do you find there that God intended for human beings to enjoy the physical creation He had made?

Even the most simple reading of the Creation account reveals nothing of the notion that the physical world, especially the human body, is bad. On the contrary, God created man and woman to interact closely with what He had made. Man came directly from the ground, which God had just created, and woman came from the man. Thus, humankind and the earth are intimately linked. Together, man and woman, living on this earth and drawing sustenance from it, were to be “fruitful, and multiply” (*Gen. 1:28*); they were to be involved in the process of creating more human beings, more human flesh. God gave them “every herb” (*Gen. 2:5*) for meat, and He gave them every tree that “is pleasant to the sight” (*Gen. 2:9*), and that was “good for food,” indicating they were to enjoy what they ate, that it would not only nourish but please them. Truly this was a paradise, and what helped make it a paradise was how well it pleased their human senses.

There’s no question: God created us as physical beings, and He gave us physical desires, which, in and of themselves, can’t be bad precisely because God gave them to us. The problem is not our basic desires but rather how we as fallen beings use them, how we keep them under control in order that we don’t allow them to take us where God never intended us to go. We can do this only through knowing what God’s will is for us and then surrendering our sinful selves to Him so we can have the power to keep our desires within that will and not enter into the paths of self-destruction.

Despite the ravages of sin, in what ways can you see, even now, indications of how wonderful the original creation was? What are some of the things we have been given that we should enjoy, and how do these reveal to us the Creator’s love?

The Fall

The Lord placed our parents in a paradise, a garden filled with things that delighted their senses, things that they, in their physical bodies, could enjoy. Unfortunately, some of these same things were used against them by Satan in order to cause the Fall.

Read Genesis 3:1-6. How did the devil use the physical senses to deceive the woman and get her to flagrantly disobey God?

It should be a powerful warning to us that, even in their unfallen state, Adam and Eve allowed their senses to turn them away from God. Satan knows that our senses, our appetites, though God-given, are a powerful means to control us. That's why the Bible tells us to keep them under control; otherwise, Satan will use them to destroy us.

Read 1 John 2:16. How do you see the principles here reflected in the story of the Fall? Notice, is it saying the eyes and the flesh themselves are bad, or is it saying something else? If so, what?

All around us we can see the results of humans who have allowed these wonderful God-given gifts to control them and their lives. God gave us sex, and we became pornographers. God gave us material possessions, and we became greedy and selfish. God gave us music, and we became punk rockers. He gave us fire, and we became arsonists. He gave us food, and we became gluttons. He gave us words, and we lie and we curse. He gave us grapes, and we became drunks. It's hard, really, to think of any God-given gift that we, as humans, haven't, one way or another, perverted or abused because of sin. The effects are seen everywhere.

Try to imagine a world where our God-given senses are in perfect harmony with the world around them (kind of sounds like heaven, does it not?). What do you think it would be like? And though you can't have that world now, what changes do you need to make in order to bring your desires and senses into closer harmony with the world as God originally meant them to be? Why would doing that make your life better now?

Times of Solitude

Read **Matthew 4:1, 2** (*see also Mark 1:12 and Luke 4:1, 2*). **Why do you think Jesus fasted for so long? What’s the message here for us?**

“Many who profess godliness do not inquire into the reason of Christ’s long period of fasting and suffering in the wilderness. His anguish was not so much from the pangs of hunger as from His sense of the fearful result of the indulgence of appetite and passion upon the race. He knew that appetite would be man’s idol and would lead him to forget God and would stand directly in the way of his salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*, p. 51.

How fascinating that though Satan caused our first parents to sin on the issue of appetite, Jesus—in His first major conflict after His baptism—would go over the same ground and succeed where Adam and Eve failed. What a message His self-denial should have for us, we who are often enslaved to our appetites and passions.

Read prayerfully and carefully **1 Peter 1:13-16**. **What is the essential message to us regarding our desires and lusts? How do his words “gird up the loins of your mind” focus us on last week’s study, and why is this crucial to keeping our desires under control?**

Amid these exhortations is the call to be holy. That’s a pretty intense command for beings who, at their core, are sinful and fallen. And yet, it’s obviously an attainable goal; otherwise, why would the Bible more than once call us to holiness? And, in this context and others—holiness, which basically means to “be set apart”—deals with the control of our lusts and passions. It says to be holy in all manner of conduct, behavior, and lifestyle. Though we have been given these basic desires by God, we are to be separate from the world and the world’s indulgences and abuses and perversions of these desires.

How much self-denial do you allow yourself to go through? In other words, when your desires are leading you where you know you shouldn’t go, how do you respond? What does your answer tell you about how well you’re following what the Lord tells us about the control of these desires?

Yield

It's one thing, of course, to read the Bible admonitions to keep our desires under control; it's another to do it. Though we want to do what is right, sometimes it's so easy to surrender, not to the will of God but to our lusts and passions. Perhaps this problem was best expressed by Augustine, who once prayed, "*God give me power over my passions—but just not yet!*" Who, to some degree, can't relate?

Nevertheless, there is great hope for us as Christians. We can have victory over the things that can, otherwise, destroy us, but we can have that victory only through the power and Spirit of God working in a soul that yields to that power. In the end, we all yield: The question is—to what? To our passions, which bring death, or to God, who brings life? There are no other options.

Read prayerfully and carefully the following texts: What's the basic message in them all? What personal experience are they all talking about? *Rom. 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:12, 13.*

Those who have totally surrendered their lives to Christ will, through the Spirit of God, die to their old selves and be "born from above" (*John 3:3, NRSV*). They have surrendered to God their whole existence, including the desires of the heart and flesh (*see Rom. 6:13*). Now, they live under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, which gives them a new life in Christ (*see Gal. 5:25*). Unlike before they knew the Lord, those who have died to self and live again in Christ can, through this power, live with their desires under control.

This new existence, however, is a day-by-day existence. Though we sometimes hear stories of those who, having surrendered to Christ, suddenly have their lifelong habit of smoking, drinking, or whatever just simply vanish, for most Christians that's not the case. Plus, too, character doesn't change in an instant. There's a day-by-day battle with sin, with self, with the carnal nature, which, though subdued through the power of God, is always there trying to break through. In and of ourselves, we can't win against our fallen flesh; all we can do is, moment by moment, surrender our wills to Christ and claim His power over our sinful desires. This takes self-denial, vigilance, a struggle, and lots of prayer, but victory is promised. Otherwise, defeat is certain.

How, in your own life, have you experienced what these texts listed today have talked about? Why is knowledge of the Cross so important for you to understand when, at times, you fail?

Further Study: Consider the stories of various Bible characters who failed to yield their desires to the will of God. Note the consequences of their actions. Some of these individuals repented of their sin and trusted in God’s grace for forgiveness and salvation. Others continued in their sin and will be eternally lost.

Bible Character	Consequences
Cain (<i>Gen. 4:3-15</i>)	
Moses (<i>Exod. 2:11-15</i>)	
David (<i>2 Samuel 11–18</i>)	
Peter (<i>Matt. 26:69-75</i>)	
Judas (<i>Matt. 27:3-5</i>)	

“You may live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and bear the fruits of the Spirit; you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Then you will be living channels of light, having your life hid with Christ in God.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 49.

Discussion Questions:

- ① **As a class, talk about what it means to die to self and live a new life in Christ. Share your own experiences and how some person may have changed your life. What advice would you give to someone who, wanting to be a Christian, admits that he or she never had such experiences with God before?**
- ② **In our struggle to keep our desires under control, why is understanding the good news of Christ’s substitutionary death so important, especially after we make a mistake and yield to our sinful desires?**
- ③ **In your own community, where do you see businesses exploiting our fallen condition? Though there are limits, of course, to what you could or even should do, is there anything that, as a class or a church, you could do to help limit the damage these businesses are doing to your community? If so, what?**

The Locked Bookcase

J. H. Zachary

From the time he was a child, Juan wanted to know God. While still a teenager, he enrolled in a seminary to become a priest. He read the Bible carefully and began noticing differences between what it said and what his teachers taught. He discovered that the Ten Commandments in the Bible differed from those he studied in class. These discrepancies drove Juan to study the Scriptures even more.

Juan spent many hours in the seminary library. One day he noticed some books locked within a case. A note taped to the case stated that no one was to read the books locked inside.

Juan became curious. *What could those books contain that would be harmful to a seminary student?* he wondered. And who is this E. G. White who had written those forbidden books?

Juan wanted to read those books and decided to make friends with the librarian. For several weeks he built up trust with the librarian. Finally he asked, "Is it possible for me to read one of the books locked in that case over there? I'm curious about them."

The librarian smiled, opened a drawer, and pulled out a key. Together the two walked to the locked case. The librarian unlocked the case, and Juan selected one book, *The Great Controversy*. He took it home and began reading it.

As he read, he began to understand why these books were forbidden. The book spoke about his church, and the accusations were as heresy to him. But every chapter of the book contained scriptural references to back it up. Juan looked up the verses and realized that the Bible supported what this book was saying.

Juan borrowed and read several other books by Ellen G. White. As he read them, he felt the Holy Spirit urging him to draw closer to the Bible and to Jesus.

Juan's questions in class brought hostility from some of his teachers. In time he left the seminary and moved to a distant island in the Philippines. There he met some people who clearly followed the Bible's teachings. After studying the Bible with them for several months, he was baptized.

He praises God for showing him the path of life through those "forbidden books." Juan is sharing his faith with animist people living in the Philippines.

J. H. Zachary was retired from the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

Lord of Our Speech



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Psalm 9; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; Eph. 4:15, 29; Col. 4:6; James 3:5-13; 4:11.*

Memory Text: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (*Colossians 4:6, NKJV*).

Key Thought: We are called to use our speech for the glory of our Lord and the blessing of others.

The gift of speech can be a tremendous blessing or a terrible curse. When we enter into a newness of life under the lordship of Christ, Jesus invites us to let Him be the Lord of our speech. Used wisely, our speech can bring glory to God and blessing to those around us. Misused, our speech can wreak havoc. Corrupt communication causes pain to the heart of God and damage to the lives of those within our circle of influence.

Ellen White reminds us that “the faculty of speech is a precious gift, and if the noblest of our faculties, reason, is set to the task of knowing God, then the gift of speech may become a means of grace to others, a channel through which the knowledge of God may be communicated.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 277.

In this week's study, we will explore some practical ways in which we can use our speech for the glory of God and the blessing of others. The same appeal that the apostle Paul gave to young Timothy is given to each one of us today: “[Be] an example in speech” (*1 Tim. 4:12, NRSV*).

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 30.*

Speaking Words of Praise to the Lord

It is the highest privilege for members of the human family to speak words of praise to the Lord. The psalms are full of exhortations to praise the Lord. In Psalm 9 the psalmist David declares, “I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High” (*Ps. 9:1, 2, NKJV*).

As much as possible, read the last five psalms. What was it about the Lord that caused the psalmist to utter so much praise?

Throughout the Scriptures, we find the testimonies of individuals who used their gift of speech to express praises to God. For example, when the secret of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was revealed to Daniel, the young prophet was quick to offer praise to the Lord (*see Dan. 2:20-23*). This is seen over and over again in the Bible.

What spiritual advantages come to us by taking time to praise the Lord, whether verbally or in writing?

There’s power in words that impacts not only those who hear or read those words but those who speak or write them. Through our own acts of praising the Lord for His goodness, His mercy, His divine acts in our behalf, we only strengthen our faith and appreciation of the Lord’s goodness, mercy, and divine acts in our behalf. Thinking about these things is also important, but there’s something about expressing them, either through spoken or written words, that increases their impact on us. No wonder, then, that the Scriptures have whole sections praising the Lord.

Write your own psalm of praise to the Lord for whatever you feel impressed to praise Him for, and then read it aloud. See for yourself how such expressions can impact you only for the good.

Speaking With Grace *(Col. 4:6)*.

Study the apostle Paul's counsel to the believers in Colosse, as recorded in Colossians 4:6. What does it mean to "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (*NKJV*)? Keeping in mind, too, that salt back then was used as a preservative, what do you think "seasoned with salt" means in this context?

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find the suggestion that grace can originate in the hearts of human beings. Grace always originates in the heart of God. Grace cannot be worked up. It must be prayed down from heaven. We can speak with grace only if our lives are filled with grace. How does that happen? Through a daily living connection with the Source of all grace, through understanding how grace has been poured out upon us. When we keep this great truth before us, that we have been recipients of grace, that we have received from God, through Christ, what we absolutely do not deserve—then we can begin to speak with grace to others.

Read the story in John 8:1-11 of the adulterous woman who was cast at the feet of Jesus. How does the interaction of Jesus with the woman and with her accusers illustrate one way by which one can speak with grace?

We often face situations where the natural tendency would be to speak sharp words, words that don't reflect grace but anger, judgment, or retaliation. Oftentimes, we might be in a position where a firm word is needed, but even then it's how we say it, the manner and the tone in which we say it, that can either reflect grace or our own selfish nature. Even when we have been mistreated, the Lord desires that we respond with words of grace rather than words of rebuke or retaliation. Christ's whole passion provides us with a perfect example of speaking words of grace, even to those who mistreat us.

Think about the last time your words were graceless. Though all you can do is ask for forgiveness for that past act, what can you do now to help prevent yourself from making a similar mistake next time?

Speaking the Truth in Love (Eph. 4:15).

As we suggested yesterday, there are times when we might need to speak words of rebuke, counsel, or admonition to others.

Read the following texts: **Matthew 16:23; 23:13-39; John 14:8, 9; John 18:19-23.** What kind of tone do you think Jesus used when speaking these words? How would that tone reflect the principles of love and grace He Himself embodied?

“Christ Himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, that refused to receive Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke His heart. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He always bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

Read **Ephesians 4:15.** How do you understand what it means to speak the “truth” in love? Is “truth” still “truth” if spoken in any other way but love?

