

# COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A North American Youth Ministries Publication

July-September 1984



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**A N D**

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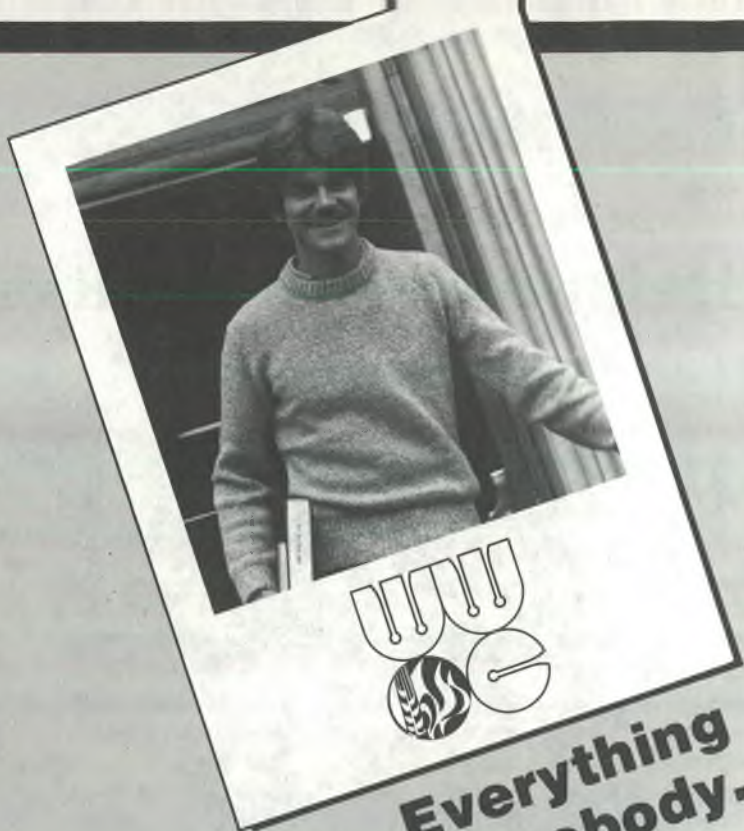


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## ABOUT THIS QUARTER'S ILLUSTRATORS

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James Lago did the photography for the illustrations. He is an independent businessman involved in international trade, but his first love is making pictures with a camera. A native of Brazil, James has lived in Los Angeles since 1966. He is putting the polish on 14 years of experience with photography at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. James attends Eagle Rock Adventist Church with his wife, Rosie, son, Kenneth, and daughter, Stephanie.



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### THE ARTISTS' COMMENT

"Our main goal was not to make pretty pictures (or ugly pictures). Rather, we wanted to communicate the ideas and concepts that each lesson explores. We also struggled to make our illustrations universal in their appeal, so one doesn't have to be a Christian to understand the message. Pictures and graphics can have remarkable power, especially when the truths they illustrate are as vital as the Christian concepts of freedom and forgiveness. We were often reminded of this when the people we used for models, most of whom are not Adventists, became interested in the ideas behind the illustrations. We encourage you to look beneath the surface of these photographs and graphic designs and explore the layers of meaning there."

---

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# HOW TO USE THE COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

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The Collegiate Quarterly, a North American Youth Ministries Publication, is designed for the college and university person, and anyone else who might happen to enjoy it. It is produced and written by college and university students and faculty, and by youth and young adult Sabbath School groups throughout North America. Over 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year, on a volunteer basis.

When studying the weekly lessons, one of the most important things for you to notice is the key texts that come under the Testimony, Evidence, How To, and Opinion pieces. Reading these passages will enhance your study because it will help keep your study centered in the Bible and show the relationship of each article with Scripture.

The weekly lessons, divided by days, are also divided by sections. Each section serves a different purpose.

- **Introduction (Sunday)** This piece is designated to get your attention and center your mind on the week's theme.
- **Logos (Monday)** This section combines the Scripture passages that form basis for the entire week's study.
- **Testimony (Tuesday)** Here the theme is approached through the writings of Ellen White.
- **Evidence (Wednesday)** This is usually the most "scholarly" article of the week as the theme is discussed from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
- **How To (Thursday)** Presented here are the practical implications of the week's theme. It shows what all the theory, previously discussed, means in day-to-day living.
- **Opinion (Friday)** This piece is a personal perspective on the theme, meant to encourage further thought and discussion on the topic.
- **React** Here questions are presented for personal reflection and group discussion.

Because one of the aims of the Collegiate Quarterly is to encourage personal thought and investigation rather than hand down official, readily-accepted and pre-digested "truth," at some point you will probably find something with which you disagree. When this happens don't get all flustered and start laying eggs, having puppies, or whatever the case may be. Instead, study the issues with an open mind and discuss them with your class. The results will not only be interesting but also rewarding.

## FINDING FREEDOM

From the beginning the *Collegiate Quarterly* has been a collaborative effort involving many minds and many hands. Creativity *volunteered* by hundreds of college students and teachers has been the key to making the quarterly a study resource appreciated by thousands.

It quickly became apparent, however, that the *Collegiate Quarterly's* appeal reached far beyond the Adventist college campuses. Its widespread use in North American churches made it seem appropriate to invite these non-collegiate consumers to participate in the creative process. Though this issue of the quarterly doesn't represent that segment's first contributions, it is the first quarter that has been written largely by church groups rather than collegiate ones.

We certainly don't intend to see the publication lose its collegiate flavor. But we thought the summer quarter would be an opportune time to present the work of the no-longer-collegians, and we're confident that it will be as enthusiastically received as that of the current inhabitants of academia.

Both editors and readers, then, are indebted to an impressive spectrum of people for this quarterly. People ranging from graduate students like Karin Dougan of the Georgetown University Law School, who coordinated week 1, to hospital administrators like Jane Ford-Harder of Hinsdale Hospital (week 3), and Scot Roskelly of Portland Adventist Medical Center (week 13), to pastors like Glenn Sackett of Shawnee Mission, KS (week 2), Robert Wilson of Kettering, OH (weeks 7 and 8), and Robert Zamora of Mountain View, CA (week 4).

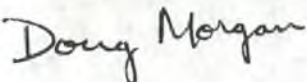
I particularly want to thank some special people who have been uncommonly generous with their talents in repeated and varied ways: Bonnie Casey for her constructive critiques as a member of the reading committee and for coordinating weeks 5 and 6 in this quarter, and the "UP & Over" group—Casey Bahr, Jim Ponder, and especially Ray Tetz—for lots of great writing and generally making Collegiate Publications their project.

This quarter's study combines two disparate themes—forgiveness during the first half of the quarter and the law of God during the second. We feel, however, that they are linked by the concept of freedom. Forgiveness brings freedom from guilt; the law shows the way to a life-style of true freedom.

It's our hope that these lessons will help readers handle the spiritual dilemma described so well by Tony Campolo.

I have found that there are two conditions that prevent me from experiencing life as my theology dictates. The first is guilt and the second is anxiety. Guilt keeps me oriented to the past. It focuses my attention on the things that I should have done, and the things that I should not have done. Guilt is a burden that saps my energy, dissipates my enthusiasm for life, and destroys my appetite for savoring the fullness of each moment. Anxiety, on the other hand, orients me to the future and keeps me from enjoying life in the present, because of the dread that I have about the future. I have nothing left with which to address the present moment in which I find myself (*A Reasonable Faith*, p. 119).

As you study this quarter may you know the good news of freedom from guilt through forgiveness and freedom from anxiety through God's guidance and promise. With the past and the future thus resolved, you are free to experience fullness of life in the present.



Doug Morgan  
Editorial Director

# Forgiveness— the Divine Initiative

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, no longer holding men’s misdeeds against them . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:19, NEB).



---

# Next to Mom

by J. Henri Evard

Beauty was a black quarter horse mare. When I first met her she was just a working cow horse. Whenever I visited the ranch to help round up the cattle, she was the horse I rode. By the time I was old enough to spend my first summer on the ranch Beauty's niche in life had been changed from being a cow pony to raising foals.

Beauty was now at the top of the pecking order of all the horses on the ranch, and she guarded this position fiercely. In the winter when the horses were kept in the corrals and fed hay and grain, Beauty would chase the other horses away from the feed bunk where she was eating. Interestingly enough though, she would not chase her own foals away from the bin, even after they had grown up and other foals had taken their places. Beauty always knew which ones were her offspring and she would allow only these privileged few to eat grain at her side. In so doing she provided her foals protection so that they could eat in peace.

In Romans 5:8 we read that God loves us so much that "while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (NIV). Because we are his sons and daughters we receive his forgiving grace. But for his grace to do us any good we must accept it. If Beauty's foals had chosen not to eat next to "Mom," her protection would have been wasted. So God's grace is wasted when we reject Christ's sacri-

fice.

In this week's lesson we will further discuss the basis of God's forgiveness, the relationship between that forgiveness and our confession, and how the cross fits into the picture.

## INTRODUCTION

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J. Henri Evard is a senior veterinary medicine student at the University of Minnesota.

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# The Pattern of Forgiveness

## LOGOS

In Romans 5 we discover the good news that forgiveness is a fact grounded in what God has already done in Christ Jesus, not in our confession and repentance.

Before we had any inclination whatsoever toward God, says Paul, God provided the comprehensive solution to the problem of our guilt. “. . . God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NIV).

The cross signifies forgiveness because it was through that decisive deed that God extended a “not guilty” verdict (justification) to the entire human race. “. . . Just as the result of one trespass [Adam’s] was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness [Christ’s] was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18, 19, NIV).

Herman Ridderbos comments that “Adam and Christ here stand against each other as the two great figures at the entrance of two worlds, two aeons, two ‘creations,’ the old and the new; and in their actions and fate lies the decision for all who belong to them.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus forgiveness and justification are extended to *everyone* because of what Christ has done as head of a “new creation” in which sinners are accepted with God. A forgiven status is already a reality for each of us, we need only to respond favorably in order to experience its benefits.

In addition to justification, Paul develops another theme which shows that God has already forgiven us—reconciliation. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. . . . We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18-20, NIV). Notice that Paul here says we *are* reconciled (vs. 18) and then urges us to *be* reconciled (vs. 20). God has already reconciled himself to us, he doesn’t need our confession for that but he does need us to say “yes” to that reconciliation. God has declared a general amnesty for everyone who has rebelled and deserted his kingdom. We only have to come home to the kingdom to experience it.

This response to God’s gift does involve confession. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 11:9, NIV).

Does the “if” in this passage make our confession the cause or basis of God’s forgiveness? No. Confession does not cause God to forgive us, but it is necessary if we are to receive that forgiveness personally and enter the friendship God offers. If we are not completely open with God in confession and repentance, then *we* are maintaining barriers that prevent fellowship with him.

In Christ God has already spoken the word of forgiveness to us all. It is this incredibly abundant grace that “leads you toward repentance” (Rom. 2:4, NIV).

D. F. M.

---

1. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 60, 61, emphasis supplied.

---

# God— The Initiator

selected by Bob Dahl

## God—Initiator of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

God is waiting to bestow the blessing of forgiveness, of pardon for iniquity, of the gifts of righteousness, upon all who will believe in His love and accept the salvation He offers. Christ is ready to say to the repenting sinner, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." The blood of Jesus Christ is the eloquent plea that speaks in behalf of sinners. This blood "cleanseth us from all sin."<sup>1</sup>

It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust in Him, for He gave His life for me. Nothing so dispels doubt as coming in contact with the character of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

## Repentance—Entirely a Gift from God

We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.<sup>4</sup>

## Satan—Dispenser of Discouragement

The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love that He has to us. 1 John 4:16. Satan is working by every deception he can command, in order that we may not discern that love. He will lead us to think that our mistakes and transgressions have been so grievous that the Lord will not have respect unto our prayers and will not bless and save us. . . . But we may tell the enemy that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. When we feel that we have sinned and cannot pray, it is then the time to pray.<sup>5</sup>

## Needed—Complete Trust in God for Saving and Keeping.

Some who come to God by repentance and confession, and even believe that their sins are forgiven, still fail of claiming, as they should, the promises of God. They do not see that Jesus is an ever-present Saviour, and they are not ready to commit the keeping of their souls to Him, relying upon Him to perfect the work of grace begun in their hearts. While they think they are committing themselves to God, there is a great deal of self-dependence. There are conscientious souls that trust partly to God, and partly to themselves. They do not look to God, to be kept by His power, but depend upon watchfulness against temptation, and the performance of certain duties for acceptance with Him. There are no victories in this kind of faith. Such persons toil to no purpose; their souls are in continual bondage, and they find no rest until their burdens are laid at the feet of Jesus.

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Psalm 103:8-14

**"We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ than we can be pardoned without Christ."**

1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 517.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

3. *Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

5. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 115.

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Bob Dahl is a real estate salesman in Minneapolis.

---

# The Christian View of Atonement

by Anders Nygren

**EVIDENCE**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Corinthians**  
**5:18, 19**

The Cross of Christ is a plain confirmation of the fact that it is not merely the result of a human delusion when the demand for atonement is continually raised afresh among men. There is a real necessity for atonement and reconciliation between God and man. No fellowship with God without atonement, no atonement without sacrifice—this fundamental principle, which constantly recurs throughout the entire history of religion, has received here its final and complete recognition. In this sense, therefore, the Christian idea of atonement is in agreement with the pre-Christian and non-Christian idea, and is related to it as its fulfilment.

... We have traced the idea of atonement and sacrifice to its extreme limit. Man offers to God something of his own; he goes farther and offers himself in works of righteousness, mercy and love; and finally he offers even the claim he might make on the basis of these, offers it in humility. This is as far as it is possible to travel on that road. From the external sacrifice we have moved farther and farther in towards the centre of the religious life. Sacrifice has developed an inwardness, a spirituality and an intensity. . . .

Even so, we have still not found real atonement. All these different kinds of sacrifice have something about them which disqualifies them as means of reconciliation. Every attempt on man's part to put himself right with God and make himself acceptable to God, conceals ultimately a piece of human presumption. There is an inner contradiction in all human attempts to make atonement and effect reconciliation. For by the very fact that he seeks reconciliation, man acknowledges God's right to make demands on him, acknowledges Him to be God. Yet at the same time he denies the divinity of God, when he imagines that by means of something of his own—his gifts, his righteousness, or his humility—he can put himself right with God. He obliterates the distance between himself and God. Not least is this true of the way of salvation by humility, even though it apparently gives God His due. Humility as a propitiatory act is the greatest conceivable self-contradiction. Atonement ought to mean that God and God's will are given unqualified affirmation; but instead, what happens is that man seeks to give affirmation to himself and his own qualifications in the sight of God.

Over against this the Christian view of atonement stands for the complete abolition of the common idea of atonement. No fellowship with God without atonement—that is true; only, atonement is not a work of man, but of God Himself. No atonement without sacrifice—this principle, too, retains its validity in Christianity; only, it is not man who offers the sacrifice and not God who accepts it, but it is God who sacrifices Himself in Christ. Christianity is not the demand for an atonement and reconciliation which man must effect so as to open the way for himself to fellowship with God. Christianity is the *word of reconciliation*, the message of how God has made a way for Himself to us so as to bring us into fellowship with Himself.

---

Anders Nygren was a theologian at the University of Lund in Sweden, and later Bishop of Lund.

“Christianity is the word of reconciliation.”



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# Realizing Forgiveness

by Shirley Karls

Does forgiveness work two ways in your life? Or do you find it much easier to accept God's total forgiveness than handling what you feel when you are hurt by another? Often we feel justified in our anger, particularly when we have been wronged. We hesitate to carry out our part of the gospel, the part that says "Forgive and it shall be forgiven."

Is it possible that we don't understand God's forgiveness until we allow him to change our heart in forgiving others, or does his forgiveness create an automatic change in our attitude toward others? What is the logical pattern in forgiveness?

1. **Accept God's free gift of total forgiveness at face value.** "You are kind and forgiving, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you" (Psalm 86:5, NIV).

2. **Search your heart for sin,** remembering we serve a jealous God who desires a close relationship with his children. "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods . . ." (Joshua 24:19, 20, NIV). Obviously God willingly forgives us and yearns for us to be willing to let him change us, but he allows us to choose what we want to do.

3. **Guard against harboring resentment.** "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12, NIV). When temptation (harbored anger, hatred, resentment) raises its ugly head, be quick to pray for a loving attitude toward others. God will give you a heart of love if you ask for it. "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11, NIV).

4. **Always remember that forgiveness is ongoing.** We will often find ourselves seeking God's forgiveness for our sins and seeking God's heart toward those who have sinned against us. Christian growth takes a lifetime. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Hebrews 7:25

---

Shirley Karls is a homemaker in Plymouth, Minn. and is an elder in the Minnetonka Church.

---

# A Spirit of Forgiveness

by Ronald W. Hockridge

## OPINION

Key text:  
Luke 7:42-47

Forgiveness is that divine capacity which humans seek, and which many times they seem to find so difficult, if not impossible to acquire. What is there about the spirit of forgiveness that keeps it at arm's reach from so many? The method by which God provides justification for sinners can help us gain an understanding of forgiveness and its basis.

In Galatians and Romans Paul writes extensively about justification, the action whereby sinners gain acceptance and right standing with God and are thereby declared righteous. Paul makes a number of points showing that individuals are justified while they are yet sinners in themselves. In Romans 4:5 we are told, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." God justifies the ungodly—the sinner. Paul then reminds us that Abraham was justified by faith while he was uncircumcised, considered an unclean state by the Jews (Rom. 4:9-11). To illustrate the fact that God can call "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17), Paul recalls once again Abraham's experience of being declared by God a "father of many nations" long before he even had a son, and in fact at a time when Abraham considered it humanly impossible for him and his wife to produce a child (Rom. 4:17-19). Thus it can be seen that God is able to do things that are not possible in human terms, and that he can and does pronounce sinful people righteous.

**"To be a FORGIVING person you must know you are a FORGIVEN person."**

There is nothing that we can do to help recommend ourselves to God. Not even the greatest amount of sanctification or holiness can help. Justification is provided unconditionally to all and it is only through faith in Christ that one can appropriate everything that has been provided for him. It is the pure gospel—Christ's life, death, and resurrection—that makes justification available for all, and those who choose to believe in Christ are assured of salvation and eternal life (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16). Christ's victory stands in the place of humanity's failure and provides us with victory and life everlasting.

When a person confesses his sinfulness, accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and by faith is justified—declared righteous before God—it can be concluded that he is forgiven of all his sins. For Paul tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ." (Rom. 8:1). Thus it can be seen that justification and forgiveness are one and the same thing.<sup>1</sup>

By applying the principles of justification we see that we are unconditionally forgiven of sin through faith in the gospel. The awareness of being forgiven nourishes within a person a spirit of acceptance, love, and forgiveness. He who is forgiven much, loves much (Luke 7:42-47). Herein lies the secret of the spirit of forgiveness. In order to be a FORGIVING person you must know you are a FORGIVEN person. You can be assured of forgiveness because God grants it unconditionally to sinners, who receive it through faith in Christ.

1. Ellen White Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1070.

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- REACT**  
**Lesson 1**
1. What adjectives would you use to describe God's forgiveness? Explain why each is true.
  2. Do justification (Rom. 5), reconciliation (2 Cor. 5), and forgiveness (1 John 1) describe the same reality? Explain.
  3. Are there any preconditions to God's forgiveness? Does your attitude toward God have any bearing on whether God will forgive you?
  4. How would you describe the relationship between forgiveness and confession?
  5. Can you be certain that you are forgiven by God? On what basis?
  6. Did God need the cross in order to be able to forgive us, or do we need the cross in order to understand his great love for us? Both? Neither?
  7. What does Anders Nygren (Evidence) mean by saying that "the Christian view of the atonement stands for the complete abolition of the common idea of the atonement"? Do you agree with him?
  8. Does God's forgiveness discourage or encourage sin in your life?
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# Forgiveness and Rebuilt Relationships

“ ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness’ ” (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV).



# It Isn't Fair

by Glenn Sackett  
and Doug Ludwig

## INTRO- DUCTION

He was really mad at his father. It wasn't fair! In fact it was ridiculous. "I always seem to come out on the short end," he thought. "I don't know what's going on in that old man's head. He's just gone too far this time."

It was his brother again. He got all the breaks. This time it was a big party at the family's expense, and the jerk hadn't even been around in ages. He decided that it was time to confront his father about this gross unfairness. When his brother had disappeared, he had taken half the family fortune with him and had blown the whole thing on big parties just like this. He had to make sure that his father understood that it wasn't fair for his brother again to have access to family privileges. From his perspective, with his urgency for fairness, everything was going wrong.

The urgency for fairness. It seems to come naturally for humans. Consider some often heard cliches: "You get what you pay for." "God helps only those who help themselves." "You made your bed, now you'll have to lie in it." Each one reflects in some way our expectation that there should be a direct correlation between a person's actions and the consequences.

The father had a slightly different view of things. True, his younger son's radical departure had been their most expensive experiment. But all

the time his son had been gone the father's greatest concern was not that the young man would come home empty handed, but that he wouldn't come home at all.

The kid had always needed enough space to figure things out his own way, and sometimes his actions built barriers between them. This time was no exception. But the father had made a landmark decision about his values. As a result he was willing to take down the barriers. It would have been out of character now for him not to forgive his son and celebrate his return.

Forgiveness is creative. Conventional wisdom demands a rigid one-to-one correlation between behavior and consequence. Forgiveness introduces flexibility into the equation of personal interactions. Without this flexibility the demand for justice would make broken relationships permanent.

Their relationship was not yet rebuilt. That would take time. And there were limits. Forgiveness could not restore the fortune, or provide access to the other brother's share (what a relief to him!). But father and son now had access to each other. They were family again, and in time they would work out the details.

This story, along with other biblical passages we'll look at this week, give us insight on God's way of dealing with broken relationships.

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# An Expression of Pain

**LOGOS** “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them’ ” (Ex. 32:9, 10, RSV).

This is not a side of God that many like to see or acknowledge. Even the Psalmist also expressed difficulty with this apparent “other side” of God’s character. “Will the Lord spurn for ever? . . . Has his steadfast love for ever ceased? . . . Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” (Psalm 77:1, 2, 7, 8, 9, RSV). But the Psalmist’s dilemma is short-lived. To answer the questions he doesn’t create elastic arguments that can be stretched to suit any preconceived ideas. He simply recalls what God has already done for his people in history. “I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yea, I will remember thy wonders of old. . . . Thy way, O God, is holy” (Psalm 77:11-13, RSV).

As in the above examples, Isaiah presents God’s anger in conjunction with his compassion. “Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: ‘I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. . . . Ah, a sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt. . . . I will hide my eyes from you. . . . I will not listen.’ . . . ‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow’ ” (Isaiah 1:2, 4, 15, 18, NIV). Here the paradox between God’s anger and compassion diminishes and is better understood. It becomes evident that God’s wrath is not so much an expression of anger as it is an expression of pain—the pain of a broken relationship.

Fortunately God does not react to pain the same way we do. When God experiences the pain of rejection, he does not in turn reject, but instead tries to reconcile. His attempts are often dramatic, as in the case of Hosea. “And the Lord said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods’ ” (Hosea 3:1, NIV).

Like the father of Luke 15:11-31 God is ever ready to accept the penitent. But more than this, God is the one who initiates reconciliation. In Isaiah 1 he is the one who gives the call to reason things out. In Hosea he seeks out the straying lover. This seeking may actually sometimes take the form of punishment, not as a vindictive measure but as medicinal. “O Lord our God, . . . you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds” (Psalm 99:8, NIV). In both forgiveness and discipline God’s eternal purpose is to restore us to a loving relationship with himself.

E. R. M.

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# Forgiveness— A Statement of Trust

by Glenn Sackett

When my granddad was a little boy he went to a camp meeting that was attended by Ellen White. She had been sitting in her rocking chair just outside the big tent. Noticing that she had stood up, apparently to stretch her legs, he eyed her chair, wondering what it would be like to sit in it. Just about the time his mother began to look around to see where he was, he was settling comfortably into the chair. His comfort didn't last long when he saw his mother coming after him—looking embarrassed (for his benefit) and apologetic (for Mrs. White's benefit) all at the same time. She was about to pull him out of the chair when Ellen White said calmly, "He's alright; he's not hurting a thing."

In real life Ellen White was demonstrating the same kind of understanding of human nature that she ascribes to the Father in relating the story of the prodigal son. Her description of the story is found in *Christ's Object Lessons*, the chapter entitled "Lost, and Is Found." I recommend that you read it. Imagine her sitting in her rocking chair with a Bible in her lap, telling the story and filling in between the lines from her wealth of experience with the Father.

"In the parable there is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. The son feels that the past is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out forever. And so God says to the sinner, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins' (Isa. 44:22). . . .

"What assurance here, of God's willingness to receive the repenting sinner! Have you, reader, chosen your own way? Have you wandered far from God? Have you sought to feast upon the fruits of transgression, only to find them turn to ashes upon your lips? And now, your substance spent, your life-plans thwarted, and your hopes dead, do you sit alone and desolate? . . . Return to your Father's house. He invites you, saying, 'Return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee' (Isa. 44:22)."

"Do not listen to the enemy's suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better; until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then, you will never come. When Satan points to your filthy garments, repeat the promise of Jesus, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). . . .

"Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered, or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul."<sup>1</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Luke 15:11-22

**"Arise  
and go to  
your Father."**

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 204-206.

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# Sinship or Kinship?

by Doug Ludwig

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Hosea 3:1-5

In a sinful world "forgiveness" has never been popular, but we may be living in a time when it is conceptually impossible. In our society the ones who have the right to be proud are the ones who earn their way by hard work, wise trading or both. "Pay your way," has a solid conservative ring to it. It is a little wonder then that we see, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive . . ." as an invitation to trade.

In a gross misapplication of the biblical narrative sin is a commodity. One could view the bringing of sin to the altar as a wise exchange for food, water and protection in a hostile desert. In a curious twist, sin somehow has value to a saving God. Sadly, sin as the focus of exchange has been parlayed into incredible corporate empires (i.e. organized religions) but one must question whether God has ever traded in sin.

The teachings of Jesus point to a God who doesn't deal in sinship but kinship. The issue when the "prodigal" son returned wasn't how much money had been lost or how to recover it, but that the son had returned. Scripture consistently presents a God whose purpose is to tell us who we are rather than what we have done wrong. This is not to say that sin does not cost. One purpose of the sacrificial system is to show the cost of sin. But there is a danger that as we view the sanctuary model of God's dealing with people, we may see a God who is preoccupied with sin and settle comfortably, or uncomfortably, into a sin-centered religion.

**"A sacrifice  
is traded for  
forgiveness."**

In this scheme God's contact with man is at the balance scale; a sacrifice is traded for forgiveness, penitence for a clean slate. It may be that because the human mind cannot explain divine acceptance, considering the weight of our sin, we view forgiveness as a bag of "holy rocks" to balance the scale of justice. But forgiveness is an attitude of God toward his people which is expressed in a constant effort to claim us as his children, sons and daughters of God.

Forgiveness is not inconsistent with justice, but neither is it contingent upon it. Justice could be described as the natural result of one's own choices, and forgiveness as God's initiative that enables those choices.

Humans wrestle with forgiveness because we don't like what we can't explain or control. But the real value of forgiveness lies not in our understanding of its theology, but in its ability to carry this message: "You are someone worth caring for. I value you and our relationship, and I do not want mistakes to remain as barriers between us. Therefore, I am putting them behind me and I invite you to do the same. We are family." When we have experienced the freedom of this relationship we are set free to forgive in our relationships with others, not because we can explain it, but because we have experienced it.

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# What's in It for You?

by Glenn Sackett and Doug Ludwig

Here are some practical questions to consider when you have a relationship that has been damaged:

1. **Are you living in the present or focusing your attention on the past or the future?** Only living in the "now" gives you access to the present opportunities for relationship. Forgiveness allows this by putting the past in the past. When one refuses to forgive or be forgiven he insists on living in the past as if the wrong committed is still happening and is the only thing there is.<sup>1</sup> When one is trying to enforce justice in a relationship he is living in the future. A decision to live in the present enables forgiveness which leads to a restored relationship.

2. **Can you let justice take its own course or do you feel obligated to judge situations immediately?** If you see justice as something that must be imposed and are not able to recognize any higher arbiter, you may judge yourself or another as undeserving of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> By allowing God to be the Judge and by recognizing that justice has a way of working itself out over time, you are free to focus on restoring the relationship. You may find it helpful, in processing this question, to talk it through with a trusted third party, even as God did in Exodus 32:9-14.<sup>3</sup>

3. **Will you be flexible or rigid in your approach?** Whether you are in a position to give or receive forgiveness, grace is what enables you to make use of it. Grace is a characteristic that allows flexibility in the give and take of relationships. The lack of grace causes a rigidity which does not tolerate getting (or giving) something for nothing. Including forgiveness.<sup>4</sup>

4. **Why should you forgive?** It takes effort to work your way through the previous questions. It costs something to let go of the hurt, the losses incurred, the barriers built. What makes it worthwhile? If you see that the relationship is valuable you will be motivated to do the work. You will then wish the barriers to recede from the foreground into a pool of background knowledge,<sup>5</sup> or go, as Jesus said, "into the depths of the sea."

But what if you decide that the relationship is not valuable, that it's not going to be rebuilt? Is forgiveness then appropriate, being a tool for rebuilding relationships? Or does forgiveness have something to do with you regardless of the future of the relationship? What happens to the barriers? Do you want to hang on to them? If you do they may become your barriers, interfering with other relationships in the future. Unless you want to give them that much control over your future you will find that, like Jesus on the cross, it is best to let go of them by forgiving (see Luke 23:34).

**HOW TO**  
Key text:  
Matthew 6:12

1. Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself*.  
2. Paul Pruyser, *The Minister as Diagnostician*, pp. 69-71.  
3. See Friday's *Opinion* article.  
4. Pruyser, pp. 69-71.  
5. Erving and Miriam Polster, *Gestalt Therapy Integrated*. See chapter 2, "The Lively Figure."

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# Can God Be Limited?

by Glenn Sackett

## OPINION

Key text:

Exodus 32:9-14

Maybe God is not what we have made him out to be. We usually think of God in superlatives. Whether we use traditional terms such as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, or plain English terms such as all-seeing, all-loving, and all-forgiving, the idea is the same. God is unlimited.