Unfortunately, there are times when we fail to speak the truth in love. We seem to easily fall into one of two traps. Some are quick to speak the truth but fail to speak it in love. Others replace love with a sentimentalism that hinders their ability to speak the truth at all.

So often it’s not what we say but how we say it that can make all the difference in the world. Stand before a mirror, or before others, and practice saying the same words, once in a loving tone, once in a harsh, unkind tone. You will be shocked that, though the words themselves are the same, their meanings will seem so different. There’s a powerful lesson here for us, if we will learn it.

Speaking in the Power of the Spirit

(Acts 1:8, 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

When someone refers to speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, we generally think of preaching. The testimony of Scripture is clear: It is God's intention that all preaching be delivered in the power of the Spirit.

Study the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:8 and the testimony of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. What is the secret of powerful preaching?

Powerful preaching is not the product of human wisdom or eloquence. Rather, it is the testimony of one who has entered into a personal, intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The same Holy Spirit who placed His seal of approval upon the preaching of Paul will also enable humble servants of Christ in our generation to speak with a demonstration of divine power.

Speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, however, is not limited to preaching. God intends that all our speech be delivered with a demonstration of divine power. Indeed, each one of us who lives in newness of life under the lordship of Christ is given the privilege and responsibility of speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Divine power, however, doesn't necessarily mean just eloquence (*see Exod. 4:10, 1 Cor. 2:1*). If we are speaking in the Spirit, our words, our tone, our message will reflect the attributes of the Spirit that are made manifest in lives touched by the Spirit. Our words will reflect the kind of people we are; they will reflect whether we are walking after the flesh or after the Spirit.

Also, we must never confuse grand elocution with speaking in the Spirit. Many of history's worst tyrants were men whose speech was very powerful and very effective; one, though, would hardly say they were speaking in the Spirit.

What principles do the following texts give us that help us know whether we, or someone else, is speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit? 1 Cor. 12:1, 2; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9, 10; 6:17-19. How can you apply these principles in your own life and speech?

Avoiding Corrupt Communication (Eph. 4:29).

The apostle Paul admonished the believers in Ephesus to avoid corrupt communication. Unfortunately, many of us live in a social environment where corrupt communication is considered normal. People frequently take the name of the Lord in vain, use profane language, and make rude or suggestive comments. Even as Christians, if we allow ourselves to be exposed continuously to this kind of language, sooner or later it will influence us to where we, ourselves, are more likely to use these words. We must constantly be on guard.

In the light of Paul’s comment in Ephesians 4:29, how would you define “corrupt communication”? Why is it not limited only to what is known as profanity? Consider also Exod. 20:16, Prov. 10:18, Eph. 4:31, James 3:5-13, 4:11.

Corrupt communication tears down. The Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:11, translated “slanderers”(KJV) or “malicious talkers” (NIV), is *diabolos*, one of the names used for the enemy, Satan. When people use corrupt communication, they are actually doing Satan’s work. What a testimony to the power that is inherent in our words!

In contrast, the apostle Paul appeals to believers to use speech that is “good for necessary edification” (Eph. 4:29, NKJV). The word used here literally means “building up.” One translation puts it this way: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4:29, NIV).

Our words, then, have a powerful influence, either for good or for evil, for either building up others in faith or for tearing them down. Who hasn’t experienced themselves the power of words, either for good or for evil, either for edification or for creating doubt? How crucial that we watch not just our words but the tone and manner in which we express them. Indeed, even the right words in the wrong spirit also can be considered “corrupt communication.”

How much “corrupt communication” emanates from your own lips? We’re not talking just about curse words; we’re talking about untruths, slander, exaggeration, being judgmental, and so forth. Take a hard look at yourself: What things might you need to change regarding your speech?

Further Study: The gift of silence. The wise man Solomon reminds us that there is a time to speak and also “a time to keep silence” (*Eccles. 3:7, NKJV*). When Jesus Christ is Lord of your speech, you will not only speak for the glory of God and the blessing of others; you will also discern when it is time to keep silent.

Note: In the light of this week’s study, consider to what extent you are allowing Jesus Christ to be Lord of your speech. Spend time reading Scripture with the intention to be more attentive to God’s words than to your own. Use a journal to record your thoughts. When you conclude your time of silence, you might find that you are more aware of the gift of speech.

“I wish we could have a pledge in our hearts that we would not utter one word against a brother or a sister. . . . Do not gossip about them and make remarks about their character, but go to them in the love of Jesus and the love of the truth and try to help them.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 289.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Jesus was described as a speaker of “gracious words” (*Luke 4:22, NKJV*). This may be a reference to both the content of His speech and also the way He spoke. What narratives in the Gospels illustrate the gracious speech of Jesus? What can we learn from these examples?
- 2 We tend to think of speech as only an individual thing. But what about us as a church? How do we, as a church, use the power of speech? Why, in many ways, is our responsibility as a church regarding our words more important than as individuals?
- 3 What counsel would you give to an individual who works in an environment where corrupt communication is considered normal? When should a person stay to be salt and light? When is it wise to leave?

One Small Miracle

Karen Glassford

I am a third-generation Adventist and a missionary kid. I had lived in the mission field, so when I accepted an invitation to go to India to conduct evangelism, I did not think that much in India could surprise me. I was prepared for the poverty I would find, but I wasn't prepared to witness the miracles God performed before my eyes and in my arms—miracles that overwhelmed me with gratitude to God, who can do anything.

Several hundred villagers came to our evangelistic meetings. They came to watch the video about the life of Jesus, to listen to the Bible stories, and to learn how to live healthier lives. I watched their faces as they realized that there is a God who loves them and wants to spend eternity with them; to learn of a future far different from the troubled world they knew. Their eyes filled with joy as they realized that life has a purpose, that hope is real.

One night as I waited to preach, someone pulled on my scarf. I turned to look into the desperate eyes of a woman holding a baby girl. The infant was clawing the air, struggling to breathe. I touched her fevered body and could hear her little chest rattling loudly. The baby's face was turning blue, and the mother's eyes begged me to help her. I placed my hand on the child and prayed, "Dear Lord, help this baby to breathe. Ease her suffering and save her!" The child seemed to calm down a little, but she still fought for every breath. I continued praying, "Lord, this little Hindu baby does not know You, but she needs Your healing touch."

The child's life hung in the balance. My faith seemed so small, but again I prayed, "Lord, for the sake of this child, her family, her village, please heal her now, so that all will know that You are all powerful and that You care about them."

Instantly the baby stopped struggling and fell into a peaceful sleep. Her hot little body cooled, and the rattle in her chest quieted as air flowed freely into her lungs.

I stood transfixed, overwhelmed at what I had just witnessed. As I had held that tiny child, the great God of the universe who had parted seas and calmed storms, had stepped down into that dusty place and touched her. I was holding a miracle in my arms.

Many other miracles marked the meetings that we held in India. Hearts were changed, souls were gathered into God's kingdom. But this one small life will forever stand as a testimony to the compassion of our mighty God.

Karen Glassford is a homemaker and mother living in California.

Lord of Our Prayers



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 53:12; John 14:12-14; Rom. 8:15, 18, 34; Gal. 4:5, 6; Eph. 1:5; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6, 12:24.*

Memory Text: “‘And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son’ ” (*John 14:13, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Those who choose to live under the lordship of Christ are called to follow the Master in a life of prayer.

The life of our Lord. Christ's life was a life of prayer. Jesus made prayer a top priority. Mark records that “in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (*Mark 1:35, NKJV*). Luke testifies that Jesus “went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (*Luke 6:12, NKJV*). “No other life was ever so crowded with labor and responsibility as was that of Jesus; yet how often He was found in prayer!”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362.

If we follow the life and teachings of Jesus, we, too, will devote ourselves to prayer, and we will learn from the example of our Lord. Prayer is the heart and soul of the Christian life. We would be spiritually dead without it.

When we pray, let us address our prayers to our heavenly Father. Let us pray in Jesus' name. Let us pray according to His will. Let us join our Lord in the sacred work of intercession.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 6.*

Praying to Our Heavenly Father

In His personal communion with heaven, Jesus addressed God as “Father” (*John 17:1*), “Holy Father” (*John 17:11*), and “righteous Father” (*John 17:25*). Even the brief prayer of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:21 is addressed to “Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” During His agony in Gethsemane, Jesus addressed the heavenly Father using the Aramaic term *Abba* (*Mark 14:36*), an endearing name connoting the idea of “my father.” The early Christians apparently followed His example, at least on certain occasions (*see Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6*).

Look up the following Old Testament texts. How do they reveal the kind of relationship God sought for His people, and how does the image of “Father” fit in? *Deut. 1:31, 32:6, Ps. 103:13, Prov. 3:12, Isa. 63:16, Mal. 2:10.*

Ideally, a father is to be someone who is loving, caring, protecting, someone whom a child can love, trust, and obey.

Then there’s also the biblical notion of adoption, that as followers of Christ we have been “adopted” into the Father’s household (*see Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:5, Eph. 1:5*). In Roman times, when a son was adopted, he received all the legal rights and privileges that came with the new family. As followers of Christ, we receive the fullness of salvation that comes from being the children of God. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (*1 John 3:1, RSV*).

Thus, praying the name *Father* should give us comfort, hope, and joy.

Of course, many earthly fathers have been the opposite of what a father should be. What advice can you give to someone for whom the idea of father brings painful memories? How can you help him or her experience the Father’s love?

Praying in Jesus' Name

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (*1 Tim. 2:5, NKJV*).

In John 14:12-14 Jesus tells us that we should ask for things in His name. That is, what we request from the Father, we should request in the name of Jesus. What does this mean? So often, when we pray, we pray to the Father, and then we often, in our prayer, end with something to the effect, “And we ask these things in Jesus’ name.” What is implied with these words?

What are the following texts saying to us that can help us better understand the idea of praying to the Father in Jesus’ name? *Isa. 53:12, Rom. 8:34, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 8:6, 12:24.*

By praying in Jesus’ name, we are declaring before ourselves, before other humans, and even before the universe (*see 1 Cor. 4:9*) that we, personally, acknowledge the authority and power of Jesus Christ in our lives. By praying in His name we verbalize our personal acceptance of Him as our Savior, our Redeemer, as the One who died for our sins and the One through whom we have complete access to the Father (*see Heb. 8:1*). By praying in the name of Jesus, we can claim the promises of God that we have in and through Him. By praying in the name of Jesus, we are openly expressing our faith in Him as the One who has closed the gap caused by sin between heaven and earth, the One through whom we, as sinners, have been reconciled to our heavenly Father. “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (*2 Cor. 5:18, 19*).

By praying in Jesus’ name, we acknowledge Him and what He has done for us. At the same time, what obligations does that place on us—we who pray in His name—regarding how we live, how we speak, and how we treat others?

Praying According to the Father’s Will

(Mark 14:36; John 6:38; 1 John 5:14, 15).

Jesus declared, “ ‘For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me’ ” (John 6:38, NKJV). Even in His prayers, Jesus demonstrated His commitment to yield His own will to the will of His Father. When we pray, there are certain requests we can know for certain are in harmony with the Father’s will. For example, when we pray for salvation, Jesus assures us in John 3:16 that we are praying in accordance with the Father’s will.

List three other requests we can make with full assurance that we are praying in accordance with the Father’s will.

Request	Scriptural Support
①	
②	
③	

In other situations, it may be more difficult to determine the Father’s will. For example, have you ever prayed for someone who is sick? How do you know the Father’s will for that individual? We are told to pray for the sick and to trust that God will bring healing. But we do not know the way in which healing will come, nor do we know God’s timing. Should we then shrink back from praying for those who are feeble and weak? No! “Let your prayer include this thought: ‘Lord, Thou knowest every secret of the soul. Thou art acquainted with these persons; for Jesus, their advocate, gave His life for them. He loves them better than we possibly can. If, therefore, it is for Thy glory and the good of these afflicted ones to raise them up to health, we ask Thee in the name of Jesus, that health may be given them at this time.’ ” —Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 375.

Go back and read Jesus’ prayer in Mark 14:36. Notice the sequence of thought: (1) His word *Abba* expresses the close relationship with His Father. (2) He acknowledges the Lord’s power. (3) He expresses His own personal desire. (4) He surrenders His own personal desire to the Father. How does this serve as a model for our own prayers? Is there any prayer you need to pray right now that reflects this same pattern? Why not get on your knees, even now, and pray it in the will of God?

Praying for Others

It is impossible to live under the lordship of Christ and pray only for yourself. When Jesus Christ is Lord of your prayers, you will join Him in interceding for others. Jesus prayed for groups of people (*see John 17:9, 20*) and also for individuals (*see Luke 22:31, 32*). Several Greek verbs are used in the New Testament to describe the prayers of Jesus. One such verb means “to beg.” This is the verb used in Luke 22:32 to describe the prayer of intercession that Jesus offered on Simon Peter’s behalf. “Satan could do nothing against the all-powerful intercession of Christ. And the prayer that Christ offered for Peter He offers in behalf of all who are humble and contrite in heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 91.

How do the following texts help us understand why we should pray for others? *Jer. 29:7; Mark 9:29; Rom. 15:30, 31; Phil. 1:9, 10; James 5:16.*

Many times we are asked to pray for others when they are facing difficulties and trials. Lists are read in church of people who “need our prayers.” On occasion, we may be tempted to feel overwhelmed because there are so many people on our prayer list. Nevertheless, there are too many mandates and examples in the Bible of God’s faithful servants praying for others. We can’t neglect doing our part, as well. There’s a power in prayer that only those who pray in the Spirit and in truth can experience.

In fact, even science is beginning to understand more about the power of prayer. Though the issue is still debated, studies have been done that have convinced many “secular” scientists and doctors that praying for sick people does, indeed, help the sick get better—a fact that from their “scientific” perspective does not make sense. All of this simply shows how prayer is something beyond science.

What are some of the things Satan throws before our minds to make us think our prayers are not needed? Or don’t matter? What can you do to reject those thoughts and make a personal commitment to pray for others in need?

Prayer Examples

The Bible is filled with examples of powerful prayers uttered by God's people. None of these folk were perfect, none of their lives sinless, and none had any righteousness in and of themselves to commend them to God. All of them were—as all of us are—sinners in need of divine grace, in need of the incense of Christ's righteousness to mingle with our prayers and make them acceptable to a holy God (*see Rev. 8:3*). Nevertheless, in their great need, in their realization of who they were and who God was, they prayed to their Creator, their Redeemer, their heavenly Father.

Prayer is an expression of our realization that we can't do it ourselves, that there are forces beyond our control, and that we are beings dependent upon something greater than what we ourselves or what our material world could provide for us.

Below are referenced a few great prayers depicted in the Bible. As much as time allows, read each prayer (or pick one or two), and write down what thoughts come to you about what makes these prayers so powerful. As you read, ask yourself: *What can I learn from these prayers that can help my prayer life be more effective?*

1 Kings 8:15-61

Psalm 51

Dan. 9:4-19

Further Study: Perseverance in prayer. Read “The Privilege of Prayer” in *Steps to Christ*. Note what new insights impress you in the context of this week’s study.

Note: Various models for prayer have been helpful for Christians. The best-known model is the Lord’s Prayer. It is possible to recite this prayer in fewer than 60 seconds. However, if you use the main movements of this prayer as an outline for prayer, your prayer time can be expanded to last for half an hour, an hour, or even all night.

The earthly sanctuary is also a helpful model for prayer, including praise, confession, cleansing, prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, empowerment through God’s Word, intercession, and intimate communion with the Lord before the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** The apostle Paul encourages believers to “pray without ceasing” (*1 Thess 5:17*). What do you think that means? How can we pray “without ceasing”?
- 2** Share in class some personal experiences with prayer. You can talk about dramatic answers to prayer or about what prayer does for you, or how you understand how prayer works. What can you share that can help edify and encourage class members in their own prayer life?
- 3** Is there anyone whom you, as a class, know needs prayer? Why not stop everything and, right now, pray as a group for this person? Afterward, discuss the experience of praying as a group as opposed to praying individually.
- 4** How can you help your children, or children within your circle of influence, to experience a meaningful prayer experience with their heavenly Father?

Free to Believe

Charlotte Ishkanian

Jane Bor grew up in Kenya in a family that worshiped traditional spirits. In school she met some Adventist children who often talked about Jesus and sang lovely Christian songs. She wished she could worship Jesus instead of the spirits, but she knew her parents would not allow it.

In school, time was set aside for pastors to teach the children doctrines. Jane belonged to no Christian church, so she went to the Adventist class to learn about Jesus. More and more she wanted to follow Jesus.

When Jane finished primary school, her family sent her to marry a man from another village that they had chosen for her. She was happy to learn that the man was from a Christian family, and she hoped that she could worship God openly. But soon after their marriage, Jane's husband stopped attending church, started drinking heavily, and forbade her to attend any church. Deeply disappointed, Jane prayed that God would provide a way for her to worship Him.

Four years later Jane's husband was killed, leaving her with two small children. According to custom, she went to live with her husband's family. Jane found an Adventist congregation nearby, but her relatives forbade her to go to church on Sabbath. When Jane refused to marry her husband's brother, as tradition required, she was told to leave. She returned to her parents' home, but they were unwilling to allow her to worship God as she wished. Jane fasted and prayed to know God's will.

One day Jane's mother suggested that she go live with her sister and look for work at the nearby university. She was thrilled to learn that the university was an Adventist school. She packed her few belongings and went to live with her sister near the university. There she is free to attend an Adventist church.



Because she has no skills, the only work available for her is as a helper on a construction site. Jane works long hours and travels home every two weeks to visit her children and give her mother money to care for them. She is praying for a place of her own, where she can have her children with her and teach them the faith she has learned to love.

Jane Bor (left). Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.

Book Ad



Welcome!

On beautiful Ulrueng Island, off the coast of Korea, Soon Joel Lee has accepted Christ as her Savior and joined the Adventist church. She is one of only a few members on this island. The small group currently meets in the pastor's home, but they long for a facility to which they can invite neighbors to join them. They look forward to having room to hold health and temperance meetings, and as a base to serve their community.

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help build an evangelistic center/church on Ulrueng Island.

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on September 24
supports projects in the Northern Asia Pacific Division.

Lord of Our Relationships



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 20:14, 17; Psalms 127; 128; Luke 6:27, 28; Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 4:32; 5:25; 6:1-4.*

Memory Text: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (*Galatians 6:2*).

Key Thought: God created human beings to enjoy intimate relationships with Him and with one another. When Jesus Christ is the Lord of our relationships, we will experience the meaningful intimacy that was part of God’s original plan.

Created for relationships. After God had created Adam, He said, “ ‘It is not good that man should be alone’ ” (*Gen. 2:18, NKJV*). Adam was not simply a work of art to be admired by his Creator. He was a relational being, created with the innate desire to experience intimacy with God and with other created beings. When the Lord brought Eve to her companion’s side, Adam gave the following testimony of the intimacy he was already experiencing: “ ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’ ” (*vs. 23*). Moses provides a brief description of the intimate relationship that our first parents enjoyed: “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (*vs. 25*).

So much has changed since that first relational encounter. Relationships have become damaged and fractured by sin. God desires that we experience the meaningful intimate relationships that were part of His original plan.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 13.*

The God of Relationships

As human beings, we live in relationship with other human beings. There's no escaping it. Nature itself shows we are meant to exist in relationships.

For starters, each one of us is here only because of a *relationship* that resulted in our birth. And even after birth, infants cannot live but a few hours on their own. They need a relationship to survive; that is, they need at least one other person to take care of their physical needs. And almost as important as the physical are the mental needs, as well. Infants crave love, attention, and affection. From their youngest days infants are aware of, and respond to, human love—to touching, to words, to moods, to attitudes. Babies are made to bond, not with toys or with the bed, but with other people. The children who have loving, close parents to bond with are so much better adjusted than those who never had them. And that's because we were made to be in *relation-ship* with other people.

And yet, no matter how basic to our existence and identity as humans, something has gone wrong with our relationships. All around us we can see examples of relationships gone sour. Most of the pain and heartache we suffer as humans, we suffer because of bad relationships.

But because God loves us, He obviously cares about our relationships, which form such an important part of our existence. Thus, He wants us to have good, healthy, affirming relationships. That's why the Bible has so much to say about this crucial topic.

Look up the following texts: Exodus 20:14, 17; Luke 6:27, 28; Romans 12:2-21; Ephesians 4:32; 5:25; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 2:2, 3. What do they tell us about relationships? What can we learn from them about how we are to relate to others? As far as time allows, find as many verses as you can in the Bible that talk about relationships (be prepared to share what you find with your class).

Here, as we interact with others, the true measure of our walk with Christ will be revealed. Thus, as Christians, no aspect of our lives should be under the lordship of Jesus Christ more than our relationships.

How well do your relationships reflect the principles expressed in the above texts? In what areas, perhaps, do you need to make some radical, even painful, changes?

Relationship With God

Though we all want good, healthy relationships with each other, that's not always so easy to achieve. We are all sinners with defects that don't always make us so easy to get along with.

Crucial, however, to our relationship with others is our relationship with God. He created us, He alone can change us. Only through a close connection with the Lord can we have the kind of relationships with others that we should, ideally, have.

Read Matthew 22:36-39. How does what Jesus says here affirm what the lesson states above? Why is our relationship with God so important in helping us form the right relationships with others? What does God do to us that helps us have the right kind of relationships with others?

Look up the following texts. How do they help answer the above questions? *Ps. 51:10, 2 Cor. 5:17-19, Gal. 4:19, 2 Pet. 1:4.*

When Job declared “For I *know* that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth” (*Job 19:25, NKJV, emphasis supplied*), he was referring to more than simple awareness of a fact. This same Hebrew verb *yada* is used in Genesis 4:1 where Adam “knew” his wife, and she conceived and bore a son. Job was testifying concerning an intimate personal relationship. In an article entitled “Growth in Grace,” Ellen White shared the following insight: “To be living Christians, we must have a vital connection with Christ. The true believer can say, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ This intimate communion with our Saviour will take away the desire for earthly and sensual gratifications. All our powers of body, soul, and spirit should be devoted to God.”—*Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882.

How has your own relationship with God impacted your relationships? Write down the practical, tangible ways in which knowing God has impacted how you relate to people. In what areas do you need to grow?

The Gift of Marriage (*Eph. 5:22-33*).

Marriage, like the Sabbath, is something we have taken from Eden. Sadly, though, many marriages today have hardly been made in paradise. Probably few things better represent the extent of the damage sin has caused to human relationships than what it has done to marriage, something that was originally designed to bring fulfillment, happiness, and joy.

Read Genesis 2:24, a command that is repeated in Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. Is this talking only about physical union, or is there more implied? If so, what?

When Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives and Lord of our relationships, our perspective on marriage will be uniquely Christian. “Men and women can reach God’s ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pp. 112, 113.

Following what Paul says about marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33, how would you answer the following questions:

① How are wives to relate to their husbands?

② How should husbands treat their wives?

③ How does what Christ did for the church represent what a husband should do for the wife?

④ What mutual principles of love and respect are seen in these texts? How would following these principles greatly enhance any marriage?

The Gift of Family

What insights can we gain from Psalms 127 and 128 about the gift of family?

God has blessed each one of us with the gift of family. Whether we are single or married, with or without children, we are all part of a family circle. That family circle is extended exponentially when we become a part of God's family! In all our family relationships, we who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus and now live under His lordship should manifest a Christlike spirit and a loving conduct that are different from that of unbelievers.

In the home, perhaps more than anywhere else, parents have a sacred obligation to live out the principles of their faith. Love, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, care, discipline—these principles are especially crucial. So many of the child's early impressions about God are formed early on as a direct result of how the parents interacted with the child and with each other. Nothing done in the home occurs in a vacuum: The repercussions of our words, our body language, our tone, and our deeds are felt throughout the house, whether we realize it or not. And long after the deeds and words or even attitudes are past, the influences live on, often in the hearts and minds of the children, who are so malleable, so tender and sensitive. How crucial that parents, or anyone interacting with children, deal gently with them.

What counsel does the apostle Paul give to Christian families regarding the interaction between parents and children? *Eph. 6:1-4*.

When caring for children within our circle of influence, the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to avoid two extremes: a harsh, tyrannical disposition and a careless, indifferent attitude. Parents need to find the delicate balance between these two extremes, giving discipline and guidance when needed, while, at the same time, showing children the mercy and love and grace God has shown to them. It's a sacred, and solemn, responsibility. Here, as in all relationships, parents need to learn from God at the foot of the Cross.

The Gift of Community (*Acts 2:41-47*).

Those who live under the lordship of Christ experience a unique sense of community. The Greek noun used in the New Testament to describe this community is *koinonia*, often translated as “fellowship.” Some scholars suggest that the “[*koinonia*] of the Holy Spirit,” spoken of by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14 (*NIV*), may also be translated the “*koinonia* brought about by the Holy Spirit.” In other words, to the degree that we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, to that degree we will have fellowship with one another.

Examine the description of the early Christian community in Acts 2:41-47. Luke records that they continued steadfastly in *koinonia*. After reading the texts, answer the following questions:

- 1. What kind of practical and theological unity did they manifest?**
- 2. What kind of fellowship did they have?**
- 3. In what practical ways did they relate to one another?**
- 4. What kind of witness did they, in their *koinonia*, present to the world?**

What a beautiful picture of the early church; what a powerful depiction of the very principles regarding relationships Jesus Himself taught and, of course, manifested in His life. Try to imagine what a force for good your local church could be were it to manifest such *koinonia*. What a powerful witness it would be (*see John 13:35*).

What changes need to be made in your church in order for it to reflect better what we’ve learned today? Why, though, must those changes begin in the heart of each believer? What is the only way these changes can come?

Further Study: When building relationships, the art of listening is crucial. We listen to God primarily through His Word and through His creative works. We listen to others as they communicate both verbally and nonverbally.

Examine the following situations in the life of Jesus where He demonstrated the importance of listening when building relationships: John 3:1-21, 4:4-42.

“The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists of listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God’s love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear. So it is His work that we do for our brother when we listen to him. . . . But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 97–99.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In every aspect of our relationships with others, one crucial theme comes to the forefront, and it’s best expressed in the words of Matthew 16:24. Read those words aloud as a class. What’s the key principle there? Why is this principle so important in order to have the right relationship with others?
- 2** List the three most important relationships currently in your life. What are you doing to nurture those relationships?
- 3** What are some creative ways you can reach out to people who lack meaningful relationships in their lives?
- 4** As a class, read together the Bonhoeffer quote listed above. What practical things can you do in order to become a better listener?

One Tiny Church

Juan Chauquian

Along the rugged coast of Chile lie some isolated clusters of homes called *caletas*. These settlements are too small to be called villages and are extremely isolated. Some are little more than an extended family who make a living by fishing or raising a few head of cattle. One of these settlements is Caleta Milagros, a cluster of four families. Unless one has a boat, it takes 14 hours to walk from the nearest settlement.

Juan Chauquian and a friend had a burden for the people along the coast of Chile who had never heard the three angels' messages. They walked the rugged coastline looking for people who were willing to listen to Bible truth. When he arrived at Caleta Milagros, he found the people wary of strangers and hesitant to let them in.

Juan and his friend knocked on each door, but were turned away. Then they found someone who would invite them in. The two young men gave the couple a copy of the "Faith of Jesus" Bible course and promised to visit them again.

In the next house they visited they found a lonely woman. But she told them that her husband would be angry if she let them in. Juan talked gently to the woman and put her at ease. Eventually she invited the two men in.

The three talked and studied the Bible together for a half hour before the woman's husband returned home. He was angry to find two strange men in his house and threatened to toss them out. But Juan talked gently to the man, and he calmed down enough to listen. The four people talked about God and the Bible for six hours that day. Before Juan and his friend left, the husband apologized for his anger, saying he had misjudged Adventists. He explained that because Adventists did not dance in the Spirit or speak in tongues, he had assumed they did not accept the Holy Spirit.