Of course God is what God is, whatever we think of him. We do not invent God out of our own needs and wishes. Yet it is likely that part of our conception of God is just that—our invention.

As human beings we often struggle with our limitations. Take the weather for instance. Kansas, where I live, is famous for wind. So I joined a group of friends in buying an old sailboat. But what happened the next Sunday? We found ourselves floating on the proverbial "sea of glass." Very frustrating! We can't control the weather, but in our conception God can.

Then there are time and space limitations. Our family likes to camp in the Rocky Mountains. Especially during the last week of July and the first week of August when it's likely to be 100° in Kansas City. Three of the four birthdays in our family also come during that time. The problem is that one of them belongs to a boy who would also like to be having a birthday party with his friends at home. We can't be in two places at one time, but in our conception God can.

Now let's consider something slightly more abstract: personality integration. We have difficulty being equally in touch with all aspects of our personalities at one moment. In our most rewarding relationships we depend on each other to help us draw out the best parts of ourselves. We assume that a self-sufficient God can maintain balanced contact with all of his personality at once.

But what about Exodus 32? If we take this passage seriously, rather than discount it by saying God is gaming with Moses or testing his loyalty, we are presented with the picture of a God who also struggles to be in touch with all aspects of himself. Yes, he is all-loving and all-forgiving but he is also jealous. Is it possible that God could, in his first reaction, be so focused on his jealousy that he is momentarily out of touch with the grace in his character that would express forgiveness? Is it possible that things happened just as the story says and that Moses was a trusted friend to God? A friend who God could depend on to help him get in touch with and draw on his grace?

Maybe God is not what we have made him out to be—the individual who is unlimited in all the ways we are limited. Perhaps as a dynamic Person he actually needs us, not out of any lack, but in the interest of his fullness.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 2**

1. Compare the way God dealt with rebellious Israel (Ex. 32) with the way the father dealt with the prodigal son in Jesus' parable (Luke 15). How would you explain the apparently differing styles of relating to sinners found in these stories? Was God more just in the first instance and more loving in the latter?
  2. Does God's *justice* work in any way to restore those who are alienated from him? Does God execute justice for that purpose today? In what ways?
  3. How does forgiveness rebuild relationships?
  4. In view of God's unmerited forgiveness, why do you think it is so easy for us to center our religion on sin and behavior (see Evidence)? How can we avoid this? Can strong concern for standards and obedience actually be detrimental to one's relationship with Christ?
  5. What does the way God relates to those who have wronged him mean for the way you treat those who have wronged you, for example—
    - a boyfriend or girlfriend who has hurt you?
    - a teacher who has unjustly given you a poor grade?
    - a friend who has betrayed your confidence?
    - someone who has cheated you out of money?
  6. Does forgiveness have any benefits for the forgiver?
  7. Does God need friendships the same way we do (see Opinion)? If so, can we give him such friendship? How?
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# Forgiveness and Repentance

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me”  
(Psalm 51:10, RSV).



**CLEAN**

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# The Forgiveness Difference

by Pat Whitworth

## INTRODUCTION

They were born to good families. They had charisma and ability. They both had successes. They each were rebuked by God's prophets and endured the consequences of their mistakes. In the end, Saul died a miserable wreck. David died a friend of God—even though some believe his sins were more deplorable than Saul's.

What made the difference?

\* \* \*

They were both villains. Their crime cost them their lives on Golgotha. One cried out to God but received no response while the other was promised paradise.

Why?

\* \* \*

Both followed Jesus for over three years. Both were groomed for leadership. Both performed miracles in his name. Then on the same chilling night, they abandoned him. Both regretted it. Each felt his tender, compassionate gaze. One despised himself to death. One despised himself to life.

How? Why?

\* \* \*

Kings, thieves, and preachers, you, and I—every soul who has ever lived—is either drawn close to God or drifts away into darkness. What makes the difference?

What did David acknowledge that Saul didn't? What did each thief see in Jesus? After the cock crowed, who did Judas feel sorry for? What did Peter feel sorrow for?

Psalm 51 is a rewarding

source for answers to questions about the saving difference called repentance. David, the poet laureate of repentance, describes the elements that stir repentance and the elements repentance stirs in turn. He pictures a circuit of concern that connects God, the sinner, and his neighbor. It is a vertical experience that affects the present as much as the future. Repentance is the difference that makes all the difference.

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Pat Whitworth is the director of the patient relations program at Hinsdale Hospital.

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# Classic Confession

**LOGOS** No doubt it was one of the most inexcusable sins ever committed. The guilty party was none other than David, the pronounced man of God and divinely ordained king. His appointed position as the nation's role model exacerbated his betrayal of his people and his God. His twofold transgression represented the worst of human ugliness. In his all-consuming covetousness, culminating in adultery with Bathsheba, David demonstrated the crassness of blind selfishness. In the murder of Uriah, he committed the ultimate violation of the very personal rights that he, as king, was charged to protect. And worst of all, it was a slap in the face to God himself.

Fortunately, however, the enormity of David's sin was surpassed only by the exemplary sincerity of his repentance. Recorded in Psalm 51, his prayer for forgiveness serves as a prototype for all convicted sinners. In this psalm David uses three terms in referring to his failures: "transgressions" (vs. 1), "iniquity" (vs. 2), and "sin" (vs. 2). The range of meaning in these terms includes willful rebellion, habitual sinning that is not really intentional so much as careless, and an innate condition of the being, a flaw in a person's character. These meanings are paralleled by three terms of forgiveness: "blot out" (vs. 1), "wash" (vs. 2), and "cleanse" (vs. 2). David seems to realize that sin completely pervades his life and that only the most thorough kind of forgiveness and restoration can meet his needs. And in God he finds a mercy so vast that it covers any type of human failure.

The prayer opens with a plea for mercy. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1, NIV). Then David fully acknowledges his guilt, making no attempt to lessen or transfer the responsibility for his actions. He also recognizes the pain he has caused God. "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge" (Psalm 51:3, 4, NIV).

David doesn't stop there. Knowing that simple repentance cannot guarantee continued obedience, he asks God for a more permanent solution: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. . . . Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you" (Psalm 51:10, 11, 13, NIV). This regeneration was to have positive effects on others as well.

Herein lies the greatness of David: In heartfelt repentance he ultimately did provide the stellar example expected of him—one that we, too, can emulate.

L. R. C.

# Made Free!

by Roberta J. Ross

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
2 Samuel 12:1-10

Psalm 51 comes from the very depths of the heart of David. He had just been brought up short by the stark realization of his sin (2 Sam. 12:7-9) and was overcome with sorrow and grief for what he had done. In Psalm 51 he seeks a cleansing—he needed freedom from guilt, he needed deliverance and restoration. Being truly sorry for what he had done, he pleads with God for a new heart—a pure heart; then he would have the joy of salvation restored and his spirit set free.

God delights in responding to such repentance and in giving release from guilt. "As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is 'reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19."<sup>1</sup>

"David's repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. But he saw the enormity of his transgression against God; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. David did not in despair give over the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance. . . .

"Though David had fallen, the Lord lifted him up. He was now more fully in harmony with God and in sympathy with his fellow men than before he fell. . . .

"This passage in David's history is full of significance to the repenting sinner. It is one of the most forcible illustrations given us of the struggles and temptations of humanity, and of genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Through all the ages it has proved a source of encouragement to souls that, having fallen into sin, were struggling under the burden of their guilt. Thousands of the children of God, who have been betrayed into sin, when ready to give up to despair have remembered how David's sincere repentance and confession were accepted by God, notwithstanding he suffered for his transgression; and they also have taken courage to repent and try again to walk in the way of God's commandments.

"Whoever under the reproof of God will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. Whoever will in faith accept God's promises, will find pardon. The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul. He has given this promise: 'Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.' Isaiah 27:5. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.' Isaiah 55:7."<sup>2</sup>

As with David, the freedom of forgiveness is ours for the asking.

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 35.  
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 725, 726.  
Additional reading:  
*Steps to Christ*, chapter on Repentance, p. 23.

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# Re-Creation of a Transgressor

by John Porter

## EVIDENCE

**Key text:**  
Ezekiel 36:25-27

David's penitential prayer in Psalm 51 can offer to its readers an important clue into the meaning of separation from God and the restoration of a right relationship.

David's act with Bathsheba was one of transgression rather than sin. In contemporary usage, we have collapsed these terms, believing that by definition we are referring to the same experience. However, in Jewish tradition, there are distinctions between transgression, which is rebellion; sin, which is wandering or missing the mark; and iniquity, which is distortion or perversion in reality.

The act of transgression caused David great torment, agony, guilt and despair. By his own choice and action, David alienated himself from God. We know from Psalm 6, another penitential psalm, that separation from God can cause physical (vs. 2) and mental (vs. 3) illness. Verse 6 is a clear description of this agony: "I am worn out with groaning, every night I drench my pillow and soak my bed with tears . . ." (Psalm 6:6, Jerusalem Bible).

Just as in the specific, concrete and tangible experiences of life we receive a glimpse or taste of the eternal, so David, in his alienation from God, caused by the act of adultery, was led to ask the ultimate question of human existence. Although his transgression was specific, the general questions of existence are lurking in his torment. Thus he says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5, RSV).

**"David's act was one of transgression rather than sin."**

In the midst of his suffering, David cries to the Lord a prayer of deliverance: "God, create a clean heart in me, put into me a new and constant spirit, do not banish me from your presence, do not deprive me of your holy spirit" (Psalm 51:10, 11, Jerusalem Bible).

The full impact of David's prayer is not totally apparent to the casual reader. In the Old Testament, the subject of the verb "create" always refers to the Lord. To create is to bring something new and wonderful into existence (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 48:7; 65:17; Jer. 31:21, 22). God's act of creating is analogous to forgiveness of sinners (Eze. 36:25ff; Jer. 31:33; 32:39, 40). By the power of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness man's inner being is changed into new life.

Thus David is seeking re-creation of himself as he seeks a "new and constant spirit." There is more to deliverance than God's forgiveness. Although God heals brokenness and estrangement, one must align the self with God's will and purpose. In the pattern of penitential laments, a vow is made to God as an offering in evidence of the person's desire for deliverance and as a statement of confidence in God's love and mercy. These offerings were not seen as a bribe for divine favor, but were a response to God's gracious forgiveness.

In summary, David has learned from experience that the autonomy of transgression in rebellion against God causes physical and emotional upheaval. Forgiveness is the prerogative of the grace of God which creates new life and gives meaning to existence. Due to the blessings of God, David responds in conformity to the Word by living in right relationships.

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by Ted Lunde

# Resources for Renewal

## HOW TO

Key text:

Galatians 1:3-5

How many times today or any day this week have you or I felt real sorrow for our sins *and* wanted to turn from them? If not too often, don't be surprised. It might just be that we're normal Laodiceans. As Revelation 3:17 says, we think we're rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing when really we're poor, blind, and naked.

The real problem isn't being poor, blind, and naked but that we don't own up to our condition. The problem isn't just saying, "I'm a sinner," but "owning" who and what we really are. David didn't seem to have that problem. He painted an honest picture of himself—warts, sins and all.

It was this ability to be honest with himself and to be completely open with God that made David an even greater penitent than he was a sinner. Here are some suggestions for cultivating such honesty and openness:

1. **Picture the crucifixion.** Who are you standing with? The soldiers, Christ's mother, the crowd, the disciples? If our sins killed Jesus, maybe we are closer to the soldiers and the crowd. Remember, we *chose* those sins; they didn't come by default.

2. **Talk to Christ.** Tell him what you have and haven't liked about his ways. Tell him about the times you felt his way was too hard or too stuffy. Tell him how you felt when you prayed the hardest and all that seemed to follow was silence. Be specific! This is the hard part, but it's the part where the most honesty is needed. When we are open in this way, God's love doesn't have as many barriers to cut through in order to reach us.

3. **Listen and look.** Listen to Christ's words as "we" nail his hands to the cross. Listen as he says, "That's all right, my child. You don't understand yet. I forgive you." Look at his face as he looks into ours and sees the rebellion in us that we're afraid to see . . . and loves us anyway. Look and see that no trace of anger or reproach fills his eyes.

4. **Meditate.** Think of how great a love it takes to look past our rebellion. Think of the love that washes past our sins, our acts of separation and engulfs them all in forgiveness and peace. Then repentance will be ours and turning from our sins will be inevitable.

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# Why Do I Have to Say I'm Sorry?

by Cherry B. Habenicht

## OPINION

Key text:  
2 Peter 3:9

In the late sixties Eric Segal's *Love Story* told us, "Love means never having to say you're sorry." One who loves usually will not purposely wrong another; his confession is unnecessary, because the loved one already understands that the hurt was unintended. Paul Tournier writes, "It is quite clear that between love and understanding there is a very close link. It is so close that we never know where the one ends and the other begins, nor which of the two is the cause or the effect. He who loves understands, and he who understands loves."<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, does God want us to tell him we're sorry about our wrongs? He knows our motivations as well as our actions and does not need our repentance to clarify the issues. It is not smug satisfaction that makes him ask for a broken spirit and contrite heart. Rather, he requires repentance so we are forced to acknowledge our innate capacity to hurt others—often in spite of our best efforts.

We are human. Our motivations are flawed, and our understanding is limited. We cannot claim to lead perfect lives on our own. Repentance asks God for mercy, cleansing and restoration.

Saul offered rationalizations. The robber on Calvary heaped insults. Judas clung to his theories. Each tried to defend himself to the end.

**"We are forced to acknowledge our innate capacity to hurt others."**

Peter "realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself."<sup>2</sup> The penitent thief accepted his fate but cast himself on the merits of the dying Jesus. David was "broken in spirit by the consciousness of his sin and its far-reaching results."<sup>3</sup>

The difference, then, is that love makes us *want* to say "I'm sorry"—with no ifs, ands or buts.

1. Paul Tournier, *To Understand Each Other*, p. 28.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 713.
3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 723.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 3**

1. After reading Psalm 51 for yourself, identify the characteristics of true repentance that you find there.
2. Few of us are guilty of murder and adultery, so do you find it difficult to identify with David? Why or why not?
3. Someone has said, "I love to sin, God loves to forgive. It's a splendid arrangement." How would you respond, keeping David's story in mind?
4. Ellen White comments that after David's sin with Bathsheba and his repentance, he "was now more fully in harmony with God and in sympathy with his fellow men than before" (see Testimony). Why do you think this was true? Was David's leadership and spiritual influence thus actually strengthened or weakened as a result of the whole affair?
5. Do you find it difficult to be as open with God as the How To author recommends? Does such openness relate in any way to repentance? Explain.
6. Since we know that God forgives our sins, why do we need to tell him we're sorry?

# Forgiveness and Self-Concept

“He planned, in his love, that we should be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ . . . that we might praise that glorious generosity of his which he granted to us in his Beloved” (Ephesians 1:5, 6, Phillips).

**before**



**after**



# God's Way in the World

by Robert M. Zamora

## INTRO- DUCTION

When God decided to quell the rebellion of this world he came with forgiveness and a promise. In this way the God of the Bible stood in bold contrast to the gods of the ancient world who were presented as cruel, hard and unforgiving. With Jehovah it was different, with him there was forgiveness.

The Bible declares that forgiveness is the very basis of God's relationship with rebellious mankind. It is only when individuals reject this forgiveness that God acts in other ways. At the first instance of rebellion in the garden of Eden God came with a promise of deliverance and a word of forgiveness. *He* would reconcile them to himself. God the great reconciler, who meets his creation with forgiveness, would do the work of reconciliation.

For Jesus this forgiveness was not only an attribute of God but was to characterize those who claimed him as Lord. They were to demonstrate that in the new kingdom Jesus had come to establish, forgiveness was available in every relationship.

Christ's church, then, would become the agency through which his saving action would be made known, not just through words but through deeds, forever demonstrating that people are changed by forgiveness, not judgment or condemnation. As D. Leslie Weatherhead has said: "The forgiveness of God, in my opinion is the most powerful therapeutic in the

world."<sup>1</sup> A new society would be created around the cross, a forgiven society extending that forgiveness through their forgiving.

This is the essence of the gospel message—that God who could have responded to our rebellion with judgment exercised through his moral power chose to meet us with a cross on which a dying figure cried for forgiveness for those who put him there. In that one act God set the pattern for all human behavior, a standard of behavior so incongruous with our nature that with our petition for daily bread must also come our petition for grace to forgive as God forgives (Matt. 6:12). The petition is not just that we may be forgiven but that God may work his miracle in us that we may be forgiving as well.

It is when we experience this that we come closest to reflecting the image of Jesus. It is then that the world gets a vision of God. It is then that sinful man is willing to trust himself to what we have to say and to turn to the Christ whose very nature is that of forgiveness. It is then that our anger and feelings of rejection shall subside and we will be free to be God's people—the instruments of his grace in a world that is in pain.

In the remainder of this week's lesson, our purpose is to explore further the "therapy" of forgiveness—how it transforms our attitude toward ourselves and toward the world.

1. D. Leslie Weatherhead, *Psychology, Religion and Healing*, p. 328.

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# The Proposition

## LOGOS

The preface is a whispered proposition intermingled with the jingle of coins. Then follow quick, nervous movements down a dark, back street, a muffled knock, a soft welcome, and then the derogation begins. This sequence had been repeated many times before. At first it took effort but now only the clink of silver was heard. The surrender at first had its price but now everything had been paid. There was nothing left. The initial pain of self-reproach had been replaced by a numbing void. The nagging guilt had been repressed into the subconscious and held there by a hair-trigger latch.

This time was different, however. There was no reward for the act of self-betrayal. It was a trap and it had sprung. And now, cast by an angry mob before a judge, the trigger snapped. All the guilt and self-loathing came lashing out. In fear she trembled before the mob that called for her blood. Terrified she waited for the judgment that would precipitate the rocks. Finally the dreaded words were spoken: "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7, NIV). She cringed. The seconds paused and seemed to stop. Risking an upward glance she saw only the judge. "Where are they? Has no one condemned you?" he said. "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:10, 11, NIV).

Here is one of the clearest examples of the way Jesus treats sinners. Instead of condemning he offers an alternate life-style. To the woman it was "leave your life of sin." To Levi it was, "Follow me." "After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him" (Luke 5:27, 28, NIV).

Instead of condemnation Jesus offers peace of mind. To the paralytic, burdened with guilt and hoping for relief, both from his mental anguish and his physical infirmity, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home" (Mark 2:5, 11, NIV).

Instead of condemnation Christ offers friendship. "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1, 2, RSV).

All that Christ offers invokes a change—to repent, to leave a life of sin, to follow. And with the change comes a mission; something new to center a life around. To Simon Peter, repentant after denying his Lord only days earlier, Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15, NIV).

The wording may differ slightly, but Christ's proposition is the same for all. There is no condemnation, leave your past and follow.

E. R. M.

# Restoration Plus

by E. Irvin Lehman

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Luke 15:2

A positive self-concept can never be based upon *denial* of sin. "Jesus died, not to save man *in* his sins, but *from* his sins. Man is to leave the error of his ways, to follow the example of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Only commitment makes penitence meaningful or relevant. Only commitment opens the heart to receive the assurance and release of forgiveness.

Note the dual process in the case of the paralytic of Capernaum: "The burden of despair rolls from the sick man's soul; the peace of forgiveness rests upon his spirit, and shines out upon his countenance. His physical pain is gone, and his whole being is transformed. The helpless paralytic is healed! the guilty sinner is pardoned!"<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord forgives and sets us up next to himself. "The souls that turn to Him for refuge, Jesus lifts above the accusing and the strife of tongues. . . . Christ unites them to His own divine-human nature. They stand beside the great Sin Bearer, in the light proceeding from the throne of God."<sup>3</sup>

Who has started lower, and been lifted higher than the prodigal son? "The father will permit no contemptuous eye to mock at his son's misery and tatters. He takes from his own shoulders the broad, rich mantle, and wraps it around the son's wasted form."<sup>4</sup> He's in the family again! He's got the robe.

Think of Mary Magdalene. "When to human eyes her case appeared hopeless, Christ saw in Mary capabilities for good. . . . Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour."<sup>5</sup>

Peter, outstanding for the ignominy of triple denial, when forgiven became just as outstanding as a compassionate under-shepherd. "Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter's repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple.

" . . . And because of his humiliation and repentance, Peter was better prepared than ever before to act as shepherd to the flock."<sup>6</sup> Amid the storms of temptation he had come to understand that man can walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he relies upon the Saviour.<sup>7</sup>

**"The one who had fallen was brought very near the Saviour"**

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 251.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 268.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 568.
4. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 203, 204.
5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 812.
7. see *ibid.*, p. 382.

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# Forgiveness as Restoration

by Scott Britz-Cunningham

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
1 Peter 2:24

The word most frequently employed in the New Testament to denote forgiveness is *aphesis*, which could also be translated as "cancellation" or "letting-go." The emphasis, as Henry Barclay Swete points out, is not so much on the mercy which forgives, as the release which sets the forgiven sinner at liberty.<sup>1</sup> "Liberty," one may ask, "for what purpose?"

"That we might live unto righteousness," answers Peter (see 1 Peter 2:24). In sin the relationship between God and humanity has been severed, and the deep-rooted egoism of our hearts leaves us spiritually dead. By our own efforts we can do nothing to restore the relationship, for sin has entangled us, and the consciousness of guilt drives us ever farther from the throne of God. God, however, supervenes; he cancels the debt of guilt; he calls the sinner to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that [he] may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need" (Heb. 4:16). With this assurance, the sinner is indeed enabled to live the life of God.

Forgiveness is, however, impossible without repentance—that is, without some experience of the bitterness of sin. This may be a stumbling-block, especially to those whose outward conduct is blameless by society's demands—to those, that is, who have never been jolted by guilt into a face-to-face encounter with the repugnance of sin. These people may be diligent in conforming to their obligations as citizens or as members of a church, but their obedience is hollow, for it cloaks the very egoism which is at the root of all sin. They fail to see that a sinner, as Emil Brunner suggests, "is not a human being who has sinned a certain number of times; he is a human being who sins whatever he is doing."<sup>2</sup> There is no remedy for such blindness except the conviction which is forced upon the sinner by the word and Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup>

Numerous passages in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:32-35) stress that God's forgiveness of us requires us to be forgiving of others. This, again, is not so much a condition of God's mercy, as of our capacity to receive it. Our forgiveness of others is inseparably linked to our repentance; it is, in a direct sense, the reflection of repentance on the plane of our relationships. For in repenting, we renounce the idol of Self; and in renouncing the claims of Self against our fellow humans, we forgive. As Reinhold Niebuhr puts it, "the final proof of the genuine spirit of humility in the 'elect', of their 'brokenness of spirit', is their capacity for mercy and forgiveness. Without consciousness of their own need of forgiveness, 'good' people never show mercy towards 'bad' people."<sup>4</sup>

Forgiveness—both God's forgiveness of us, and our forgiveness of others—is a creative force, a restorative of broken relationships. Alec Vidler states it well: "God forgives this man and that man, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit they may become agents of Christ's reconciling work. . . . Where a church is alive and not dead, it is moved by gratitude for forgiveness and reconciliation received to go out and extend those blessings universally."<sup>5</sup>

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Scott Britz-Cunningham is editor of the Mountain View Mirror, published quarterly by the Mountain View Central Church.

"Forgiveness  
is a creative  
force"

1. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, pp. 80, 81.
2. Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 142.
3. Swete, p. 153.
4. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Human Destiny*, p. 20.
5. Alec Vidler, *Christian Belief*, p. 97.



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# Guarantee by God

During a recent nostalgic look at one of my academy yearbooks, I noted with some amusement that a fellow student had signed across her picture the words, "Gross! It's me." Though few would express their low self-esteem in quite so public and blatant a manner, most of us experience times when a look in the mirror elicits a response not unlike, "Gross! It's me."

And if we have even slightly felt the impact of the heavy consequences of our sin, we know that such a self-analysis is all too accurate. That's why God's forgiveness is such good news. Though in some ways we are undeniably and utterly "gross," he doesn't hold it against us. Rather, he steadfastly affirms our value as his own creatures, even though we have fallen far short of his design.

When you realize that God takes such a remarkable attitude toward you, your own outlook is revolutionized so that you can:

1. **Stop worrying about what God thinks of you.** Jesus' forgiveness of the undeserving—like Peter, the woman caught in adultery, and even those who nailed him to the cross—forever settles any questions about God's disposition toward you. No circumstance you may face, no sin you may commit, can alter the "good news . . . that the universe is a friendly place, that God wears a friendly face toward man."<sup>1</sup>

2. **Stop worrying about yourself.** All insecurity, guilt and self-hatred are refuted by the powerful argument of Calvary. With his own blood, Christ has confirmed beyond doubt your inestimable worth, your high status as a favored child of the King of the universe. Your self-worth, then, is guaranteed by God, and is not dependent on the approval of others, or even on your approval of yourself. Making the dean's list, getting into Loma Linda, winning the championship, being asked out on Saturday night—these may all help you feel good about yourself. But for the Christian, these sorts of things are never the *basis* for self-acceptance.

Helmut Thielicke writes that once we see Christ's attitude toward us, "then we no longer need to have our value constantly confirmed. We need no longer be addicted to recognition. . . . We can know that we are accepted, although we are weak. . . . We no longer have to establish our own value or have it confirmed by other people. . . . [This] means an indescribable freedom, for now we can know that no matter what we have done, no matter who we may be—no one and nothing can step between us and God; no one and nothing can change the fact that we are accepted by him. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

3. **Start worrying about the needs of others.** Again Thielicke: "Instead of always having to put ourselves in the proper light, instead of spending our energies, our love, our imagination, and our objectivity in constant pursuit of self-confirmation, we are now free to help others with whatever capabilities we have and to take responsibility in all areas of our life."<sup>3</sup> In liberating us from our doubts and fears about ourselves, God points us toward meeting the hurts, needs and insecurities of others.

D. F. M.

## HOW TO

Key text:

Ephesians 1:7, 8

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1. Jack W. Provonsha, *God Is With Us*, p. 130.  
2. Helmut Thielicke, *The Faith Letters*, p. 147.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

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# The Key to Self-Acceptance

by Jim Brock

## OPINION

Key text:

Romans 3:23, 24

Fundamental to New Testament anthropology is the fact of human inability to live a successful, fulfilling life outside of a relationship with Christ. Paul asserts that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). History itself supports the Bible in this claim, and testifies to man's failure to order his life in a constructive fashion. The truth is that we all know what is right and moral and at the same time we all know that we are not doing the right. Herein lies the dilemma and the great need of humanity.

What happens to our self-worth and self-image in view of our moral failures? The New Testament and contemporary society are filled with numerous examples of people whose lives have been wrecked and crippled by guilt and self-blame. People get caught in the trap (because of their shortcomings) of thinking that they are worthless. We often become burdened down when we sense our own inadequacy. Thus, the fullness of life, the glorious opportunity of living, means very little to many people. They have become fed up with life; their hopes have been dashed, their dreams broken, and their visions short-circuited.<sup>1</sup> How can we accept ourselves when, in fact, we do fall short of moral rightness?

**"Forgiveness removes the barriers caused by sin."**

Before we can live happy, successful lives, we must first accept ourselves and maintain a healthy self-image. The message of the gospel is that this self-acceptance comes through the experience of forgiveness. Forgiveness removes the barriers caused by sin and thus opens the way to recovery of wholeness of personality and the integrity of the individual.<sup>2</sup> Within the concept of forgiveness, is the message that God loves us and values us enough to risk himself and his well-being that we might become reconciled to him. Forgiveness makes possible our adoption as sons and daughters of God, as well as giving us access to the renewing powers of the new age.

Once we understand that God loves us unconditionally and places the highest value on us, we will not only be able to discern and acknowledge our faults, but we will also find, in our gratitude toward a forgiving God, the motivation to reform our lives and become a blessing to the world.<sup>4</sup>

1. John Powell, *Fully Human Fully Alive*, p. 32.

2. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 318.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

4. Charles Scriven, *Affirming the Best in Yourself*, p. 32.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 4**

1. How did Jesus affirm the self-worth of Mary Magdalene, Levi and Peter (see Logos and Testimony)? How were their lives affected by this affirmation? What is the significance of each case for us?
  2. What differences do you see between the self-esteem of the one who has not sought forgiveness and the self-esteem of the Christian who has experienced forgiveness?
  3. If, through God's forgiveness, we come to accept ourselves as we are, do we then lose motivation to develop and improve Christian character?
  4. Do you *have* to like yourself if you are to be saved?
  5. Leslie Weatherhead has called the forgiveness of God "the most powerful therapeutic in the world" (see Introduction). Do you agree? Explain. In what tangible ways can Christians apply this therapeutic, both in the church and in outreach?
  6. Are there instances when genuine forgiveness occurs but the public loss of confidence in a person may mean that he or she cannot be trusted with an important responsibility any longer? If so, how does this square with Jesus' example of entrusting Peter with responsibility after his failure (John 21)?
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# Freedom From Guilt

**“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus . . .” (Romans 8:1, NIV).**



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# Guilt—Passport From License to Freedom

by Warren R. Zork

## INTRO- DUCTION

My motor vehicle driver's license lies buried somewhere in the inner recesses of my wallet. Except when needed for an "ID," I seldom think about that little plastic card with the not-so-flattering photo that gives me the freedom of the public roads, as long as I obey the rules under which I promised to use it.

On a recent Sabbath morning I was part of a pack of cars hurrying along an eight-mile stretch of I-95 between home and church when we approached a favorite state police speed trap. Accustomed to the trap, the motorists moving 5-10 miles per hour over the speed limit cut back their speed as they neared the radar unit. Rounding a slight curve we could see a half dozen officers flagging down erring motorists. Instinctively I felt for the wallet in my hip pocket. It wasn't there.

As I eased by the trap (what a relief—they hadn't singled me out!), I felt guilty, exposed, uncomfortable, outside the strong, protective arm of the law. Had I been stopped, my bumbling excuses would have fallen on courteous, but deaf ears, my guilt undeniable: driving without a license in my possession and speeding. "Points" would be entered against my license number into a giant computer somewhere indicating that I had abused the privilege of the freedom to drive, and there would probably be an increase in my next year's insurance premium.