Before Juan and his friend left at 2:00 A.M., the entire family had accepted the Bible truths and had asked for baptism. And the man who had been so angry to find Adventists in his home began to tell his neighbors what he had learned. In time the other two families in the settlement joined the first family for Bible studies. Today if you were to visit Caleta Milagros, you would find that everyone living there is an Adventist. The families worship together in their homes. Because they have no pastor, the family members take turns leading their little congregation. They would not have heard about the Sabbath had it not been for two faithful lay workers who were willing to go the extra miles for people they had never met.

Juan Chauquian is a lay worker living in Zaleta Manzana, Chile.

Lord of Our Resources



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deut. 8:7-18; Matt.6:19-21; 24:45-51; 1 Cor. 9:11-14; Phil. 4:11-13; Heb. 13:5; James 1:16, 17.*

Memory Text: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (*James 1:17, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Every good and perfect gift comes from above. We are not owners but stewards of the resources the Lord graciously places at our disposal.

The psalmist reminds us that “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (*Ps. 24:1, NKJV*). Every good and perfect gift we receive comes from the Father’s hand. The greatest gift of all was bestowed when God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. “He poured out all heaven to man in that one great gift. And then he completed the work by surrounding man with unlimited blessings, favor upon favor, gift upon gift, opening to our view all the treasures of the future world.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 17, 1891.

When we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we will recognize Him as Lord of all our resources, for all our resources have come only from Him and certainly not from ourselves. We, then, are stewards, not owners, and as stewards we identify ourselves with the Master, whose goods we have been given to oversee. We must accept the responsibilities of a steward and act in our Master’s stead.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 20.*

Giving Thanks for Every Good and Perfect Gift (*James 1:16, 17*).

What important truth does James reaffirm in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Christ scattered abroad? *James 1:16, 17*. What are some of these gifts? What error is he trying to help them avoid?

Our culture tells us we get what we earn, and we control what belongs to us. The Word of God, however, reminds us we get what we don't deserve and that our possessions belong to God. Every good and perfect gift comes from above. Were it not for our loving heavenly Father, we would have no life, no meaning, and no future. The apostle Paul reminds us that "in Him we live and move and have our being" (*Acts 17:28, NKJV*).

Think for a moment about the blessings you enjoy on a daily basis. Have any of us duly considered how much we have to be thankful for? What do you possess that didn't, ultimately, have its origins in God, our Creator? Wealth, power, prestige, whatever you have, at its source it didn't start with you but with God, who created all things. How important that we never forget that truth.

How does the Sabbath help keep this important truth before us on a weekly basis?

What danger did the children of Israel face as they prepared to possess the land of promise, soon to be surrounded with a multitude of blessings? *Deut. 8:7-18*. What is the Lord warning them against doing? How are we in danger of doing the same thing?

What are some of the gifts you have been given that mean the most to you? Why are they so important? What can you do to protect yourself against taking them for granted or thinking you somehow deserve them because of your own innate goodness?

Returning a Faithful Tithe

The Lord gave the following command to the children of Israel through His servant Moses: “ ‘And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s. It is holy to the Lord’ ” (*Lev. 27:30, NKJV*). The phrase “holy to the Lord” makes more sense when you understand that the idea of *holy* carries with it the notion of “set apart for holy use,” indicating the tithe is to be set apart for the Lord, to be used for Him and His purpose specifically, as opposed to other uses. It is something special, something different from the rest of our “seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree.”

Read Malachi 3:8-10. Why does God call not paying tithe robbery? What does that imply about who owns it to begin with?

We see various aspects of the tithing principle throughout the Bible. Abraham gave tithe to the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek (*Gen. 14:20*), a fact that’s reemphasized in the New Testament book of Hebrews (*see Heb. 7:2*); Jacob, as well, understood the idea of tithing (*Gen. 28:22*); and, after the Exodus, God reaffirmed the law of tithing as a divine institution (*Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:24, 26, 28; Deut. 12:6, 11, 17*).

“Because Abraham is the father of all believers, he is the model of tithing for Christians. As Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, so New Testament believers give tithe to Christ, our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (*Heb. 5:9, 10; 7:1-22*).”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 272.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:11-14. How do Paul’s words here help us understand an important principle behind our duty to pay a faithful tithe to the storehouse of the church?

How is tithing a visible manifestation of our acknowledgment that all that we have comes from God? Why is tithing such an important act of faith?

Laying Up Treasure in Heaven *(Matt. 6:19-21).*

Read Matthew 6:19-21. Rewrite the text in your own words, expressing the essential message you believe the Lord is telling us here.

However simple Christ's words, the idea behind them is profound. Jesus warns us that things of this world are temporal, transitory, unstable; why, then, put all your treasure where one day it will be swept away or lost forever? Why put your money in a bank that you know is going to collapse? The Lord is pointing us to eternal things, to heavenly things, to things that long after this world and all that's in it pass away will still be here.

Read 1 John 2:15-17. In what ways are these words saying to us the same thing that Jesus did in the above verses?

How do you understand the exhortation of Jesus to “‘lay up . . . treasures in heaven’”? What specifically does this involve? *See Luke 12:16-21.*

Laying up treasure in heaven deals, not just with what we do with our money but with our whole lives. What are our priorities? What are our biggest concerns? How much of our life is spent on earthly, worldly, temporal things as opposed to spiritual and heavenly things? For example, how much time do we spend in prayer, Bible study, or witnessing as opposed to watching TV? Do our lives reveal that we, indeed, are not only preparing to meet Jesus but we are working to help others prepare, as well? Those who are laying up treasure in heaven are daily making decisions for the Lord; they are choosing obedience over sin, love over hatred, and others over self. In short, laying up treasure in heaven is living the Christian life, a life marked by self-sacrificing love, a life that isn't dominated by love of the world or the things in the world, where moths and thieves and rust exist.

Dwell on Christ's words, “‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’” Where's your heart? What does your answer tell you about yourself and where your treasure is? Is it time to transfer your account?

Living as Faithful Stewards *(Matt. 24:45-51)*.

Read the account in Matthew 24:45-51. What message is the Lord giving us here?

Look at the characteristics of the faithful and wise servant. He is doing what was expected of him. In other words, it wasn't just that he had correct doctrine or theology. Perhaps all that was implicit in his actions. The point is, the man was obedient. Hence, the time of the master's return wasn't all that important; it made no difference when he came back, because, at any time, he would find his servant working faithfully.

Meanwhile, in contrast, it is easy for us to pass judgment on the unfaithful steward and condemn him for his waywardness. And yet, how many of us act in much the same way? We use the resources our Master has placed at our disposal to serve ourselves. We preoccupy ourselves with our own present desires and agendas, at the expense of what the Lord has asked us to do as stewards of the gifts He has given us.

Read again the texts for today. How did the evil servant manifest his wrong attitude toward the Lord? What did he do? What are some modern parallels to beating the servants and eating and drinking with the drunken? In other words, how might we, today, still awaiting the coming of Christ, manifest in our lives the same wrong attitude as the unfaithful servant?

Notice, too, the unfaithful steward didn't believe that the Lord wasn't coming back; he thought it was just going to be longer than first anticipated. What could better depict a danger that we as Adventists face—we who have long been expecting the Lord to come and who often talk (rightly or wrongly) about a "delay"? Have we, even subconsciously, changed how we live because we think the Lord's coming is delayed?

Suppose Christ came back yesterday. Would He have found you a faithful or an unfaithful steward? If the answer was the latter, what would you have done differently yesterday in order to have been deemed a faithful servant?

Learning to Be Content

“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (*1 Tim. 6:6, NKJV*).

The noun translated “contentment” in 1 Timothy 6:6 implies self-sufficiency, “the state of one who supports himself without aid from others.” This state of being was highly valued by some of the philosophers in Paul’s day. While the apostle Paul also affirms contentment as a virtue, he suggests that, for the follower of Jesus, the source of contentment does not come from within but from without.

Study the following passages of Scripture that refer to “contentment” or “being content” (*Phil. 4:11-13, Heb. 13:5*). **How is a Christian able to experience contentment even in the most difficult circumstances? In what ways have you experienced some of the things Paul is talking about in these verses? What lessons did you learn in these experiences? Give specific examples of your situations and share them with your class.**

Our contentment is based upon our confidence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the One who strengthens us. He is our Rock, when everything else is shifting sand. He is our Surety, when everything else is uncertain. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no true contentment.

“Paul in this letter to Timothy would impress upon his mind the necessity of giving such instruction as should remove the deception which so easily steals upon the rich, that because of their riches they are superior to those who are in poverty, that because of their ability to acquire they are superior in wisdom and judgment—in short, that gain is godliness. Here is a fearful deception. How few heed the charge which Paul commissioned Timothy to make to the rich! How many flatter themselves that their acquisitiveness is godliness! Paul declares, ‘Godliness with contentment is great gain.’ Although rich persons may devote their whole lives to the one object of getting riches, yet as they brought nothing into the world, they can carry nothing out. They must die and leave that which cost them so much labor to obtain. They staked their all, their eternal interest, to obtain this property, and have lost both worlds.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 541.

Why does one not necessarily need to be rich in order to face the dangers Ellen White is talking about? Why is the imbalanced pursuit of anything worldly dangerous? What practical steps can we take to make sure we don’t get caught up in this trap?

Further Study: Look at two case studies in stewardship. Compare the story of the rich fool with the story of Nicodemus.

The Rich Fool: *Luke 12:13-21*

“By the parable of the foolish rich man, Christ showed the folly of those who make the world their all. This man had received everything from God. . . . He did not realize that God had made him a steward of His goods that he might help the needy. He had a blessed opportunity of being God’s almoner, but he thought only of ministering to his own comfort.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 256.

Nicodemus: *John 3:1, 2; 19:38-40*

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

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What if everyone felt at liberty to place their tithe wherever they felt the urge to place it, as opposed to the church itself? It’s hard to see how the church could still function or even exist. What should this tell us about the importance of where we place our tithe? Discuss this issue as a class.
- 2 How does the act of returning tithes and offerings help keep us from being greedy?
- 3 Suppose someone were to come to your class and say, “Look, I just lost my job. I barely have enough money to pay the rent and feed my kids. I just can’t possibly return tithe. I can’t get by on what I have now.” What would you say to that person? What could you do for that person, as well?

Where's Ina? part 1

Virgie Amora

Ina is a widow who lives in a mountain village in the southern Philippines. *Ina* is the local word for mother, and it fits Ina. Whenever children in the village cry for their mother who is gathering food in the forest, Ina comforts them. Whenever somebody in the village is sick, Ina brings herbs and roots to treat them.

Although Ina's village has no Adventist members yet, Ina faithfully worships God with the school children. She hushes the noisy ones and reminds them to listen to the teacher.

When Ina gathers sweet potatoes from her garden plot for dinner, she brings extras for the missionary teachers.

When a storm tore half the roof from the missionary teachers' hut, Ina came to help us fix it. She was everyone's mother.

One day Ina did not attend morning worship at the school. She did not attend evening worship at the missionaries' hut. They grew worried and went to find her. Others searched for Ina too. "Ina! Ina!" the people called at her hut. The door was open, but no one answered. Just then someone inside the dark hut coughed. "Ina?" they called.

A frail voice struggled to say, "Come in!" Quickly the teachers climbed the stick ladder to the house, and inside they found Ina curled up under a thin blanket, very weak, very sick.

"What happened, Ina?" one missionary teacher asked, touching her hot forehead. The teacher bathed her hot body and asked her if the children could sing for her.

"Please, sing, Maestra [teacher]," Ina said.

The children began singing songs that Ina knew. Tears streamed down Ina's face. "Stop singing," Ina whispered. "Stop singing and pray for me."

The group bowed their heads and prayed for Ina. "Dear God in heaven, our Great Physician, please touch Ina and make her whole so that she can again worship You."

After prayer Ina told the children, "Be good; love one another; obey your parents, and love your teachers. God is coming soon to take us to heaven. Now, sing," she pleaded.

Ina was still very sick when the missionary left the village for her monthly trip to Mountain View College. Every step she prayed that she would see Ina alive when she returned.

Virgie Amora is a student at Mountain View College in southern Philippines. She served as a missionary teacher among the Manobo people.

Lord of Our Body Temples



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:16, 17; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.*

Memory Text: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (*1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIV*).

Key Thought: Our bodies are not disposable containers we can use and abuse according to our own desires. As trophies of God's grace, redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should honor God with our bodies. The question is, How do we do that?

You are the temple of the living God. When the apostle Paul first mentioned the word *temple* to the inhabitants of Corinth, they did not think of their own bodies; rather, they thought of the temple of Aphrodite, a place where worshipers engaged in sexual immorality with temple prostitutes. That's probably why in his letters to the Corinthians Paul goes to great lengths to reeducate the new believers concerning the temple where God dwells, which is in the hearts of those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Paul declares, “You are the temple of the living God” (*2 Cor. 6:16, NKJV*), and “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor. 6:19, NKJV*). Thus, the most compelling reason to care for our bodies is not simply that we might extend our lifespan or enjoy better health now, but because we choose to honor God with our bodies, which are His gifts to us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 27.*

All Things Were Made by Him *(John 1:1-3).*

The New Testament writers boldly proclaim that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Messiah, the Son of the Highest, but He is also the Creator of the world. Thousands of years before the Son of God entered into humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, He spoke the world into existence.

What three claims about the Word who became flesh does the apostle John make at the beginning of his Gospel record?

<i>John 1:1, 2</i>	
<i>John 1:3</i>	
<i>John 1:4</i>	

The apostle Paul also emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus Christ, Son of God, as the Creator of all things, and the One from whom we have even our life. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God, Paul writes, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (*Col. 1:16, 17, NIV*).