The truth? I had used my privilege of freedom to use the roads as a license to cheat, if ever so slightly, the system set up for my protection. The guilt was real and forced me to reassess my attitude toward the law.

Guilt is an essential and necessary emotional response to understanding my broken relationship to God and my fellowmen. "If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin" (Rom. 7:7, RSV). A sense of guilt signals my moment of truth in relation to right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error.

The critical test centers around what I do with that guilt. Do I drive it underground into my subconscious? Do I rationalize it away with the mores and excuses of surrounding society? Or do I come clean and choose to say to God and those I've offended, "I blew it. I'm sorry I hurt you. Help me out of this."

My response will depend largely on my view of God, his grace—the degree to which I really believe that he trusts me personally, and I trust him.

This week's lesson confronts the reality of guilt in the healthy Christian's life. We shall explore how unresolved guilt can bankrupt our relationship with God and those around us. We shall see how the gospel of our Lord can resolve each guilt experience and restore the relationship of freedom to live the abundant life.

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# Getting Past the Guilt Trips

by Merle J. Whitney

## LOGOS

Often we attempt to rid ourselves of guilt in ways that are bankrupt. Rebellion frequently is used to escape the presumed cause of guilt. Paul recognizes that even parents may engender rebellious reaction in their children: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, NIV). Rebellion serves only to remove support, deepen hard feelings, fracture personal relationships, and generate more wrong for which to be guilty.

Few human traits are more common than casting the blame for our personal predicament on someone else. This is illustrated in 1 Kings 18:17, 19: "When he [Ahab] saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is that you, you troubler of Israel?' 'I have not made trouble for Israel,' Elijah replied. 'But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals'" (NIV). Saying, "It's not really my fault" is just one example of twisted thinking that retains guilt.

It's also easy to give up and dissolve into depression and discouragement. That attitude accuses others or even God of not caring. Our blindness and refusal to allow God to be involved in the situation then turn an untruth into dire reality. "He answered me, 'The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, "The Lord has forsaken the land; the Lord does not see." So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done'" (Eze. 9:9, 10, NIV).

Sometimes removal of guilt is aborted because confession is superficial. "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. 'This time I have sinned,' he said to them. 'The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail.' . . . When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again . . . and he would not let the Israelites go" (Ex. 9:27, 28, 34, 35, NIV).

We try desperately to get out of the consequences of our wrongdoing without changing our behavior. As soon as the circumstances allow, we return to sin and compound the guilt.

Behavior drastically changed for one of Jesus' most devoted followers—one whom he repeatedly freed from guilt. Her devotion led her to the tomb on Easter morning, where she had the thrill of being the first to recognize and greet the risen Lord. "When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons" (Mark 16:9, NIV).

Resolution of guilt through the gospel is not complicated. Two passages of scripture make the process clear. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13, NIV). "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1, 2, NIV).

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# Guilt Must Be Confronted

by Warren R. Zork

Ellen White uses Jacob's "angel-wrestling" experience to highlight the reality of an intense encounter of faith which often will come to one suffering from a sense of guilt. "God taught Jacob that in his own strength he could never gain the victory, that he must wrestle with God for strength from above."<sup>1</sup>

"Jacob [after deceiving Esau] fled . . . [and] was weighed down with a sense of guilt. . . . The one thought that above all others pressed upon his soul, was the fear that his sin had cut him off from God. . . . In sadness he lay down to rest. . . . As he slept . . . vast shadowy stairs seemed to lead upward to the very gates of heaven; . . . angels of God were passing up and down, . . . the divine voice was heard in a message of comfort and hope. . . . The mystic ladder of his dream represented Jesus, the only medium of communication between God and man."<sup>2</sup>

According to Mrs. White, there will be real conflict in every genuine attempt to seek release from guilt. Notice the words "struggle" and "subdue" in the following quote: "When sin *struggles* for the mastery in the heart, when guilt oppresses the soul and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, remember that Christ's grace is sufficient to *subdue* sin and banish darkness. Entering into communion with the Saviour, we enter the region of peace. . . ."

"It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. . . ."

"Let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love. . . ."

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts; . . . and be ye thankful' (Col. 3:15). Forgetting our own difficulties and troubles, let us praise God for an opportunity to live for the glory of His name."<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Romans 8:1, 2

1. Manuscript 2, 1903.  
2. *Steps to Christ*, pp. 19, 20.  
3. *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 250-253, emphasis supplied.

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# Inescapable Guilt

by Paul Tournier,  
selected by George B. Gainer

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Romans 7:19-8:2

We all experience guilt feelings, and we also continually seek to escape from them, not by the pardon of God but by the mechanism of self-justification and the repression of conscience. Therefore we ourselves have need at one and the same time of both aspects of the biblical inversion. We need the assurance of grace to meet our conviction of guilt, and we need the severity of God to drive us back upon ourselves, to the recognition of our guilt and misery, and to make us entrust ourselves still more ardently to the divine grace.

This is the meaning of the traditional Christian *felix culpa*. It is a happy fault, happy guilt, for it has lead us and continually leads us, through begging for grace, to bow before God that we may receive it. The salutary saying of George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, is well known, that the light which shows us our sins is the light which heals.

It follows that what we have distinguished in order to clarify the discussion, is in fact integrated into one experience; we have both at the same time a sharp sense of guilt and a sharp awareness of grace. The more acute, penetrating and refined our sense of guilt, so much the more acute, far-reaching and joyous is our awareness of grace.

In the Epistle to the Romans chapters seven and eight, St. Paul gives a most moving description of our human lot. . . . There seems to be a striking contrast between vii. 1-24 on the one hand, and the last verse of the chapter (vii. 25) together with the whole of the following chapter, on the other. There appears to be a break in the thread of the argument which has worried translators.

In the first section the apostle depicts man's inescapable guilt and despair: 'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am!' (Rom. vii. 19, 24). But in the second part this despair is swept away to give place to a paean of triumph: 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. vii. 25; viii. 1).

The contrast is so sharp that the explanation has been sought by supposing that St. Paul may have been describing in succession man's condition in two distinct phases of his life—in chapter seven, before his conversion, and in chapter eight, after it. This simple interpretation is entirely contradicted by experience. . . . Those who think that conversion gives shelter from sin and guilt are grossly deceived, and they fall into a repression of conscience. I have seen many instances of this, especially with various sects in which it is said that converts no longer commit sin and where scandals are rife.

The fact is that the Christian is still accompanied by guilt after his conversion, and it even becomes more acute, as we have seen. The condition described in Romans chapter seven is the state of everyman, converted or not. There is no 'before' or 'after' in it.

Some translators of the Bible have been deceived over this. They

“Those who think that conversion gives shelter from sin and guilt are grossly deceived.”

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have carefully inserted three dots between verses twenty-four and twenty-five. Not all translations have this pious emendation, of course; but the intention of the translators who have inserted them is clear. They assume that St. Paul had snapped the thread of his argument, and after describing what man is like before conversion, oppressed by the consciousness of guilt, he has then taken a leap into the future and described the same man long afterwards, converted and sure of forgiveness, without saying how he passed from one state to the other.

Recently I met a theologian friend of mine who said to me: 'I have long asked myself what was concealed by these three dots, and what happens between the condition of man in chapter seven and his condition in chapter eight, and whether it happens once for all or whether it recurs time and again throughout life. Then one day I realized that the three dots mean nothing at all, and that a man is at the same time such as is described in chapter seven and also in chapter eight.' That is correct; the dots represent nothing at all, because they have simply been invented by the translator, and they pervert St. Paul's message.

We have the sharp consciousness of guilt of chapter seven and the vivid certainty of grace of chapter eight simultaneously! This can be seen in history; for believers who are most desperate about themselves are the ones who express most forcefully their confidence in grace. There is a St. Paul, as I have just shown; and a St. Francis of Assisi, who affirmed that he was the greatest sinner of all men; and a Calvin, who asserted that man was incapable of doing good and of knowing God by his own power. The same thing can be seen in the consulting-room. Those who are most pessimistic about men are the most optimistic about God; those who are the most severe with themselves are the ones who have the most serene confidence in divine forgiveness.

To separate consciousness of guilt and consciousness of forgiveness is to doom oneself to a misunderstanding of man. To imagine that after conversion one is sheltered from sin and guilt is to beguile oneself with a dangerous illusion. It is even to prepare the way to profound despair on the day when it is realized that, in spite of an entirely sincere conversion, one has fallen back into sin, and guilt is experienced once again in an even more vivid form.

But perhaps it is necessary to experience such disillusionment in order to discover the incredible scope of God's grace. How many of us have not experienced successive phases in conversion? In the first flush, our soul is irradiated with light and purified, and obedience seems easy and joyous; love is given to us from those whom we used not to love; we feel ourselves to be sheltered from temptations, which have lost all their attractions. At the same time our faith is somewhat over-simple in that the contrast between our old life and our new life is seen in black-and-white, but we witness to the new life with power and sincerity.

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**"What grace removes is not guilt, but condemnation."**

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Then with time the grey colouring returns; the tones fuse; even crude temptations arise afresh; obedience becomes an effort; and we discover, even more sadly than before, the ineradicable nature of sin. But above all, slowly we apprehend better both ourselves and God—God's holiness, and over against it, our misery. And we become aware of a guiltiness of which we had no conception previously.

It is then that we understand more profoundly how vast the grace is which receives us just as we are, with all our despair, all our weaknesses and all our relapses. By degrees the awareness of our guilt and of God's love increase side by side. It is the saints who have a sense of sin, as Father Daniélou says, 'the sense of sin is the measure of a soul's awareness of God.'

A patient of great shrewdness, who had become very sensitive to human problems through his illness and the trials of his own life, wrote: 'I know what it is. We are destined to remain suspended between sin and grace, between heaven and the abyss.'

What grace removes is not guilt, but condemnation. St. Paul is quite clear: 'There is therefore now no condemnation.' And paradoxical as it may appear, we have seen that the condition for such absolution is contrition and a conviction of guilt—the very opposite of an absence of guilt.

Quite recently I have had some wonderful conversations with a Roman Catholic priest, severely tested by inner conflicts, a restless, tormented man, incredibly clear-sighted about himself and fully conscious of his doubts, his rebelliousness and hesitations, and of the profound gloom into which he has been plunged. 'Yet all of that,' he says, 'nevertheless in no way shakes my calm certainty of faith and of grace.'

I feel myself closely akin to that man, in a deep community of spirit, I completely understand him. For though less tried by life, I also for my part am both heavy and light-hearted, sad and joyous, utterly sad and utterly joyous, weak and strong, tormented by guilt for innumerable things and yet confident of the grace of God, not for later on but now in the present, in the midst of my anguish and weakness, my guilt and my doubts, and even because of them. 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners', Jesus said (Matt. 9:13).

# A Warning Light

by Reginald N. Shires

In the opening chapter of his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Dr. Karl Menninger, the psychiatrist, tells the story of a man who stood at a busy corner of the Chicago Loop during the lunch hour, accusing people as they passed him. He was a stern-faced, plainly dressed man, and as people approached him he lifted his right arm and pointed at a person and intoned a single word: "GUILTY." Resuming his stiff stance for a few moments, he would wait for another person to approach him. Raising his arm again, he pointed and pronounced the solemn legal term: "GUILTY." The effect of this strange pantomime on passing strangers was eerie. "They would stare at him," Dr. Menninger writes, "hesitate, look away, look at each other, and then at him again; then hurriedly continue on their ways." One man even said: "But how did *he* know?" Commenting on this experience, Dr. Menninger says:

No doubt many others had similar thoughts. How *did* he know, indeed? 'Guilty!' *Everyone* guilty? Guilty of what? Guilty of overparking? Guilty of lying? Guilty of arrogance and hubris toward the one God? Guilty of 'borrowing,' not to say embezzling? Guilty of unfaithfulness to a faithful wife? Guilty only of evil thoughts—or evil plans?<sup>1</sup>

The truth is that we do not need someone to point to us and say we are guilty. We somehow know it as a member of the human race. We inherit guilt. We also create guilt for ourselves. Even the Christian experiences this tension. As one writer has said: "Thus the fight is carried out simultaneously on two fronts—between the person and his world and within the person—and it is in some way the tension between these fronts that raises the battle to neurotic proportions."<sup>2</sup>

In his ministry, Jesus worked to remove the burden of guilt that religion had placed upon people. In the synagogue of Nazareth, his hometown, he told the people that he would fulfill the message of Isaiah about the Servant of the Lord's mission "to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19, RSV).

True Christianity should bring relief to the human mind as it frees us from guilt of sin. Yet it is the minor guilt feelings that trouble us: the guilt feelings that our companions or parents work too hard for a living; that we are not caring enough for our parents, relatives or friends; that we spoke the wrong word; that we don't work hard enough at our jobs. The list stretches on.

Christians can come to grips with what is causing guilt and begin to make provision to deal with the source of guilt so that we can be "set at liberty." A simpler lifestyle can help some deal with the guilt of debt. A caring spirit may keep us from riding roughshod over other people. Faithfulness at our work may help us feel less guilt over our jobs. Guilt in our life is like a warning light in our car: when it comes on in our life we need to stop, examine ourselves and correct the problem if we are really to enjoy our lives.

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Luke 4:18, 19**

1. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* pp. 1, 2.  
2. Joel Kovel, *A Complete Guide to Therapy*, p. 15.

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# Let the Healing Begin

by George B. Gainer

## OPINION

Key text:  
Luke 23:34

Guilt feelings are deeply rooted in our lives. Way back, a lifetime ago, when our parents brought us up, they quite naturally cultivated within us an intense sense of guilt. We learned that there are some things you just don't do. You don't throw food. You don't pick your nose. The most precocious among us even learned not to burp in public. And, if perchance, we instinctively lapsed back into the forbidden zone, we were stopped cold with those soul-piercing words, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Our parents had succeeded. Civilization would continue for another generation, for we felt guilt.

Many of those early feelings grow into "false guilt," while others, even now, were rooted in "true guilt." I still remember the "Paradise Lost" event in my third year of life. All of life was a seamless whole, you know, "brother robin—sister sparrow." A robin landed in our front yard a few feet from me and began to pull up a worm. Some bigger boys arrived on the scene, slingshots ready, and I was confronted with a decision. Let the bird be killed, or scare him away and then be killed by the boys (or so I believed). I stood mute, and the robin dropped dead. As I ran to my mother, tears of terror were mixed with tears of guilt. I had let my brother die.

**"We can turn to a bustling religious practice as a major ally in maintaining the fiction of a together life"**

As we mature, we struggle more or less successfully to handle the barriers false guilt imposes on our way. But what about our true guilt? All too often we expend our energy denying it, repressing it, or projecting it on to those closest to us. We think that if we can stash our beast beneath the basement steps and bolt and bar the door behind us, everything will be fine. The scary thing is that we can then turn to a bustling religious practice as a major ally in maintaining the fiction of a together life before our neighbors (even while our latent self-hatred gathers force).

O wretched man that I am! Can I ever be healed?