Compare John 1:1-4 with Colossians 1:16, 17. How do they complement each other? What’s the key message of both?

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ never explicitly claimed to be the Creator of all things. However, as we study His life and teachings, we find many evidences that point to His creative power. For example, when Jesus calmed the storm on the sea of Galilee, the astonished disciples exclaimed, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!” (*See Mark 4:41, NIV.*)

With the few texts we read for today as background, read Genesis 2:7, the account of God making humanity. Notice the closeness, the intimacy, of the act, in contrast to how everything else in the Genesis account was made. What does that tell us about the basic meaning of our own personal existence, about who we are, about why we are here? What radically different conclusions can we draw about the meaning of our lives in contrast to those who believe we are products of pure chance, nothing more? (See also Gen. 1:26, 27.)

Redeemed

In yesterday's study, we saw that the Bible very clearly reveals Jesus Christ as the Creator, the One who created all things, the One who spoke the world into existence, and the One who in a very intimate act breathed "the breath of life" into the first human being. Thus, we are not our own, in that we somehow created ourselves or put ourselves here out of our own volition, and, therefore, have an absolute claim over ourselves. On the contrary. As the objects of His specific act of creation, we belong to God, *whose claim over us is greater than our claim over ourselves.*

Read the last sentence of the above paragraph, specifically the italicized section. What are the implications of that thought? How should it impact how we live and the kind of decisions we make? When was the last time you made a decision based on the premise of that sentence?

We might belong to God because He is our Creator, but, according to the Bible, that's not His only claim over us.

Read the following texts. What are they saying, and how do they help us understand the Lord's claims over us? *Acts 20:28; Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.*

In the Bible, the idea of being redeemed is to be ransomed, to be bought back, to be recovered, to be rescued, or to be set free. Through Jesus our Redeemer, all these things have happened to us, which means His claims over us are even greater than before, for now we are His, by both creation and redemption. And redemption might even be a greater claim, because simply being created doesn't necessarily mean something good. After all, some people might curse their own existence and wish they had never been born. In contrast, as the One who redeemed us in an act that promises us a new existence in a world without sin or suffering, Christ has done something wonderful for us that nothing can diminish or destroy (*see Dan. 2:44*).

Write out a prayer thanking God for what He has done for you as your Creator and Redeemer. How, then, do you want to respond to Him because of what He has done? What obligations do you feel toward God, and what motivates you to fulfill those obligations?

The Temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*).

In his first epistle to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul emphasized the importance of honoring God with our bodies. The Corinthian believers were facing some intense challenges. They lived in a city where sexual immorality was not only prevalent, it was encouraged. Satan was marring the image of God in unbelievers and believers alike. Promiscuity was not only plaguing the culture, it was permeating the church.

In Paul's discussion of the damaging effects of sexual immorality, what two reasons does he give for honoring God with our bodies? *1 Cor. 6:19, 20*.

Summarize in a few lines what you believe Paul is telling us with these two verses. How should these truths impact our lives in a practical, daily way?

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot use and abuse our bodies with careless indifference. Too often, people say, "This is my life, and I can do what I want with it." The Word of God challenges that self-centered philosophy. When Christians engage in harmful activity, they damage themselves personally and dishonor God publicly.

What are some other harmful activities that are inappropriate for those whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? *See Deut. 21:20; Prov. 20:1, 25; 1 Cor. 10:31*.

Honoring God with our bodies involves more than refraining from sexual immorality. Once we recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, this realization will affect every aspect of our lives. We will not only seek to avoid defiling our body temple with any substance or activity that is harmful or inappropriate. We will also actively seek to care for our body temple and involve ourselves in activities that honor God.

"What matters for the Christian is only the spiritual, not the physical." How would you, from a biblical perspective, respond to this claim? How do you understand the strong link between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of humanity?

Do All to the Glory of God *(1 Cor. 10:31)*.

Having appealed to the believers in Corinth to avoid defiling their body temples through sexual immorality, the apostle Paul shares a principle that can guide every aspect of life: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NIV*). The Greek noun translated “glory” is the same word used as a verb in 1 Corinthians 6:19: “Honor God with your body.” The correlation between these two passages is clear. Because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, everything you do, including what you eat and what you drink, should be done to the honor of God.

How possibly does one “honor God” with one’s body, or how does one eat and drink “to the glory of God”? What does that mean? How do these above texts show us that God does care about what we eat and drink? Why would He care?

We are physical beings. In the new heaven and the new earth, we will still be physical beings (*see Rev. 21:4, 14*). The idea that we are temples serves to prove even more so how sacred, and important, the physical aspect of our being is. No wonder, then, we are admonished to take care of ourselves, to use our bodies in ways that glorify the One who made them. Any kind of physical indulgence, any kind of bodily sin, any kind of abuse of our body simply defiles what God has created and given us.

Also, if God loves and cares about us, then it should be no surprise that He wants us to take care of our bodies, which can be a source of much joy or so much suffering, often depending upon how we ourselves take care of them.

What do the following texts say about God’s attitude regarding our physical well-being? *Exod. 15:26, Jer. 30:17, Mark 5:25-34, 3 John 1:2.*

Read these words of Ellen White: “Since the laws of nature are the laws of God, it is plainly our duty to give these laws careful study. We should study their requirements in regard to our own bodies and conform to them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol.6,p.369. What is she telling us here? How do these words reflect the principle Paul gave us in 1 Corinthians 10:31?

Shalom!

Many people have heard of the Hebrew word *shalom*, understood as “peace.” It is sometimes used as an informal greeting among Jews today.

What do you think of when you think of the word *peace*? In what different ways do you use that word in your language? What does it mean to you?

The word *shalom* itself has a very rich and deep meaning in the Old Testament, where it appears in one form or another hundreds of times. It carries within it the idea of completeness, good welfare, wholeness, soundness, well-being, inner harmony, and health. The word itself incorporates every aspect of life, including the physical, mental, and the spiritual, whether individually, collectively, or nationally.

For example, in one of the earliest uses of the word, Jacob inquires about the well-being (*shalom*) of Laban (*see Gen. 29:6*). The word translated “well” both times in the text is *shalom*. In contrast, in Jeremiah 29:7, Jeremiah tells the Jews in captivity to pray for the *shalom* “of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away,” because, the Lord says, in the *shalom* of the city will be the *shalom* of the Hebrew captives.

Look up the following texts where *shalom*, in one form or another, appears. How does its use help us understand the meaning of the word in regard to our total health and spiritual well-being? *Gen. 43:28, Ps. 38:3 (the word translated “rest” in my bones is *shalom*), 119:165, Prov. 3:2, Isa. 48:22, Jer. 33:6.*

The Bible calls Jesus, *Sar-Shalom*, “the prince of peace,” which makes sense because, in Him, through faith in Him, through obedience to His law, both moral and physical, we can find “shalom,” wholeness, completeness, and well-being in our lives.

As Adventists, we have been greatly blessed with a health message. How seriously do you take the light we have been given on health? What changes might you need to make to have more “shalom” in your own life?

Further Study: The message of health reform, honoring God with our bodies, has always been important for Seventh-day Adventist Christians. God provided much guidance on the topic of health reform through the ministry of Ellen White. It is our privilege to share this message of honoring God with our bodies with the world. “It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of breaking away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind. . . . Let the poor have the gospel of health preached unto them from a practical point of view, that they may know how to care properly for the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 137. See also *Education*, pp. 99, 100; *Health Reformer*, October 1866; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 347, 348; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 17.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Since we are saved by God’s grace through faith and not by our own works, why does it really matter how we care for our body temples?
- 2 In what ways, if any, can you see a link between holiness and healthful living? Is that idea found anywhere in Scripture?
- 3 As a class, talk about what you might be able to do to help your own church members be more conscious regarding the need to take care of their bodies.
- 4 What dangers do we face in emphasizing the importance of health and its link to faith and spirituality so that we don’t make those who are sick feel as if they were somehow facing the judgment of God?
- 5 What role do dress and adornment have in the question of our body temples? What does Scripture say about this topic?

Where's Ina? part 2

Jugen Densing

After praying for Ina, Virgie, one of the student missionaries said Goodbye and started down the trail to Mountain View College for the monthly meeting. She pondered Ina's promise: "I will live because you prayed for me."

When Virgie returned to the village, the children ran to meet her. "Ina is well! Ina is well!" they cried. Virgie hurried to Ina's hut to see for herself.

Ina was well. She was washed; her hair was combed; she was walking, cooking, and comforting others. She welcomed her visitors and invited them to come and hear of her healing. "It is a miracle!" Virgie whispered.

Virgie learned that every day the children had gone to Ina's house to sing for her. They brought their picture roll and held worship in her little hut, because Ina was too weak to join them in the school. When Jugen, the missionary who had remained in the village, told the story about Jesus raising the dead girl to life again, Ina promised, "I too will be well. This Jesus, who can raise a dead girl to life, can heal me too."

When Jugen tried to bathe Ina, Ina refused. She was sure that she would die if she bathed. But Jugen reminded Ina that she bathed in the cold river often, and she was strong and well. Finally, after much protest and tears, Ina was bathed and dressed. She smiled for the first time in days.

On Sabbath morning Ina asked if she could attend worship. But Jugen told her she was still too weak to go and should remain in her hut, where she could listen. But during worship time, Ina struggled down her stick ladder and tried to walk to the meeting place. She was too weak to walk, so she crawled on hands and knees. When the children saw, they ran to help her. Finally she was seated on a stick pew.

"You should have stayed in your hut," Jugen gently reminded Ina.

"No," Ina said. "I can't lie there while you enjoy your beautiful stories here. Don't you worry about me, I'm going to be well!"

What faith! Jugen thought.

A few days later Ina was strong enough to walk. She made her way to her garden to dig sweet potatoes. A few days after Virgie returned from Mountain View College, Ina left to visit her sister in a village three hours' walk away. Her simple faith in God had seen her through.

Jugen Densing is a student at Mountain View College in the Philippines. She and her fellow student missionaries live among the Manobo tribal people in the mountains to teach the children and share God's love

Lord of Our Labor



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15; 3:17-19; Matt. 25:14-30; Acts 10:36-43; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-12.*

Memory Text: “‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’” (*Luke 3:11, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Those who live under the lordship of Christ will demonstrate excellence and productivity in their labor. The work of their minds and hands will bring honor to God and blessings to those around them.

The dignity of labor. We are called, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth. However, at the same time, God also calls us to be productive in our daily labor. Commenting on Christ's parable of the talents, Ellen White notes that “God has called us to serve Him in the temporal affairs of life. Diligence in this work is as much a part of true religion as is devotion. . . . Every man and woman who is truly converted will be a diligent worker.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 343.

In this week's lesson, we will explore the gift of work for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We will discover that excellence and productivity in our work are important parts of our witness as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 3.*

The Gift of Labor in Eden (*Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15*).

Contrary to a common notion, daily labor is not one of the negative consequences of living in a sinful world (the common *notion* that labor itself is bad, though, *is* a consequence of sin). Meaningful labor for the human family was part of God's original and perfect plan.

What work assignment did the Creator give to our first parents? *Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15*. **What was the nature of their work? Why should there be work in a sinless, perfect environment? What does the existence of work in such a context tell us about the idea of work in general?**

The Garden of Eden was a flawless environment. All creation rejoiced together in perfect harmony. In this idyllic setting, God gave Adam and Eve a meaningful work assignment, both for the Garden itself and for the world in general. Their whole relationship with the created world around them wasn't limited to just enjoying it; they were, rather, to interact with it. In fact, they were to rule over the created world; thus, in a sense, they were gardeners-rulers, working in their garden home while ruling over the earth and the things in it. Created out of that world, they were distinctly part of it, working in it as laborers while at the same time given rule over it, an interesting combination of roles, to be sure.

Given the nature of humanity and our capacity to grow, to learn, to be changed, why do you think God wanted our original parents, even in a sinless environment, to work and to have responsibilities?

In what ways does your labor, whatever kind it is, offer you opportunities to grow, to mature, to learn? What could you do in order to take advantage of whatever opportunities your work does offer you toward growth and maturity?

The Challenges of Labor After the Fall

(Gen. 3:17-19).

The entrance of sin into our world resulted in numerous negative consequences. The most devastating consequence was death. Long before Adam and Eve experienced death personally, they would witness the horrifying consequence of their sin in the death of Abel at the hands of his brother Cain. Sin not only affected the human family; it also affected the environment.

Read prayerfully and carefully Genesis 3:17-19. How did the entrance of sin affect the environment and our interaction with it? How do you understand what God is saying in these texts? Were these changes purely a punishment of sin, or were they the natural results of sin?

It is not clear how much time elapsed after God created the world before sin marred the perfect creation. Undoubtedly, Adam and Eve enjoyed the privilege of laboring in that wonderful setting. With the entrance of sin, however, the environment became harsh and hostile. Our first parents were now compelled to labor by the sweat of their brow. The cycle of deterioration and death in the natural environment would be a constant reminder of their own mortality as well as a stark contrast to the Eden they had once enjoyed.

A quick reading of those texts sounds as if the Lord was being very harsh in punishing them. Yet, if you read below the surface, what else can you see here? In other words, in what ways could the Lord have used these changes to help Adam and Eve?

“It was God’s purpose to alleviate by toil the evil brought into the world by man’s disobedience. By toil the temptations of Satan might be made ineffectual, and the tide of evil stayed. And though attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, labor is still a source of happiness and development, and a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God’s great plan for our recovery from the fall.”—Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, p. 213.

What examples have you seen, if any, of how work can be used for our spiritual benefit?

Productivity in Our Labor *(2 Thess. 3:6-12).*

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 and then answer the following questions:

1. Whom should the people avoid? _____

2. Whose example should they follow, and in what? _____

3. What reason did Paul give for the fact that he and his fellow evangelists worked to earn their bread? _____

4. What was Paul's attitude toward those who refused to work?

5. How would you sum up the essence of what Paul is writing here? What principles are here that we, today, should apply to our own lives and how we relate to work and to those who don't work?

6. In what kind of situations might those who are not working be excused for not working? What, then, is your responsibility toward such a person? _____

When we are productive in our labor, we are blessed in many ways. We are able to provide for the needs of our families and loved ones. Our productivity also brings honor to the Lord we serve. Whether we are ploughing a field, caring for the sick, working in the home, or operating a small business, we can use this time of labor for the honor of our Lord and the blessing of those around us. Such is the attitude of an individual who is living under the lordship of Christ.

“If any would not work, neither should he eat.” How do you relate to this admonition with the whole idea of grace, of forgiveness, of treating people better than they deserve, just as Christ has treated us better than we deserve?

Laboring for the Benefit of Others

What principle regarding labor did the apostle Paul share with the believers in Ephesus? *Eph. 4:28.*

The apostle Paul practiced what he preached. Speaking to the Ephesian elders before leaving Miletus, he said, “ ‘I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and *for those who were with me*’ ” (*Acts 20:33, 34, NKJV, emphasis supplied*). Paul’s teaching in words and life reminds us of the counsel of another servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist challenged his hearers to let the fruits of their labors bless the lives of those around them: “ ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise’ ” (*Luke 3:11, NKJV*).

Read James 2:14-20. What important message does he have for those who profess to be saved by faith alone? How does this counsel help us understand what saving faith is?

What’s fascinating about James’s words is the kind of works he links with faith. We often tend to think of works as not stealing, not killing, not breaking the Sabbath, and so forth, which, of course, are all part of what it means to follow Christ. Yet, James here talks about something else, that of taking care of those around us who are in need. Just saying nice things to them or just offering a prayer for them isn’t enough. James is giving us an example of the kind of works that reveal true faith. As Christians, we need to be careful that we don’t, as did the Pharisees, get caught up in “ ‘tithing of mint and anise’ ” while ignoring the weightier matters of the law, “ ‘judgment, mercy, and faith’ ” (*Matt. 23:23*).

Helping the poor requires two things: time and money. How much of your time, how much of your money, are you willing to spend helping those in need around you? What does your answer say about the kind of faith you have?

Laboring as We Await Our Lord's Return *(Matt. 25:14-30)*

The Lord Jesus Christ told a parable that emphasized the importance of using every resource to its full potential while we await His return.

Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. What lessons can we learn for our lives today? What message is Jesus giving to us?

“There is not one human being to whom is not committed some talent, not one but has a work to do for the Lord. Not one is to be excused. Not one is to remain in idleness; but every man is required to do his best; the talents entrusted to him are to be used in consecrated service for the Master.”—Ellen G. White, “Redeem the Time Because the Days Are Evil,” *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1896.

What's fascinating, too, about this parable is that it comes right after the parable of the foolish virgins (*see Matt. 25:1-13*), which has an emphasis more on the life of faith, devotion, and prayer, which leads to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Right after comes the parable of the talents, which deals with the active Christian life, not of just praying and believing and studying but of outward work for the Master.

The principle here, though, doesn't have to be limited only to our work for the Lord. In all our work, all our labor, we should seek to go about our tasks with faithfulness and diligence as did the faithful servants.

How do we understand this parable in light of the concept of salvation by faith alone? (*Rom. 3:28, 4:1-13, Gal. 2:16*).

Our faith will be revealed in our works, in what we do with the gifts God has given us. We cannot separate our Christianity from how we live; and how we live cannot be separated from how we work, how we do our job, whatever it is. In the workplace, faithful, thorough, diligent, and honest labor can be a powerful expression of our faith, as well as a powerful witness to the God we serve.

If all someone knew about your faith was from how you went about your work, what impressions would they likely receive about your faith?

Further Study: See also *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 359, 360.

Some individuals are called to full-time service for God. They have the privilege and responsibility of devoting their complete attention to kingdom business. Ellen White spoke of this call to full-time ministry in a letter written at the beginning of the last century: "Many young men and women now engaged in secular labor will feel earnestly stirred to give themselves to the service of God, to become channels of light. . . . Let these be given an opportunity to obtain an education for the work of God. And let all God's workers help and cheer and encourage one another with their prayers and faithful conversation, impressing one another with the dignity and responsibility of the work in which they are engaged."—Letter 66, 1901, *Manuscript Releases*, p. 44.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** How does the Sabbath fit in with this whole question of labor? What message does the Sabbath tell us regarding our labor?
- 2** How do you understand the basic message of this week's study with the words in Galatians 6:2?
- 3** In every generation, God raises up women and men who honor Him in their labor. Think about your own culture. Who comes to mind as an individual whose labor has brought glory to God and blessing to others?
- 4** Is there anyone in your own church family out of work right now? If so, what can you do as a church community to help (1) provide for his or her family's immediate needs and (2) find the person work?
- 5** "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (*1 Tim. 5:8*). As a class, discuss the implications of this text in regard to how you would treat someone who refuses to provide for his own family.

The Boy Who Heard God Speak

John McGhee

Boldera sat on his pony watching the clouds scurry across the Mongolian sky. The hot August sun beat down on the treeless plain where his 200 thirsty sheep bleated their protest. The 12-year-old guided his pony around the herd to turn them away from the nearby railroad tracks. He was not willing to lose even one sheep.

Later, as the sheep drank at a spring, Boldera sat astride his pony and spoke into the wind: "Creator of the sky and the earth, talk to me; teach me about life."

Boldera again rounded up a few sheep who had surged toward the railroad tracks. He noticed a scrap of paper lying on the tracks. Sliding off his pony, he picked up the paper and read its words, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. . . . When he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:4-7, NIV).

Other scriptures on that dirty, wrinkled scrap of paper spoke of God's desire for Boldera to repent. Boldera knelt in the tall brown prairie grass and prayed to this God whom he did not yet know. "Creator of the sky, You have spoken to me. I repent and ask You to forgive my sins. Carry me on Your shoulders as You did that lost sheep. Be my Shepherd."

God led Boldera from his perch atop his pony to the city of Darkhan, Mongolia, where he met other Christian believers. There he learned more about the Savior to whom he had prayed. He gave his life to Christ and pledged to follow Him wherever He led.

Four years later Boldera continues to worship God in Darkhan. Today he is a soft-spoken teenager, leader of his 43-member Youth Alive club.

Boldera still has that tattered scrap of paper that led him to God. And he has a special burden to reach the other Mongolian shepherd boys with the gospel. He wants them to know the Creator and recognize His voice when He speaks.

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Lord of Our Worship



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Psalms 47; 63:1-4; 95:6, 7; 99:9; 150; John 2:13-16; Acts 4:24-31; Col. 3:16; Rev. 5:8-14; 14:6, 7.*

Memory Text: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (*Psalms 95:6, 7, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Those who live under the lordship of Christ will find their greatest joy in worshiping God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in spirit and in truth.

God is seeking true worshipers. Every human being will inevitably worship someone or something. Our choice is not whether or not we will worship but rather what or whom we will worship. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ emphasized the importance of worship, both in His actions and also in His teachings. Whether in the temple, in a synagogue, or out on a mountainside, Jesus took time to worship His heavenly Father. On one occasion, when meeting with a woman at Jacob's well, Jesus shared the startling news that God is actively seeking true worshipers. According to Jesus, true worshipers are those who worship God “in spirit and truth” (*John 4:23, NKJV*).

In this week's study, we will explore the theme of worship as it relates to those who live under the lordship of Christ.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 10.*

The Focus of Our Worship

There is only One who is worthy of worship. When Satan urged Jesus to bow down and worship him, our Lord responded:

“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” ’” (*Matt. 4:10, NKJV*).

What are some reasons given in the Scriptures for worshipping God?

Ps. 95:6, 7

Ps. 99:9

Rev. 4:8-11

Rev. 5:8-14

Even though the Scriptures clearly testify that God alone should be the focus of our worship, there are times when individuals attempt to direct their worship elsewhere. For example, when the apostle John encountered an angelic being, he fell down in worship. He received the following rebuke from the heavenly messenger: “See that you do not do that! . . . Worship God!” (*Rev. 19:10, NKJV*).

Read Acts 14:8-18. How did the inhabitants of Lystra respond to Paul and Barnabas after a crippled man was healed in Jesus’ name? Why were their actions so understandable? In what ways might we, today, in the twenty-first century, be tempted to do the same thing; that is, worship something other than God?

The inhabitants of Lystra brought sacrificial animals and wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas, saying, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men” (*Acts 14:11, NKJV*). Ellen White notes that even though “Paul endeavored to direct their minds to the true God as the only object worthy of worship, it was still most difficult to turn them from their purpose.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 58.

If someone were to ask you, Why do you worship the God that you do, what answer would you give? How do you justify worshipping a Being you have never seen, whose mere existence even you have to take on faith? Write a paragraph or two that clearly and simply gives your reasons (read them to one another in class on Sabbath).

Sabbath and Worship

It is our privilege to worship our Creator moment by moment. Every time we lift our hearts and voices to God in worship, we join with the heavenly beings before His throne who worship Him day and night. Through silent prayers of thanksgiving and praise, we can worship our God anytime, anywhere (*see 1 Thess. 5:17*). In many ways, our personal, private devotion and worship are more important than what we might do as part of a community.

Nevertheless, there are special times for worship, distinct from whatever we might do throughout our normal daily routine. This was seen, in principle, in the ancient Hebrew feasts, where numerous times were set apart for various acts of worship and thanksgiving (*see Lev. 23:4-44*).

Yet, more universal than the Jewish feasts is the seventh-day Sabbath, which has been set apart by our Creator as a time for all God's people, Jews or Gentiles.

Read Genesis 2:1-4. What do you see in there that shows the universality of the seventh day; that is, why it was not set aside simply for one group of people but for all humanity?

Read Revelation 14:6, 7 and then answer the following questions:

1. Whom is the message of the “everlasting gospel” to go to? How does this answer fit in with what we’ve just read above in Genesis 2:1-4?

2. Whom are we told to worship? _____

3. How do your answers to questions 1 and 2 help you understand the role of the Sabbath here in the first angel’s message of Revelation 14?

What is it about the Sabbath commandment itself (*Exod. 20:8-11*) that gives us a special opportunity for worship we might not have at any other time? How well do you avail yourself of that opportunity? What changes might you need to make to get the best out of the Sabbath that it offers?

A Heart for Worship

Read David's song of thanksgiving in **1 Chronicles 16:8-36**. What does it mean to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (vs. 29)? **Read John 4:23, 24** for further insights.

Holiness in the Bible gives the idea of something "set apart for holy use." In a real sense, worship is just that, setting aside not just time but setting aside ourselves for special communion and interaction with God. It's our way of saying, "How great Thou art, and how unworthy I am." It's our way of acknowledging our total dependence upon Christ's righteousness as our only means of salvation. It's a time to cease from work, from play, from everything else we do and pour ourselves out in praise and adoration of the One who's the Source of all that we are, the One whose death on the cross has opened the door to heaven for all who will walk through.

Yet, true worship is so much more than merely forms, songs, or a liturgy. It's, in a real sense, a work, a human expression of gratitude for who God is and the great things He has done for us through Jesus. Just as John said, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (*1 John 5:3, NKJV*), we also reveal our love for God by worshipping Him. It's a different kind of expression of love than that of keeping His commandments, but it's an expression nonetheless. Certainly this was part of what Jesus talked about when He said we would worship the Lord in "spirit and in truth."

Keeping the above idea in mind, what do you think motivated Jesus to do what He did at the temple? *John 2:13-16*.

Worship, like anything that's repeated, faces the danger of becoming mechanized, routine. Once we cease worshipping God out of sincere love for who He is and what He has done for us, our worship can go in any one of a number of unhealthy directions. The temple services during Jesus' time on earth had become cold, formal, and businesslike. The same can happen now; or they can become a means of entertainment or a social gathering where the Lord could look upon us and say: "With their lips [they] do honour me, but [they] have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (*Isa. 29:13*).

Think of two different worship experiences you have had: one where you left exuberant, uplifted, encouraged in your faith; the other, where you left downbeat, discouraged, cold. What caused the crucial difference between the two?

The Expressions of Our Worship

As we search the Scriptures, we discover that through the ages worshippers have expressed their devotion to God in a variety of ways.

What expressions of worship do you find in the following passages of Scripture? As you read these texts, ask yourself: **What kind of environment do they seem to speak of, something morose, solemn, or something joyful and exuberant? Is something automatically holy if it's somber, or is it automatically irreverent if joyful?** *Psalms 47, 63:1-4, 149:3, 150.*

Music has always played an important role in worship. The heavenly courts are filled with songs of praise (*see Rev. 5:9, 10; 15:3, 4*). When we express our worship to God through music, we are privileged to join in that symphony of praise. "Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above, and we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. . . . Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the song, to give it right expression."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 594.

How do you understand Paul's counsel that, when singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we should sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord? *Col. 3:16.*

There are musical performances that may be entertaining or aesthetically pleasing, but they bear no traces of the grace of God. Only music that flows forth from a heart that has been touched by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, is worship that's "in spirit and in truth."

What is your favorite worship song, a song that really moves your heart? Why not sing it now and offer praises of thanksgiving to the Lord?

The Impact of Our Worship

When we worship God in spirit and truth, we will experience personal transformation. It is impossible to stand in the presence of the Holy and remain unchanged.

Consider the experience of the early Christians as they gathered together for worship, as recorded in Acts 2:46, 47. What was the impact of their worship?

True worship impacts us personally. The psalmist David declared, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’” (*Ps. 122:1, NKJV*). He had discovered that in God’s presence “is fulness of joy” (*16:11*). We experience joy when we worship God in spirit and in truth. Though there’s always the danger of getting carried away with hype and emotionalism (as seen in certain types of church services), there’s also the danger of our worship being cold, dead, and lifeless worship that’s neither in spirit or in truth.