Enter Jesus. It is Sebastian Moore who suggests that Jesus comes to me as the true human being, i.e. my "true self."<sup>1</sup> Confronted by Jesus in his wholeness, a man who is everything that down deep I know I was meant to be, I am provoked. My self-hatred, until now directed toward myself, is gathered and fueled by my rage, and inflicted with all the force of violence on this Jesus. Suddenly the crucifixion isn't 2,000 years ago, it's today! And I'm driving the nails! For the first time the diffused evil of my fearful, contingent existence is focused. I see myself as I really am. . . . It is at this instant that the Word is heard, "I forgive you. I love you even now . . . especially now, I love you!" Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ! The festering power of sin has been lanced. Let the healing begin!

1. Sebastian Moore, *The Crucified Jesus Is No Stranger*, p. 19.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 5**

1. Is guilt good or bad for us? Explain.
2. How would you summarize the biblical way of resolving guilt? What inadequate ways of coping with guilt do you see in the Logos section? Can you identify with them?
3. Is a guilty conscience the same thing as true guilt? Explain.
4. Has the Adventist community in some ways imparted unhealthy guilt to its youth? If so, what can parents, pastors and teachers do to avoid this?
5. Paul Tournier (Evidence) says that the Christian never loses a sense of guilt. Do you agree? Doesn't God's forgiveness do away with guilt? Does Tournier underestimate the transforming power of grace?
6. Reginald Shires (How To) suggests that a new set of behaviors—simpler life-style, caring spirit, faithfulness at work, etc.—helps free us from guilt. Do you agree? Why or why not?

# The Forgiving Community

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you . . .” (Romans 15:7, NIV).



# Post-Mousse Musings

by Janice Eiseman Daffern

## INTRODUCTION

Key text:  
Galatians 6:21

It was one of those typical Sabbath, after-dinner conversations. My husband and I, along with three friends, Sally, Bob, and Karen (the names have been changed to protect the intemperate) were engaged in an animated debate. One might speculate that the sugar in the chocolate mousse had set our metabolic systems on a collision course, but as I recall, we had some genuine differences of opinion.

The discussion heated when Bob told the story of an Adventist church member who had been disfellowshipped for shady business practices. Karen suggested that no one who really wanted to remain a member (and some said that person did) ought to have his or her name removed from the church books. To this Sally responded, "absolutely no one?"

Once it was established that we all would have attended a business meeting to vote Adolf Hitler out of church membership (one sleepy participant actually opened his eyes long enough to ask with alarm whether Hitler *really* was an Adventist), we moved on to more difficult cases like Richard Nixon.

At this level, a discussion of church membership is only scintillating Sabbath afternoon banter. When it gets close to our home churches the process becomes painful and complex. Probably most local churches would have no trouble deciding what do to about the guy who married a

hundred women and took off with their life savings. However, most Adventists are less spectacular sinners. While very few of our dilemmas ever hit the news, they call for our thoughtful care. These situations are about real people and the communities that are responsible for their spiritual nurture.

Our committee of five gradually moved from a discussion of celebrity sinners to some of the ways which we think about the church. One in our group saw the church as an organization in which one kept the rules or lost membership. A more maternal type among us liked the idea of the church as a family who welcomed erring members with open arms. In a family, only the most extreme circumstances warrant disinheriting a child.<sup>1</sup> Another person suggested that belonging to the church was like holding citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Only *treason was considered a crime worthy of exile*.

It doesn't take a genius to see that we didn't settle the issue that afternoon. We discovered that we couldn't come to clear-cut decisions. Our little group will probably get together again on a Sabbath to overeat and argue (or in the case of one, intermittently doze). Maybe one of these times we will talk about how we would feel if one of us were to lose church membership. Should it ever happen, I suspect there might be more crying than conversation.

1. For further development of these ideas see James J. Londis' "A Pastor Looks at Church Discipline," *Spectrum*, vol. 13, no. 3.

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# Gentle Restoration

by Janice Eiseman Daffern

## LOGOS

The members of the early church truly needed each other. They belonged to a struggling, despised little group and had given up friends and family for the privilege of being part of it. In spite of all the adversity and pressure, the group continued to grow. The most significant reason for this seems to be the love and openness people found in the church.

Confession is a crucial element in this atmosphere of openness. James admonished us to “. . . confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16, RSV). Confession clears the air for communication.

Equally essential is a spirit of forgiveness. “If he [your brother] sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:4, RSV).

When we read the story of Mary anointing Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:37) at Simon’s house we get a picture of the results of super abundant forgiveness. When Simon exposes his disdain for such a sinner and such public display of love, Jesus tells him a story and asks a question: “‘A certain creditor had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarri, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered, ‘The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more.’ And he said to him, ‘You have judged rightly’” (Luke 7:41-43, RSV). Think about it. Our deepest connections are with people who have put up with a lot from us and yet who we know love and forgive us.

The kind of relationships which are built on mutual acceptance and love also are healthy because they incorporate the “forgetting” factor. In Jeremiah 31:34 we learn that even God forgets our sin. Of course, when we are wronged by another person, particularly the one we love, we do not banish the incident from our memory. Most of us have minds a little too efficient for that. The forgetting comes in letting go of the burdens or barriers of that incident.

Not only should there be forgiveness between individual Christians, but the church is to be a forgiving community in the corporate sense. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin,” writes Paul, “you who are spiritual should restore him gently. . . . Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1, 2, NIV).

Sometimes, as happened in the Corinthian church, an individual’s action causes such disruption and pain in the whole church body, that disciplinary action is necessary. But even in such instances, Paul urges an attitude of reconciliation toward the one who has been disciplined. “The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him” (2 Cor. 2:6-8, NIV). The Bible is clear in its affirmation of love, forgiveness and a spirit of tenderness as we work with one another.

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# Sinner Lovers— Sin Haters

by Warren R. Zork

Ellen White was a keen student of human behavior. Notice her pointed comments about those who would rather play "judge" than face their moment of truth in identifying with a forgiven sinner. These comments focus on the gospel story of the woman taken in adultery.

"It is not Christ's follower that, with averted eyes, turns from the erring, leaving them unhindered to pursue their downward course. Those who are forward in accusing others, and zealous in bringing them to justice, are often in their own lives more guilty than they. Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein."<sup>1</sup>

"We ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. . . . Let this grace be revealed to others.

"Give the erring one no occasion for discouragement. Suffer not a Pharisaical hardness to come in and hurt your brother. Let no bitter sneer rise in mind or heart. Let no tinge of scorn be manifest in the voice. If you speak a word of your own, if you take an attitude of indifference, or show suspicion or distrust, it may prove the ruin of a soul. He needs a brother with the Elder Brother's heart of sympathy to touch his heart of humanity. Let him feel the strong clasp of a sympathizing hand, and hear the whisper, 'Let us pray.' God will give a rich experience to you both."<sup>2</sup>

When it becomes necessary for the Christian, individually or corporately, to confront a fellow Christian about a matter of public witness, a sensitivity to the other's feelings should take priority. "It is always humiliating to have one's errors pointed out. None should make the experience more bitter by needless censure. No one was ever reclaimed by reproach; but many have thus been repelled and have been led to steel their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins."<sup>3</sup>

"We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God; but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again'" (Matt. 7:2).<sup>4</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Luke 7:47

**"If you show suspicion or distrust, it may prove the ruin of a soul."**

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 250.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 167.

4. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 251.

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# The Need for Confession

by Bonnie L. Casey

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
James 5:16

In Christian theology, the concept of forgiveness has always been closely linked to that of confession. Adventist theologians, writing in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, stress that prayers for forgiveness of our sins must be preceded by confession of our sins, for "the prime requirement for sincere faith in prayer is a clear conscience. Wrong deeds secretly done are to be confessed to God alone. Sins that involve others are to be confessed also to those who have suffered injury. A guilty conscience erects a barrier to unre-served reliance upon God and will defeat prayer."<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament, one of the strongest admonitions to confess our sins is found in James 5:16. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, that you may be healed."<sup>2</sup> It is no accident that the three verses directly preceding the instruction to confess sins have to do with prayers and anointing for the sick, since, as Scottish theologian William Barclay points out in his commentary on James, one "great characteristic of the early church was that it was a *healing* Church. . . . Few communities can have been so devotedly attentive to their sick as the early church was."<sup>3</sup>

But the church is to be a healing community for the spirit as well as for the flesh, which explains why in the book of James instruction on prayers for healing is followed by instruction on confession of sins. For the early Christians, the concepts of confession and healing were closely bound. First of all, writes Barclay, "there is the idea that all sickness is due to sin. It was a deeply-rooted Jewish belief that where there were sickness and suffering, there must have been sin. . . . The Jews always identified suffering and sin. Nowadays we cannot make this mechanical identification; but this remains true—that no man can know any health of soul or mind or body until he is right with God."

Commenting further on the idea of confession in James 5:16, Barclay explains, "There is the idea that, to be effective, confession of sin has to be made to men, and especially to the person wronged, as well as to God. In a very real sense it is easier to confess sins to God than to confess them to man; and yet in sin there are two barriers to be removed—the barrier it sets up between us and God, and the barrier it sets up between us and our fellow-men. If both these barriers are to be removed, both kinds of confession must be made. . . . This is clearly a principle which must be used with wisdom. It is quite true that there may be cases where confession of sin to each other may do infinitely more harm than good; but where a barrier has been erected because of some wrong that has been done, a man must put himself right both with God and his fellow-man."

The church as a forgiving community must be one where people can look to their fellow church members for healing forgiveness when they do wrong, after first openly and honestly confessing their responsibility for the wrongs they have done to each other.

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary* on James 5:16.  
2. William Barclay's original translation.  
3. William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed., p. 181.

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# Forgiveness for the Whole Community

by Reginald N. Shires

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**1 John 4:10**

Recently, while studying Leviticus 4 I was impressed with fact that provision was made for every type of person in the Israelite community who repented.

Leviticus 4 shows us that God even forgives the priest who sins: "... If anyone sins unwittingly in any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them, if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer for the sin which he has committed a young bull without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:2, 3, RSV). As a minister this thought is a blessing. Forgiveness even for a priest when he sins! Congregations love their ministers but they have a hard time forgiving them when they sin.

Leviticus also shows us that there was forgiveness for the congregation as a whole if their elders confessed the sin as they placed their hands "... upon the head of the bull before the Lord ..." (Leviticus 4:15, RSV). There was forgiveness also for the ruler who sinned who brought "... as his offering a goat, a male without blemish" (vs. 23). Common people were asked to confess their sin upon a female goat or lamb (vs. 32).

What about those who could not afford these expensive offerings? The Bible tells us that there was provision for every sinner in the community: "But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring, as his guilt offering to the Lord for the sin which he has committed, two turtledoves or two young pigeons ..." (Lev. 5:7). But there were some so poor they couldn't even afford two turtledoves. They were instructed to bring "... a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering ..." (vs. 11). Thus in this object lesson the forgiveness of confessed sin was taught to all of God's people. It's a lesson worth remembering. The church today can learn many lessons, for even though we do not depend upon a lamb when we sin because Jesus gave himself for us, we need to learn how to forgive people in our church who sin. We well understand the fact that God forgives us, but in the area of human forgiveness we need constant reminders. We tend to hold grudges and keep from forgiving others, thus increasing their sense of guilt and making their lives even more difficult.

In a church I once pastored there were a number of leading members who had once faced difficulties in their personal lives and had sinned, causing much sorrow to the church. One person told me of the day he came back to the church after wandering away from the truth like the prodigal son. He didn't want to come to church because he knew how he had hurt the people who cared for him. Finally, one Sabbath he walked in. He tells of the joy in the hearts of the church people when they saw him enter. They threw their arms around him and kissed him, welcoming him in love. When he told me the story, many years after it happened, tears still came to his eyes in remembrance of that day of forgiveness. The church can indeed be part of God's forgiving community.

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# A Matter of Sight

by Bonnie L. Casey

## OPINION

Key text:  
Mark 10:21a

I didn't worry much about forgiveness until I met a very obnoxious person in graduate school. Until then I had assumed that forgiveness was a quality applied to specific acts or misdeeds directed at myself. And since, in a civilized society, I might go for days or even weeks without anyone directly, consciously, hurting or insulting me, I hadn't paid much attention to developing a forgiving nature.

Then I had to take a graduate course in the company of a real jerk. His obnoxiousness was not the result of any specific acts directed at me or any other member of the class, it just emanated from his very being. For one thing, he looked like a bully. His lips curled up at the edges in a perpetual smirk. Whenever he made a comment in class, he would stick out his chin and rotate his head from side to side, scanning the room for signs of approval. His attitude offended me as well. He was a grade school teacher who had to return to school every summer to work on his master's degree, an effort he found demeaning and wasteful. He was also visibly irritated when one of the women in the class outscored him in an essay or test. Like I said, he was a jerk.

I think I was most offended, though, by his ignorance. I remember the day he walked into class and announced that he had made a momentous discovery in the library the night before. He had discovered that his three-year-old son, Darwin, bore the same name as the man who had first proposed the theory of the evolution of species. Wasn't that an amazing coincidence? he asked, a century after Darwinism had become a household word to everyone but himself. That his little boy, the son of an Adventist school teacher, should have the same name as the man who thought we all came from monkeys! He hoped the school board never saw that book he was reading last night; they might get the wrong idea about his orthodoxy. I remember being personally offended that such a man was being unleashed upon unsuspecting children.

I struggled with my feelings for this person. I knew my faith did not call upon me to become friends with him, but to at least rid myself of the animosity I felt for him—to be able to wish him well. That is when I discovered that loving your neighbor is often a matter of forgiving him for being the way he is, for not being the kind of person you can take to readily. And I also discovered that this kind of forgiveness is more a matter of sight than of feeling.

I was gazing out the library window some time later when I saw this fellow strolling around the campus quadrangle. I had never seen him outside of class before. He was with his wife and a little child who I immediately deduced was the unfortunately-named Darwin. He and his wife were holding hands and every now and then she would lean her head on his shoulder. Little Darwin was running along beside them, excitedly trying to get his daddy's attention to show him bugs and leaves he had picked up from the sidewalk. Suddenly my classmate underwent a transformation in

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Bonnie L. Casey is staff writer and editor for the Sligo Church.

“Forgiveness is more a matter of sight than of feeling.”

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my eyes. He may still have been a jerk, but he was a jerk that somebody loved. Somebody looked to him for guidance; somebody drew comfort from his presence; somebody cared about his success and safety; somebody would miss him terribly if he were gone. It was easier to forgive him his ignorance and bad behavior after that.

If being converted to the way of Christ means anything, it means seeing things differently. Most of all it means seeing fellow human beings who, just like ourselves, will occasionally be offensive or even cruel, as creatures who are of much value to Somebody right now and who may, when all things are made new, be creatures of dazzling glory.

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1. After studying the biblical passages for this week (see Logos) and reading Ellen White's comments in the Testimony, how would you summarize the key principles for dealing with church members who openly sin?

**REACT**  
**Lesson 6**

2. If you don't have an attitude of forgiveness toward a fellow church member, how do you go about changing your perspective?

3. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* lists several reasons for which an individual may be disfellowshipped, ranging from "denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel," to "adhering to or taking part in a divisive or disloyal movement," to "the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages" (see pp. 247, 248). The manual goes on to state that where deep repentance and confession is manifest, the church may censure rather than disfellowship. But, "in cases of flagrant violation of the law of God, which have brought public reproach upon the cause, the church may deem it necessary, even though a sincere confession has been made, to disfellowship the member to protect its fair name and its Christian standards." Later the disfellowshipped member may be re-baptized (p. 249). Read pp. 235-255 for the church's full policy.

Do you think the church's policy, as you understand it, is in harmony with the principles taught by the Bible and Ellen White? Explain.

4. Should church leaders be held to a higher standard of behavior than church members?

5. How might the church better help those who are struggling with sin in their lives? How can we become a more caring community?

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# The Freedom of the Forgiven

"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts" (Psalm 119:45, NIV).

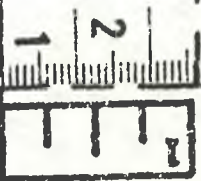
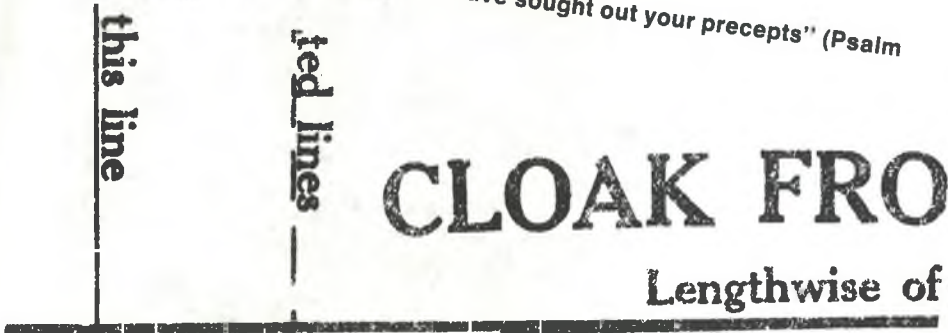
## CLOAK FRONT

Lengthwise of

1

this line

fold lines



Center Front



# Two Kinds of Cloaks

by Tom Robbins

## INTRODUCTION

A first it was only an occasional, distant twinkle, barely visible through the howling storm, but Darth Vandar knew that it surely must be an inn. Here he would be able to get some new patches for his coats. His steps quickened as the light became brighter and took on the familiar triangular shape of the windows typical of the dwellings in the region. As he passed through the entry dome, he was surprised to see so many new coats hanging there, but the greatest shock came as he stepped into the main dome. The sounds of laughing and festivities were jarring to this man who spent much time alone. One group was dancing around the central table with joined hands, playing some sort of game. But the most amazing thing to Vandar was that everyone was wearing extremely light clothing. In Vandar's homeland, such innocent clothing was only worn by the very young and inexperienced, but the faces of many of these people appeared to be even older and more experienced than Vandar's.

Mumbling something about how their frivolity would teach them a lesson, Vandar took a seat in a dimly lit corner of the room. The dancers in the center of the room became more and more excited as the music became more joyous. Suddenly, one of them bumped into one of the women and knocked her to the floor. Vandar jumped to his feet and began chanting

loudly, "Tear his cloak! Tear his cloak!" The group turned and stared as two people helped the woman to her feet. "Tear his cloak! Tear his cloak!" said Vandar, but his voice began to die away as he noticed that he was the only one chanting.

The group clustered around him as a tall thin man asked Vandar, "Why do you say this? Why should we tear his cloak?"

"He must pay for his error," replied Vandar. "It is the natural code; errors have consequences!"

"But it does not matter," said the woman who had fallen. "I have forgiven him."

"Errors have consequences," Vandar repeated. "In my land, when you err, you pay, and your cloak bears the record," he insisted. "You youngsters do not understand. If you had my years behind, you would have many cloaks, torn and patched, just as I. Your innocent clothes show that you know nothing of how one must carry the consequences of one's errors."

The tall man spoke up. "There was a time when we all wore a heavy crust of cloaks bearing the accumulation of our past, as you do, but this is not our way. Our clothing is light and innocent, not because we have little life experience, but because we know forgiveness. We do not carry all of our past with us."

"But this is not the way of

*(Continued on p. 67)*

Tom Robbins is Assistant Professor of English at Kettering College of Medical Arts.

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# November Freedom

## LOGOS

As I look out my office window this afternoon in late November, the view really isn't unusual. White snow and bare trees against a background of cloudless sky—common fare in Nebraska for this time of year. But there's something special about the way the sunlight reflects off the sparkling crystals of newly-fallen snow, through the sparsely-clad trees and back to the azure sky. Yesterday's storm, with its bitter wind and driving snow, is like a bad dream and the splendor I'm viewing renders it easily forgotten. This scene acts as more than an agent of amnesia, however. It brings an aura of peace and freedom that not even the swishing and splashing of passing cars can diminish. All blemishes have been covered by white purity—everything is fresh and clean—and free.

God's forgiveness gives me much the same feeling. With his removal of our sins there comes a reversal in our lives. Paul counsels, "Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so go on living in him—in simple faith" (Col. 2:6, Phillips). Our motives for living become singular. "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, NIV). Although this new direction emanates from within, evidence of it can be empirically observed. John delineates the proof: "The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." "This is love for God: to obey his commands" (1 John 2:4-6; 5:3, NIV).

Here is where the freedom of God's forgiveness is easily misconstrued. Christ's gift removes the *penalty* of the law from sinners who accept it. It does not abolish the law. The gospel simply removes the law as a motive or means of salvation. No longer a constrictive force, the law has a positive role in the Christian life. In fact, James speaks of the law as a source of freedom. "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25, NIV). In this role the law becomes internalized: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds" (Heb. 10:16, NIV).

Instead of a burdensome requirement, the law for the forgiven person is an essential guide to the quality of life he desires—the life of peace, joy, and freedom. "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river . . ." (Isa. 48:18, NIV). Or as David puts it: "Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart" (Psalm 119:111, NIV). Kind of reminds me of a sunny day in November.

L. R. C.



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# If Ye Forgive . . .

Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love can not touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren.

After completing the Lord's Prayer, Jesus added: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." He who is unforgiving, cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances, and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, we are to pardon all who have done evil to us.

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12.

God in Christ gave Himself for our sins. He suffered the cruel death of the cross, bore for us the burden of guilt, "the just for the unjust," that He might reveal to us His love, and draw us to Himself. And He says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32, A.R.V. Let Christ, the divine Life, dwell in you, and through you reveal the heaven-born love that will inspire hope in the hopeless, and bring heaven's peace to the sin-stricken heart. As we come to God, this is the condition which meets us at the threshold, that, receiving mercy from Him, we yield ourselves to reveal His grace to others.<sup>1</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Luke 11:4

**"It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin."**

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 125, 126.

# Cancelling the Debt

by Robert G. Wilson

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Matthew  
18:23-35

Last week I clearly blew it. I was painfully aware of my blunder and the inconvenience it caused other persons. Oh, it was not my calculated objective or my total disregard of responsibility—but rather my unsuccessful attempt to balance out various commitments and responsibilities along with several miscalculations of my abilities. There were reasons—nevertheless, I blew it and others were affected by my failure.

At that point I was hopelessly in *debt*. How could I ever find a sense of freedom, the release of my debt? I could and did take my debt to God and sensed his understanding. As Helmut Thielicke reflects, "The Saviour can take even our helpless groans, even the things we failed to say or do or even pray, and make something of them. . . . Out of His fullness He can give abundantly even to those who are far gone into debt. . . ."1

"Here is one who sees in me, not only a sinner, a hopeless case, a bundle of nerves, a burden to others, but rather an erring child, but nevertheless a *child* and nothing less than the child of the *Father*, whom he wants to save by the sacrifice of his life and bring back home to the Father's house. I ask you: where in all the world has anybody ever devised a conception of human nobility or in his boldest moments ever dreamed of an ideal image that can equal the dignity which man acquires in the eyes of Jesus?"2

So, I could feel acceptable to the Father. But I still had a debt to the others of his children. The duty of my debt was to apologize sincerely to those who bore my debt. They still held a dimension of my bondage or freedom in their hands. On the one hand, they could remind me of my failure, chastise me (justly) for my error and thus hold my debt outstanding. The debt could be held out indefinitely and I could never pay it off, and peace would elude my soul.

But on the other hand, they could forgive me, let me know a debt I could never repay was cancelled in their heart. As one of God's dear children extended that blessed sense of forgiveness to me, my debt with them was cancelled and I was free of it. With that alternative comes a deep sense of release, freedom, and renewal. My debt with them was cancelled and I was free to let go of the guilt that plagued my heart and which I could never erase by myself.

Within human hands, as within God's hands, is the power to set us free of our debt, or to hold it over us like a Damocles sword enslaving us to our guilt. With true forgiveness comes a freedom that opens our burdened hearts to peace and hope and new opportunities for becoming more than we currently are. In profound gratitude we resolve anew never again to inflict the price of our debt on those who so generously offered us the freedom of forgiveness.

" . . . Forgiveness provides the sole possibility of the world's ever escaping the law of the echo, that dreadful, chaotic law by which nations and individuals are constantly inflaming and provoking one another because of the 'other's fault,' and swelling the avalanche of guilt and retribution to ever more gigantic proportions."<sup>3</sup>

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"Forgiveness provides the sole possibility of escaping the law of the echo."

1. Helmut Thielicke, *Our Heavenly Father*, translated by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 100.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 107.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

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# Dual Freedom

by Peter Bath

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Corinthians**  
**5:14-17**

The Christian focus of freedom is more often than not directed to that which we are freed from as opposed to what we are freed to do. But the concept is not an either/or proposition; instead, it involves both sensing our constant freedom *from* sin and our freedom *to* live in a new, exciting way. Sounds good you say—but how do I do it? Quite simply; you don't. God does! And you can cooperate with God if you:

1. **Relax.** We sometimes seem to think we are competing against each other for heaven. Relax in the arms of your Saviour; focus upon his unending love and promises given of eternal life (John 10:26-30; 1 John 5:13; John 3:16).

2. **Follow his timing, his agenda.** The Holy Spirit has promised to guide us into all truth, to bring all things to our remembrance, to correct and reprove (John 16:8, 9, 13). He knows what we must deal with and how—so why not allow him the privilege of being the Holy Spirit in your life!

3. **Trust.** God has promised to continue his work within us and to bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:12, 13; 1:6). Can you trust him to lead you to that day?

4. **Study.** It becomes a new adventure when you approach Scripture knowing the Holy Spirit will speak through it to you. Studying should be done with a pen and paper. Write down those things that apply to your life: promises, admonitions of comfort or direction. Then let the Holy Spirit tell you where change is needed or what special things he'd love you to do.

It is in living this life of assurance that we commit ourselves to our Lord and Saviour. Thus, the freedom that he obtained for us can be used to his glory. It's freedom to be changed, to live as his teachings indicate, freedom to love.

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Peter Bath is the associate pastor of the Kettering Seventh-day Adventist Church and a religion instructor at the Kettering College of Medical Arts.

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# Stepping Down Off God's Throne

by Robert G. Wilson

## OPINION

Key texts:  
Ephesians 4:32;  
Colossians  
3:12, 13

C. S. Lewis put his finger on a sensitive spot when he said, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Why do we find the practical application of this virtue so difficult? It seems to me one reason is that it automatically removes us from the judgment seat. My judgment of others puts me in a position of superiority which, in fact, is a usurping of the divine prerogative. For me to forgive is to relinquish that power and to recognize myself upon the same level as those I would judge. The temptation has always been to set up human wisdom in the place of divine wisdom and to think one's own wisdom is at least as good if not superior to God's. To withhold forgiveness is to maintain judgment and to contend our evaluation is valid and that the one who has wronged us does not deserve our generosity. We thus maintain our godlike position of pseudo-superiority.

Our heavenly Father would remind us of our inability to accurately appraise each complex situation and know the motives of the human heart. He would remind us that the loving options of forgiveness exceed the power prerogatives of judgment. God in Christ continually underscored the value of each person and that the greatest godlikeness available to mankind is in the loving restoration of a downtrodden, erring human heart. C. S. Lewis reminds us, "Perhaps, it makes it [forgiving] easier if we remember that that is how he [Christ] loves us. Not for any nice, attractive qualities we think we have, but just because we are the things called selves."<sup>2</sup> Helmut Thielicke continues the same theme. "One cannot 'love' someone simply at command or forgive him or have respect for the life and property of another . . . simply because one is commanded to do so. . . . Seeing them as he [Christ] sees them makes them look totally different, and this way of 'seeing' also gives to my conduct and my whole way of living a totally new stamp and an undreamed-of incentive."<sup>3</sup> The forgiveness of God, the recognition of his graciousness with our own sinfulness, and appreciation of our inability to judge, and the warming divine love and respect for persons in our own hearts can keep us from seeking God's judgment seat for ourself. The forgiveness of God can free us from our unforgiving, judging inclinations.

With the recognition of our own liabilities and the graciousness of God with our indebtedness, we may become content to let him be God and relinquish to him our inadequate attempts at judgment. We are free then to reflect his compassionate forgiveness. To pardon others is to move down off God's elevated throne and take our place among the erring mortals who desperately need his forgiving love.

1. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior*, p. 103.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
3. Helmut Thielicke, *Our Heavenly Father*, Translated by John W. Doberstein, p. 107.

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1. What is the significance of the "light coats" in this week's Introduction?
  2. Paul describes Christ's love as a *compelling* force (2 Cor. 5:14). Is being compelled the same thing as being coerced? What have you felt Christ's love compelling you to do? Try to name two or three specific things, and discuss why you feel it is Christ's love that is the motivating force.
  3. Is obedience to God natural and spontaneous for the forgiven individual? Is natural, spontaneous obedience the only kind that is acceptable to God?
  4. The Logos section points out that those who are forgiven will, in response, tangibly demonstrate their love for God and for others. Are such loving deeds then the ultimate test of whether or not one has truly been forgiven? Explain why or why not.
  5. Do human beings, as well as God, have it within their power to cancel another's debt of guilt (see Evidence)? If God has forgiven you for a wrong but the person you wronged hasn't, are you still in a sense indebted or bound to the guilt? What implications might this have for how we treat one another?
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*(Continued from p. 61)*

the Maker," claimed Vandar. "In the woods, if a man tears his coat on a thorn, it does not mend. He must cover it with a patch and bear it as the price for his error. These are the natural consequences. If someone wrongs another, he must pay a price as well. His coat must be torn."

"We once thought just as you," replied the woman who had fallen. "But there was one who came among us who taught us a new way. He said that the Maker would be pleased if we would forgive ourselves and forgive others,

that we could have new clothes if we would forgive."

Vandar rose, confusion all over his face. He looked down at his coats. "You mean," he said, "these many cloaks, all their torn fibers, all their patches, that I have borne since my early days, can be replaced with a single new one like those in the entry dome? How?"

"It is truly a mystery," said the stranger. "But it seems that as we forgive, we are forgiven. You, too, may wear the innocent clothing that we wear. Come, know our forgiveness and give us yours."

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# Freedom From Lesser Gods

“ ‘If Yahweh is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him’ ” (1 Kings 18:21, Jerusalem Bible).



# No Other Gods

by Jill Doster

## INTRO- DUCTION

"Like, Tom Selleck has gotta be the most awesome guy who ever lived!" Susan collapsed on the bed to stare dreamily at the poster positioned in the middle of the ceiling. Blue eyes and a mustached mouth smiled back at her. "Sometimes I think I could just lie here and look at that face all day long."