Though worship is nothing if not a personal expression of faith, the Bible talks about corporate worship, about coming together and worshipping as a community. How, for example, were the lives of the early Christians impacted by the time of prayerful worship following the release of Peter and John from prison? *Acts 4:24-31*. What can we learn from this account about what corporate worship should do for us?

The early Christians left their times of worship filled with joy, ready to speak the Word of God boldly. They were strengthened and encouraged by the others’ expression of faith, of testimony, and of their love for God. This should be our experience, as well. We should draw faith, hope, and encouragement from others, just as others should draw these things from us. Corporate worship should bring us closer to God and to one another; it should fill us with a desire to proclaim the great news of Christ and Him crucified. If this isn’t your experience, you haven’t worshipped; you’ve just gone through the motions of a religious service.

Write down your understanding of what true corporate worship should be about. Might you have some notions that need to be changed? Compare notes in class.

Further Study: Worship and the Cross. Go through the New Testament and find some texts on Christ's death for us on the cross. Dwell on what that death means; write out your understanding of His death and the forgiveness it offers you. Pray over it and ask the Lord to help you grasp the fullness of what Christ has done.

Afterward, you will be filled with a desire to worship Him, for of all the reasons we have to worship God, none is better than because of the Cross.

It will be the privilege of the redeemed to worship God throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. We will come from every kindred, nation, tongue, and people. Our cultural heritage will be different, but our worship will blend in a beautiful symphony of praise. "Heaven and earth will unite in praise, as 'from one Sabbath to another' (Isa. 66:23) the nations of the saved shall bow in joyful worship to God and the Lamb."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 770.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, have different people express what their understanding of what an ideal worship service would be like. What differences are there between your views? Are there fundamental differences or simply differences in taste and style? Most important, what does Scripture teach us about proper worship?
- 2** How can our worship reflect more clearly the worship of God in the courts above? See *Revelation 4, 5, and 19:1-7*.
- 3** What changes have you observed in the way people worship? To what extent are those changes cultural rather than biblical? How much of a role should culture play in worship? Is there any one "right" way to worship the Lord?
- 4** Worship services can either turn crusty, stale, and formal, or they can turn into "sanctified" entertainment. In which direction does your local church lean? What changes might you need to make, and how can you make them?

Man on Fire

L. Fortunet Kalou

Fortunet was a college student in West Africa when his sister introduced him to the Adventist faith. He was not interested, for he planned a great career.

One day he found a Bible on a bus. No one claimed it, so he began reading it. He read about the Sabbath and began asking questions. Soon he joined his sister in church.

Sabbath conflicts at school led him to quit. He found work with ADRA, teaching Liberian refugees. Although he could not share his faith while working, he organized a Bible study group after work. Fortunet discovered that he loves evangelism.

He was invited to become a Gospel Outreach worker in Guinea. He and a partner were given a small stipend and sent to a town in central Guinea to establish a congregation of new believers.

Fortunet and his partner visited every home and church in the area and discovered that the people knew nothing about Adventists. When the people learned that these missionaries worship on Sabbath, they wondered about that. Some remembered that long ago their forefathers had not worked on Saturdays, which they considered a “bad” day. This roused curiosity in some, and they asked many questions. Fortunet used translators to study with the people. The translators learned the gospel as they taught it to others. In the first year the pair celebrated 11 baptisms.

They began working in nearby areas. One man, Jonas, studied the Bible with them for months but made no decision to follow Christ. Then one day as he worshipped in his own church, he felt no desire to pray or sing. Jonas realized that because he was not following God’s leading, he was not receiving God’s blessing. He took a stand for Christ and joined the Adventist believers.

Jonas was so excited about his new faith that he began preaching in the marketplace. Some people don’t like Jonas’s blunt methods of preaching, but they cannot deny that God has touched him. Some have come to Christ because of Jonas’s marketplace evangelism.

One big challenge facing evangelism in Guinea is literacy. People do not speak or read French, and no Bible is available in their native languages. This makes evangelism more difficult.

The new believers worship in a rented house which is too small to accommodate those who wish to come.

L. Fortunet Kalou is a Gospel Outreach missionary in Guinea, West Africa.

Lord of Our Service



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 10:38-42, John 13:1-15, Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:28-13:3.*

Memory Text: “‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.’” (*Mark 10:42, 43, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Our Lord Jesus Christ provides the ultimate example of service. He reminds us that “‘the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” (*Mark 10:45, NKJV*). As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to serve in Jesus' name.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, He invites us to follow in His steps. This is not a call to greatness as the world counts greatness. Rather, it is a call to service. It is a call to have the mind of Christ, who humbled Himself in the form of a servant. Like the disciples, we often find ourselves struggling for the place of honor, the position of authority. But Jesus lovingly reminds us, both in word and in life, “it shall not be so among you” (*Matt. 20:26*).

We are called first and foremost to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then to serve others in Jesus' name. We will serve, not out of compulsion but out of love for Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us. That's the only service that's truly acceptable in His eyes, service born out of a heart of love for God and others.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 17.*

The Example of Jesus (*John 13:1-15*).

Only the apostle John records the story. Not a word from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Not a single reference in the writings of Peter or Paul. And yet, when you read this story, it reminds you so much of the character of Jesus.

How did the conduct of Jesus in the upper room demonstrate His willingness to serve rather than to be served? *John 13:1-15*.

The foot-washing service is an opportunity for Christians to reaffirm their need for spiritual cleansing through faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Jesus made this point clear when He said “ ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean’ ” (*John 13:10, NKJV*) and “ ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me’ ” (*John 13:8, NKJV*).

However, the foot-washing service is not only an opportunity to say Yes again to Jesus as your Savior and Lord. It is also an act of service. Jesus provided for the disciples, and for each one of us, a perfect example of service. He had every right to sit back and let someone else serve, but Jesus humbled Himself. He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant.

Explore some other incidents in the earthly ministry of Jesus that demonstrate His willingness to serve. What can we learn from these stories about the call to service? *Mark 1:32-34, Luke 9:12-17, John 2:1-12*.

Jesus demonstrated, both in word and deed, that He came to serve rather than to be served. When He calls you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him; He is calling you to a life of service.

When was the last time you went out of your way to do a service for someone who had no possibility of repaying you, a service that took your time, your money, or both, a service that offered you nothing (at least in tangible goods) in return? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

Our Greatest Service

Of all the good things we can do for others, the greatest is to lead them into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, the One who, at the cross, paid for the sins of every human being. And if we believe that every Christian is commissioned to share this good news of Christ's sacrifice with the world, the question is not whether we should witness to others, but how. Here again, we can learn from the example of Jesus. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

Dwell on what the Lord's servant wrote above and go through some of the Gospels and note specific examples of where Jesus was doing what she wrote. See, for example, *Matt. 12:9-14, Mark 2:15-17, Luke 19:2-7*. After you find some examples, answer this question: Even if I can't perform these same kinds of miracles, how can I, nevertheless, minister as Jesus did?

Christ's method of reaching souls, however, took something that many of us, even professed Christians, don't want to give: And that is ourselves. Oftentimes we might be tempted to think that throwing some money in a collection plate for a mission offering or handing out a few flyers for an evangelistic series is enough. And though these acts have their role, they are not the same as mingling with people, spending time with people, and ministering to their needs. To do this we need to give of ourselves in unselfish service. That's not always easy; it takes a painful death to self and a willingness to serve the Lord by serving others. Only through a daily commitment, a daily taking up of our own cross, will we be doing what we could for the Lord through ministering to others. This is the essence of Christian service, and it can open hearts to our message in ways that all the argumentation, Bible studies, and prophecy charts could never do.

Think of individuals within your sphere of influence who need to hear the gospel message. What are some practical ways that you can use Christ's method to reach them? Also, are you willing to make the personal sacrifices needed in order to reach them?

Varieties of Service

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28).

We are all called to share the good news about Jesus Christ with others. This is our greatest service, and we will be effective when we follow Christ’s method for reaching people. It is important to realize, however, that the way in which we serve others will vary, based upon our personality and spiritual gifts. We are not all called to do the same thing. Part of the death to self required for Christian service is being willing to accept just what our gifts and callings are and are not.

Make a list of various forms of service recorded in **Romans 12:4-8** and **1 Corinthians 12:28–13:3**. In what ways do you sense the Lord calling you to serve others in His name? Justify your reasons.

When we consider the various ways Christians are called to serve in Jesus’ name, a natural question to ask is this: “In what ways is the Lord calling me to serve?” Every follower of Jesus Christ has to answer that question personally, but here is a process that might be helpful.

- Step 1: Explore the forms of service found in Scripture. The list you just made is not exhaustive. Other forms of service can be found in narrative passages of Scripture.
- Step 2: Experiment with various forms of service. As you serve others in a variety of ways, be attentive to your own thoughts and feelings. When you serve others using the gifts the Lord has given you, you will experience freedom and joy.
- Step 3: Be attentive to the counsel of brothers and sisters in Christ. The Lord frequently uses people either to confirm the fruitfulness of your service or to suggest alternate forms of service that might be more appropriate, based upon the gifts they observe in your life.

How were you able to identify the gifts the Lord has given you? How are you using those gifts in service for others? Might you need to make changes in how you work, or maybe you should be doing something else entirely?

Examples of Service

The New Testament is filled with examples of men and women, boys and girls, who served others in Jesus' name. Some well-known examples include Andrew, when he brought his brother Simon to Jesus (*see John 1:40-42*), and Dorcas, who sewed garments for those in need (*see Acts 9:36-39*).

You may find it interesting and educational to select a book of the Bible and read it entirely, looking for examples of service.

Skim through the book of Acts, which contains numerous examples of service in Jesus' name. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify examples of service you might imitate in your own life. (Or perhaps you might find another book and do the same thing.)

When we serve others in Jesus' name, we are not only following the example of our Lord. We are giving evidence of His transforming presence in our lives. We are no longer self-centered and self-serving. Rather, we find joy in serving others. There is a power in unselfish service for others that no force in the world can negate. Again, for sinful beings who are inherently self-centered and selfish, this doesn't necessarily come easy. Daily surrender to the Lord is crucial.

What's so important, too, is to keep the Cross before your eyes, for here is the greatest example in all the universe of unselfish service for others. As we day by day contemplate the great sacrifice made in our behalf, the spotless Son of God, the One through whom the worlds were made (*see Heb. 1:2*), taking upon Himself the sins of the world, our hearts will be broken. Before the Cross, nothing Christ asks of us will be too much; before the Cross, our service to others will be the least we can do for the God who has said to us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (*Matt. 25:40*).

Take time to dwell on the sacrifice of Christ, the greatest example possible of unselfish service. How does dwelling on the Cross impact you and your willingness to serve others?

Misguided Service *(Luke 10:38-42)*.

We must be careful not to allow our service in Jesus' name to hinder our relationship with Jesus. Indeed, we need to keep our relationship with Jesus as the center, the foundation, of our desire to serve others. Otherwise, a number of things can happen. For instance, we can become proud, thinking our good works are things we do that add to our salvation, that are meritorious toward our basic acceptance with God.

At the same time, it is possible as followers of Jesus to become so preoccupied with serving others that we have no time to spend with Jesus Himself. A classic example of misguided service is seen when Jesus visited the home of Martha. In many ways, Martha is a model of devotion. She believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (*see John 11:27*). She was willing to keep trusting, even when she did not see the way (*see John 11:21, 22*). On one occasion, however, when Jesus visited Martha's home in Bethany, she allowed her service to hinder her relationship with Jesus.

How does Martha's preoccupation with "serving Jesus" affect her personally and, consequently, impact her relationship with the Master? *Luke 10:38-42*.

Martha is worried. The verb used here in the Greek (translated as "careful" in the KJV) is a strong one. We find this same verb in Philippians 4:6, where Paul exhorts the believers to "be anxious for nothing" (*NKJV*). We find a variation of the word, as a noun, in 1 Peter 5:7, where Peter appeals to believers to cast all their anxiety, all their cares, upon the Lord. But Martha is holding on to all her anxieties. She is anxious. There is a division and distraction in her mind. She is full of inner turmoil.

Martha is also troubled. The Greek verb (translated "troubled" in the KJV) implies external agitation. Martha is not only full of inner turmoil. She is also externally agitated. Her service for Jesus is misguided. As a result, her relationship with Jesus suffers. Instead of sitting at His feet and experiencing intimate communion with Him, she accosts Him with these words: " 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me' " (*Luke 10:40, 41, NKJV*).

How can we avoid this trap, where our preoccupation with serving in Jesus' name gets in the way of our relationship with Him? Why must we not let anything, even our service for the Lord, hinder that relationship?

Further Study: Another danger Christians face as they serve others in Jesus' name is a spirit of competition. We can easily fall into the trap of comparing ourselves with others or measuring our service against theirs. Consider the following passages of Scripture that address the issue of competition in our service for others: *Luke 9:49, 50; 1 Cor. 1:11-13*. What lessons can we learn from the teaching of Jesus and the attitude of the apostle Paul?

Note: The teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew 25:31-46 suggests that our service for others is an important indicator of our Christian experience. This account of the dividing of the sheep and the goats suggests that those who are not involved in acts of service to others will be sent away into everlasting punishment. How would you explain this passage in the context of salvation by grace through faith? Are acts of service necessary for salvation? Is it accurate to say that we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick if we expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 A friend tells you she would like to explore ways of serving others in Jesus' name, but she feels her schedule is already overloaded. What counsel would you give her?
- 2 What can you do together, as a class, to reveal to others the caring and serving spirit that should be the hallmark of all who profess to follow Jesus Christ?
- 3 How can we avoid the trap of believing that our service for others somehow earns us merits with God, that somehow good works can add to our salvation?
- 4 What contemporary example of serving others has been most inspirational to you, and why? Discuss.

Mary's Boys

Mary Metobo and J. H. Zachary

In Nairobi, Kenya, thousands of children wander the streets searching for food. Some are orphans of AIDS; others have run away from troubled families or desperate poverty.

Mary Metobo's heart ached to help these children who ate from garbage cans, begged on street corners, or stole to stay alive. When her husband retired, they rented a home outside Nairobi where they could start helping some of these children.

Mary bought foam sheets for beds and a charcoal stove on which to prepare meals. Mary invited 15 boys to come.

Some boys needed drug and alcohol treatment; all needed hope. The boys receive food, shelter, training, and an introduction to Jesus.

With help from a donor, Mary bought utensils and soybeans and found someone to help teach some of the boys to prepare a popular soybean meal. In another room of her home two boys are making metal fencing. A man teaches some boys mechanics. As the youth see benefits of their labor, hope fills their hearts. "For the first time in my life I have hope," smiles a young man holding the welding rod.

One boy has accepted Jesus as his Savior and now serves as the group's chaplain. Each morning the youth study the Bible and pray together.

Mary hopes that after spending six months in her home, the boys will be ready to step out on their own. She plans to help them find work and a nurturing church family. Then she will start over with another group of troubled children. She looks forward to the day when she can buy bunk beds and can double the number of youth she helps.

Sometimes when Mary sends the boys on an errand in the city, they meet their street friends who see that they are living a better life. The friends beg to come to Mary's home, where they can find help and hope. "Not yet," she must tell them. "As soon as we have beds and work opportunities, you can bring your friends here."

Mary hopes that one day soon she can help 100 youth at a time. She wants to help the girls that live on Nairobi's streets as well. "I could train them to work as maids in the homes of the more affluent," Mary says. "Many people would be happy to hire them. But this project will have to wait for some time in the future." Right now she can only pray.

Mary Metobo lives near Nairobi, Kenya; J. H. Zachary was retired from the Ministerial Association at the General Conference.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords!



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 24:23-51, 7:21-29, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 20:7-9.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (*Revelation 19:11, 16, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will come again in glory to gather the redeemed of all ages into His eternal kingdom. All those who have received Him as Savior and Lord will welcome Him with joy when He returns to this earth.

Of all the promises that Jesus, our Savior and Lord, has given us, the greatest promise is that He will return and take us from this sin-sick world. We have this hope, the hope in the coming of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as our Savior, reconciled earth to heaven and thus paved the way for the great and glorious day of His return when—as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS—He will bring that reconciliation to its eternal consummation.

This is the great hope of all whose acknowledgment of Christ as Lord has been made manifest in their lives; in contrast, for those who—regardless of what they confess—have rejected Jesus as Lord of their lives, the Second Coming will be a sad and fearful event.

Why not, right now, make that complete surrender to the One who, at Calvary, surrendered all for us?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 24.*

The Certainty of Christ's Return (*John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11*).

Those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are a people of hope. With joyful expectation we are “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*Titus 2:13, NKJV*). Our hope concerning the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is not wishful thinking. It is based upon the faithfulness of our Lord to honor His promises.

What promise did Jesus Christ give to His followers concerning His return to this earth? *John 14:1-3.*

We trust in this promise of Jesus: “ ‘I will come again.’ ” This phrase might literally be translated “I am coming again.” The verb to come is in the present tense. We call this a “futuristic present,” which emphasizes the certainty of that which is being described. In this promise, Jesus Christ assures us His return is as certain as if it were already taking place!

What promise of two heavenly messengers confirmed the promise of Jesus regarding His return? *Acts 1:9-11.*

Seventh-day Adventist Christians have long cherished the blessed hope of the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our name, Adventist, reminds us that Jesus Christ, who came once as a baby in Bethlehem's manger, will come again as King of kings and Lord of lords. Even though our pioneers expected His return long before now, the promise is still sure. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come” (*2 Pet. 3:9, 10, NKJV*). The apostle Paul affirms the certainty of our hope in these words: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (*1 Thess. 4:16, NKJV*). The second coming of Jesus is not wishful thinking. It is our certain hope.

Feeling discouraged, worried, fearful? Prayerfully, read again John 14:1-3 and place yourself, your name, in each spot where it's appropriate. Realize that in a very real sense, Jesus is talking to you, that those words are for you. What hope do you draw from this precious, and intimate, promise of Jesus—to you, personally?

The Nature of Christ's Return

Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us not only to be certain of His return but also to understand the nature of His return. We have already discovered from yesterday's study that His coming will be literal. Jesus declared, "I will come again." We must reject any interpretation that would attempt to spiritualize Christ's second coming as His coming into our hearts. While it is true that Christ can dwell in our hearts through faith (*see Eph. 3:17*), this dwelling in our hearts by the Holy Spirit does not replace His literal return in glory.

What can we learn from the following comments of Jesus about the nature of His return? *Matt. 24:23-26, 27, 30, 31.*

The second coming of Jesus will not be secret. It will be dramatic, visible, and audible. These words of Jesus also imply that a resurrection of the dead will occur at the time of His coming. Listen to another promise of Jesus: " 'And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day' " (*John 6:40, NKJV*).

Read Paul's descriptions of the nature of Christ's second coming (*1 Thess. 4:16, 17*). **Why would that be something hard for an imposter to fake? Why, too, with such clear biblical testimony regarding the nature of Christ's return, have so many people been fooled by false christs in the past?**

The apostle Paul reinforces the teaching of Jesus regarding the nature of His return. The second coming of Jesus Christ is personal: The Lord Himself will descend from heaven. It is dramatic: The Lord will shout and the trumpet will sound. There will be a resurrection: The dead in Christ will rise first. Finally, all the redeemed will be gathered up to meet the Lord in the air.

Using your imagination, depict in writing what it will be like when Jesus returns. Share it with your class.

The Timing of Christ's Return

Almost two thousand years ago, in His last recorded comment in the book of Revelation, our risen Lord declared, “ ‘Surely I am coming quickly’ ” (*Rev. 22:20, NKJV*). Christians have wrestled with that declaration ever since. From our perspective, it doesn't seem as though He is coming quickly. We realize, of course, that the Lord is not locked in time as we mere mortals are. The apostle Peter reminds us that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (*2 Pet. 3:8, NKJV*).

Dwell upon what Peter wrote regarding the Lord and time. What mistake should these words protect us from making?

In terms of eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming quickly. And yet, many times we find ourselves crying out with the souls under the altar, “ ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ” (*Rev. 6:10, NKJV*).

Read the parable Jesus tells in Matthew 24:45-51. In your own words, write out what you believe is the basic message Jesus is giving us here. Why is this parable so relevant for us as Adventists?

There's been a long-running debate in the church about the question of a delay. Is there one? If so, why? If not, then why hasn't Christ returned? And though we probably won't get all these questions resolved this side of eternity, the crucial thing for us is to be ready always, regardless of when He comes.

If someone were to ask you, What does it mean to be ready for Jesus' return, how would you respond? If Christ returned today, would you be ready? Justify your answer.

The Impact of Christ's Return

The glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will impact those living on the earth in one of two ways. For those who have refused to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, it will be a time of terror. Even for many professed followers of Christ, those who never let Him be Lord of their lives, it will be a time of fearful judgment.

Read carefully the following texts in light of this whole quarter's lesson: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (*Matt. 7:21-23*). How do these verses capture the essence of what it means to *profess* Jesus as Lord but not allow Him to be Lord? What is the crucial difference between the two?

Our Savior is very clear: We can't separate a profession of faith in Him from a life of obedience to Him. Notice how Jesus here links obedience with actually being in a saving relationship with Him; He says He "never knew" those who—though professing Him as Lord, and even doing deeds in His name—weren't obedient to the will of God. This has to be one of the strongest statements Jesus ever made about the futility of calling oneself a Christian while not living like one, and living like one demands that we do the will of the Father in heaven. Otherwise, our faith is made out of nothing but sand.

Read the parable that comes right after Christ's words here (*Matt. 7:24-29*). How does this fit in exactly with what Jesus said in verses 21-23?

The Cosmic Confession

For Christians, their profession that Jesus is Lord is matched by a life of faithful obedience, not an obedience that saves (it can't), but an obedience that expresses a true faith in God.

Read Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, and Hebrews 9:12. What do these verses tell us about how we are redeemed?

And yet, these people are not the only ones who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. According to the apostle Paul, the day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will make that same confession.

Read Philippians 2:9-11. What is Paul talking about here?

“At His first coming, Christ was denied and rejected by men, and by them dragged as a criminal to Pilate’s bar, where they charged Him with blasphemy. He was scourged and crucified. Nails were driven through His hands and His feet. . . . At His second coming, the scene will be changed. He will be acknowledged by all as the King of glory. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The angels will bow in adoration before Him. His enemies will see the mistake they have made, and every tongue will confess His divinity.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, April 19, 1905.

However, for the wicked, this will not be a saving confession but simply a recognition of that which is undeniably true. There is no change of heart. No repentance. In fact, according to Revelation 20:7-9, they continue their rebellion against the Lord.

In contrast, there are those who—though sinners, though imperfect, though in and of themselves possessing no righteousness—have, nevertheless, committed their souls to the Lord Jesus by surrendering their will to Him. These people will proclaim Jesus as their Lord, and their lives will reflect that proclamation. Our praise of the Lord in heaven will simply be our picking up where we left off praising Him here. If we love and serve Jesus even amid the toil, pain, sin, and corruption on earth now, then how much more so in the new heaven and a new earth? Our service to Jesus as Lord there will just be the continuation of our service to Him here but without the cumbrousness of sin, disease, ignorance, and the devil. That’s the victory Jesus won for us. We can, by trusting and living by faith with Jesus as Lord, start enjoying the fruits of that victory, even now.

Further Study: Read the last four chapters in the book of Revelation. Take time to meditate on this beautiful scene of the new earth: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (*Rev. 22:1-5, NKJV*).

What a blessed hope is ours. Soon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and we will reign with Him forever and ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, compare notes from what you wrote in Monday’s study about what it will be like when Christ returns.
- 2** What do you say to someone who, when the subject of Christ’s return is brought up, says, “Look, ever since I was a kid, I was told that Christ was coming soon. That was so many years ago. Please, don’t bother me with this talk of His ‘soon’ return.”?
- 3** If you read the selection above in Revelation, talk as a class about what you think life will be like in the new earth. What will the major difference be between life there and life here now?
- 4** As a class, talk about the difference between merely believing in Jesus as Lord and experiencing that lordship in your life.

Two Answered Prayers

Dorothy Eaton Watts

Jaggaya worked in a railway station in eastern India. One day the wind stirred up stray papers lying around the station. One paper landed near Jaggaya. He picked it up and read it. It told the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. *Now that is amazing*, Jaggaya thought. *This Jesus must be a very great God to do this. I must learn more about Him.*

Jaggaya asked a Protestant pastor in his village to tell him more about Jesus. Soon Jaggaya was attending church and reading his Bible. Always his prayer was that Jesus would teach him more. Then one day a stranger walked into Jaggaya's village.

Paul Reddy prayed as he neared the village, "Lord, lead me to some soul longing to know more about You." As he walked down the street, he noticed an old man reading a Bible. "Hello, Brother," Paul greeted the man. "I see you are reading God's Word. I am a Christian too." The two men talked for a while, then Paul asked him, "Do you know about the Bible Sabbath?"

"No," said Jaggaya. "I have read the Bible a lot, but I do not know anything about a Sabbath. Will you explain it to me?" Paul Reddy opened his Bible and began seven days of intense Bible study with Jaggaya. They studied many doctrines of the Bible. Over and over Jaggaya exclaimed, "This is wonderful! I never knew that before!" At the end of the Bible studies, Jaggaya asked Paul Reddy to rebaptize him, symbolizing his acceptance of the new Bible truths he had accepted.

"I will bring a minister to baptize you," Paul promised. But it took several weeks before Paul could return with a pastor. In the meantime, Jaggaya faithfully followed what he had learned from Paul Reddy and the Bible.

Jaggaya is 80 years old, but he walks the streets of his village sharing his newfound faith with others. He is studying the Bible with 20 people he has found. They are preparing to be baptized into the Adventist church.

The work in Orissa State in eastern India is exploding. In 1997 after 70 years of Adventist work, the church had 102 congregations in Orissa and 3,100 believers. Today there are more than 350 congregations and more than 30,000 believers. Pray that God will open the way to build more than 300 churches needed by new congregations in Orissa. Pray too that our new members will remain faithful to God in spite of great difficulties.

Dorothy Eaton Watts is assistant secretary of the Southern Asia Division.

John M. Fowler, author of this quarter's lessons, will guide us in one of the great love letters of the Bible, the book of Ephesians. It is our hope that this study will help each of us experience the life-changing power of the gospel as it works in the hearts of sinful human beings.

Lesson 1—The Church at Ephesus

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Ephesus: Jesus Vs. Diana (*Acts 19:24-29*).

MONDAY: Ephesus: Aquila and Priscilla

TUESDAY: Apollos at Ephesus (*Acts 18:24-28*).

WEDNESDAY: Paul at Ephesus (*Acts 19:1-20*).

THURSDAY: The Depth of Paul's Ministry (*Acts 20:17-38*).

Memory Text—*Acts 19:20, NKJV*.

Sabbath Gem: Among those associated with the Ephesian church were Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos, Timothy, and the apostle John. Each of them had a role to play in the building of this church, one of the finest of the first century. What can we learn as we delve into this fascinating and instructive moment in early Christian history?

Lesson 2—Ephesians: Themes in Relationships

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: The Author: Paul (*Gal. 1:11-17*).

MONDAY: The Recipients: The Saints in Ephesus (*Eph. 1:1, NKJV*).

TUESDAY: Grace and Peace (*Eph. 1:2, NKJV*).

WEDNESDAY: The Theme: Unity (*Eph. 1:9, 10, RSV*).

THURSDAY: The Key: In Christ (*Eph. 3:11, 12*).

Memory Text—*Ephesians 1:3, NKJV*.

Sabbath Gem: The letter to Ephesians deals with no particular problem, doctrinal or social. It celebrates the joy of fellowship, relationship, and unity in Christ. It's also a great expression of thanksgiving and praise for what God has done through Christ in the creation of His church.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.