"I've been meaning to ask you, Suze," returned her friend, applying fuschia to her toenails, "why did you put that poster on the ceiling of all places? I mean, like, most normal people put posters on walls, ya know?"

"Really, Cindy, how much of an airhead can you be? With the picture on the ceiling, his face is the first thing I see in the morning, and the last thing I see at night." She closed her eyes in peaceful ecstasy. "This way I *always* have pleasant dreams."

\* \* \*

Andy hummed softly as he rubbed turtle wax over the already gleaming body of his '72 Camaro. "Let's get you nice and shiny, baby," he cooed. "Yes sir, ain't nobody around here has anything like you. You're the best."

"Andy!" his mother's voice shattered his reverie. "You've been working on that car all afternoon. Can't you find anything better to do?"

Andy's eyes widened in horror. "Something *better* to do?!"

\* \* \*

"Trying to play catch by yourself is no fun," Bobby thought as he looked longingly

toward the house. Taking a deep breath, he headed toward the front door and marched into the house. Through the kitchen, past the freshly baked chocolate chip cookies he went. He paused, but only briefly, at the door of his father's study. Firmly pushing the door open, he went in.

His father's neat bald spot stared at him, but he never hesitated. "Dad, ya wanna play some catch?"

His father's head rose up. "Hey buddy," he smiled, "I'd love to, but some things just can't wait."

Just then Bobby's mother appeared and steered him back toward the kitchen.

"Mom, why does Dad always have to work?"

"Well, sweetheart, you know your father has lots of responsibilities."

"But he worked all last night and the night before that, why can't he stop for a little while now?"

"Honey," her voice a little less patient, "the night before last he was working on the report for the finance committee, Wednesday night was prayer meeting, and today he must work on his sermon. Being a minister is the most important job there is. You know that, don't you?" she coaxed.

"Yeah, I guess so."

The screen door slammed behind him as he trudged back out to the garage. He sighed again, "Yeah, playing catch by yourself sure is no fun."

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Jill Doster is an instructor of English at Kettering College of Medical Arts.

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# Free to Run

## LOGOS

As a child I often took pride in the fact that of all the Ten Commandments only the first two presented any major difficulties in breaking. It was quite within my vocabulary to misuse the Lord's name. With childish impatience, I often pushed the sun down on Sabbath. I knew all too well I didn't honor my parents as I should, and when reminded of this I sometimes wondered just how long my days on earth would be. At a tender age I learned that I was a murderer—I hated someone at least once a day.

The problem was that I really did want to be good. Being bad just came so naturally. This is why the first two commandments were a source of delectation. To my childish mind, they were the ones I simply could not disobey.

I've grown a little since then, at least enough to realize that the first commandment is a concise summary of the other nine. "I am the Lord your God. . . . You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2, 3, NIV). This statement calls for commitment that demands everything. God must come first; nothing before or after him. But what does this cliché mean? Christ answered the question, presented in different words by "an expert in the law." "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:36-38, NIV).

Imbedded in the first commandment is the foundation of all others. Christ recognized this but the rich young ruler did not. Desiring to receive the benefits of God's kingdom the ruler asked, "Good teacher, . . . what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17, NIV). Christ first pointed to the obvious, perhaps to show the inadequacy of keeping the lesser commandments when the "greatest" is missing. Jesus said to him "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother'" (Mark 10:19, NIV). The young man thought he had kept these, but knowing that something was missing he had come to Christ. Jesus now pointed to the root of the problem. "'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth" (Mark 10:21, NIV). He chose a lesser god.

A choice must be made, a commitment confirmed; either all or nothing. When this is done, the natural thing may still be to disobey God. But we no longer *have* to disobey. When the choice is made we become free from lesser gods to serve the God. We become free from "everything that hinders," free from "the sin that so easily entangles," free to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1, NIV).

E. R. M.



# Prize Nothing Higher Than Christ

selected by Barbara Tyson

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Philippians 3:7-9

The first four commandments allow no separation of the affections from God. Nor is anything allowed to divide, or share, our supreme delight in Him. Whatever divides the affections, and takes away from the soul supreme love to God, assumes the form of an idol. Our carnal hearts would cling to our idols and seek to carry them along; but we cannot advance until we put them away, for they separate us from God.<sup>1</sup>

Mammon is the idol of many. Its golden chain binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshiped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others.<sup>2</sup>

My heart aches as I am shown how many there are who make self their idol. Christ has paid the redemption price for them. To Him belongs the service of all their powers. But their hearts are filled with self-love, and the desire for self-adorning.<sup>3</sup>

Modern Israel are in greater danger of forgetting God and being led into idolatry than were His ancient people. Many idols are worshiped, even by professed Sabbathkeepers.<sup>4</sup>

The people have not erected graven images, yet their sin is no less in the sight of God. They worship mammon. They love worldly gain. . . . God's professed people are selfish and self-caring. . . . They have not love toward God nor love for their neighbors. They are idolators, and are worse, far worse, in the sight of God than the heathen, graven-image worshipers who have no knowledge of a better way.<sup>5</sup>

God will bring His work closer and closer to test and prove every one of His people. Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. . . . If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: "They are joined to their idols, let them alone."<sup>6</sup>

The position you must come into is to value salvation dearer than earthly gain, to count everything but loss that you may win Christ. The consecration on your part must be entire. God will admit of no reserve, of no divided sacrifice; you can cherish no idol. You must die to self and to the world. Renew your consecration to God daily. Everlasting life is worth a lifelong, persevering, untiring effort.<sup>7</sup>

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 289.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 83.

3. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 80.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 609.

5. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 440, 441.

6. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 187.

7. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 49.

Barbara Tyson is a nursing instructor at Kettering College of Medical Arts.

# From Idols to the Ideal

by Ron Coffin

**EVIDENCE**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Corinthians**  
**2:4-6**

Walter Bagehot, the 19th-century British political pundit, called gold "the obvious and natural idol of the Anglo-Saxon." William Shakespeare has Juliet address her lover Romeo as "the god of my idolatry."

It comes as no surprise to most of us that the word idolatry conveys more than stooping to kiss the stony toes of a heathen idol. Idolatry literally means the adoration of alien deities, generally in the form of clay, wood, or stone. At several crucial points in the history of Israel there was the inclination to adopt the Canaanite fertility cult in order to secure the material prosperity of nature. The prophet Hosea's severe censure of his contemporaries, for example, was aimed at the Hebrew acceptance and trust in the gods of nature rather than the only true God of history.

In the New Testament the apostle Paul links the dishonorable passions of the Gentiles with the preoccupation with the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). The idolator is one whose god is his belly, whose glory is in his shame, whose mind is fixed on earthly things and whose end is destruction (Philippians 3:19). Covetousness is synonymous with idolatry and disqualifies a man from God's kingdom (Ephesians 5:5). For Paul, it could be concluded, idolatry means putting ultimate value in the wrong place.

The reformer, Martin Luther, would agree: "The confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol. . . . Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever our idols, they will betray us. Even the ancient Persian, Omar Khayyám, expressed disillusionment with idols:

"Indeed the Idols I have loved so long,  
Have done my credit in the World much wrong;  
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,  
And sold my Reputation for a Song."<sup>2</sup>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *Ethics*, has identified four major categories of "idolization" and suggested an antidote for each.

The first category is the idolization of man. According to Bonhoeffer, contempt for man and idolization of man have a common root in an unrealistic self-concept. Either man's baseness is glossed over and excused or man's humanness is despised. God's response to the twin evil of deifying or despising man's humanity was the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus.

"The news that God has become man strikes at the very heart of an age in which both the good and the wicked regard either scorn for man or the idolization of man as the highest attainable wisdom."<sup>3</sup>

Bonhoeffer's second category, the idolization of death, seems at first glance far-fetched. Who would make an idol of death? When death is the ultimate end of life, man plays a deadly game of all or nothing. Fear of death combined with defiance results in a compulsive grasping for life or a frivolous playing with life. The resurrection of Christ contradicts the logic of death as a last thing.

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Ron Coffin was a resident in administration at Kettering Medical Center at the time of this writing.

"To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is."

Third, is the idolization of success. The successful man dazzles the crowd with his own brilliance and creates a cult of imitators who wish to share the limelight. The eyes of the crowd see only success and are blinded to moral judgments. Success and goodness become one and the same.

In contrast, Jesus was not concerned with success or failure. His goal was the acceptance of God's judgment which alone would bring "reconciliation with God and among men."<sup>4</sup>

Bonhoeffer's fourth category is the idolization of the church. Why did Bonhoeffer identify the church as his last category instead of technology, mass movements, or nationalism?

The church has developed title and authority independent from the membership which compose the body of Christ. Religion is the business of churchmen who claim to be the guardians of orthodoxy. Tradition draws exclusionary circles and sets boundaries to identify the "in group" from those who are outsiders.

Yet, what really matters in the church, declares Bonhoeffer, is not religion but the "form of Christ," incarnate and awakening to new life. "The church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form."<sup>5</sup>

Through Christ man becomes an object of God's love rather than an object of contempt or deification. As Christ's life and love take form in his disciples, they are freed from false uniformity and stereotypical models of human personality. They are free to become their "Creator's creatures."

"To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is. Now there is no more pretense, no more hypocrisy or self-violence, no more compulsion to be something other, better and more ideal than what one is. God loves the real man. God became a real man."<sup>6</sup>

Thus our attention shifts from idols to the Ideal, from images to the Image of God. The New Testament places the emphasis not on man's being in the image of God, but with Christ's being the Image of God. Christ is the "likeness of God" perfectly corresponding to the divine prototype (2 Corinthians 4:4).

It is Paul's conviction that only in relation with Christ can man conform to the "likeness" of God which was man's in promise from the beginning. It was Adam's quest for that likeness to God that got him into idolatry in the first place.

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1. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, Part I, "The First Commandment."  
2. Edward FitzGerald, *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām*, p. 108.  
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 72.  
4. *Ibid.*, p. 77.  
5. *Ibid.*, p. 83.  
6. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

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# Confessions of a TV Junkie

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Zechariah 4:6

It was a great day, or so I thought, when our very first TV arrived at the house. I was in a state of shock. I had never dared to dream that my Dad would ever break down and buy a "boob tube." But here it was, sitting in the kitchen all shiny and new. It was incomprehensible.

From the start the "tube" was strictly governed. One hour per day maximum. This one hour, however, became the precursor of an unsatisfiable appetite. So while, through the years that followed, the one hour edict remained steadfast, my devotion to it did not. I would watch my "legal" time with my parents and when they weren't around I'd watch as much as I could.

As time went on, the craving grew worse. I gave promises, made resolutions, and in the end told more lies. But all this finally wore on my conscience to the point where I knew I *had* to change. I will never forget the day I went to my Dad's office and confessed all. I asked that he solve the problem by carrying out an often-made threat—throw the TV out of the house. His reply shocked me as I expected him to gladly comply. He said, "Son, you will be a far better person if you learn to resist temptation when it stares you in the face than if you resist by simply removing the temptation out of sight. This develops self-discipline. The TV stays." The TV did stay, but, in time, my devotion to it did not.

How does a change like this take place?

1. **There must be a desire to change.** Nothing is ever done without desire. An individual only does what he wants to do. But what an individual wants to do is not always done. Action must be taken. This brings the second step.

2. **Replace the "idol" with something else.** Find a constructive habit to replace the old habit. Smokers, wanting to quit, are told to chew gum, take walks, or do anything that will replace the cigarette. However, as far as "spiritual idols" (anything that comes before God) are concerned, there is only one replacement. Substitute the old "worship" with worship for God. Replace the old adoration for a relationship with Christ.

3. **Remember that more than grit and determination is required.** "The Lord said to Gideon, 'The people with you are too many . . . , lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, "My own hand has delivered me"'" (Judges 7:2, RSV). "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zech. 4:6, NIV).

4. **Finally, follow the advice of Luke 12:22-34.** Seek first the kingdom of God and the wealth of his righteousness and all that you need will be given, especially if it is a change of heart!

E. R. M.

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# The Bomb or the Cross?

by Jim Wallis

*This special two-part Opinion section discusses whether nuclear weapons are idols for the modern age. In the first excerpt Jim Wallis argues that all support for or acquiescence to the existence of nuclear weapons constitutes idolatry—failure to trust in God and worship him supremely.*

*In the second excerpt, Col. Don Martin takes the view that possession of nuclear weapons does not represent false worship or misplaced trust, but is a necessary deterrent to aggression in a sinful world.*

*The purpose of this special section is not to promote debate over political or military programs, but to help readers explore the spiritual question of how the first commandment might relate to nuclear weapons.*

The sign of the nuclear age is the Bomb. The sign of Christ is the Cross. The Bomb is the countersign to the Cross; it arrogantly threatens to undo the work that the Cross has done. In the Cross, all things are reconciled; in the Bomb, all things are destroyed. In the Cross, violence is defeated; in the Bomb, evil has dominion. In the Cross, death is swallowed up; in the Bomb, death reigns supreme. Which will hold sway in our times? Will we choose to live under the sign of the Cross or the sign of the Bomb? Finally, which sign will the church choose for its own life? . . .

There is no theology or doctrine in the traditions of the church that could ever justify nuclear war. Whether one begins with pacifism or with the just war theory, total destruction by nuclear weapons has to be judged morally unacceptable. By any traditional standard of church teaching on the subject of violence and war, nuclear war is outlawed.

If there is no real theological debate on the issue, what can explain the church's dreadful silence and accommodation in the face of the nuclear threat? Or, as Karl Barth asked in 1959: "How do you explain the fact that the large Christian bodies cannot pronounce a definite yes or no on the matter of atomic war?" It can only be our lack of conversion; it can only be that we are guilty of forgetting and of falling into idolatry. We have forgotten who we are and who our God is.

Our violence of the nations increases daily. More and more of the resources of the world are being used to make preparation for war. The powers that be have placed the world in unprecedented danger. Nuclear holocaust is impending. *And the people of God are quiet and acquiescent.* The churches are immobilized, unable to name the idolatry and see the heresy. Fighting for our own ideology, defending our national self-interest, protecting our standard of living; these have become the justifications for making war on others; these have become our gods. In the churches, as in the political arena, most of the current debate over nuclear policy is constricted to paying homage to these gods. If the churches continue to agree

## OPINION

### Part 1

Key text:  
Ephesians  
3:9, 10

**"A church that places its trust in the Bomb is a church that no longer trusts in the Lord."**

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Jim Wallis is editor of *Sojourners*.

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with the politicians about the acceptable boundaries of the debate, the cause of peace will forever be diminished.

A church that places its trust in the Bomb is a church that no longer trusts in the Lord. We live in nations where we are told that to be secure we must place our faith in systems designed to incinerate the globe. Can we possibly agree with that and still say, "We are God's people, we belong to the Lord, and we place our security only in him"? The God of the Bible hungers for peace and reconciliation among all men and women. Are we willing to move into the midst of the world's violence as agents of that reconciliation? The question at stake in a nuclear age is whether the church will demonstrate to whom it ultimately belongs. A church that is accommodated to a nation making preparations for nuclear war is making a statement about its own false worship. . . .

The willingness to produce, possess, and use nuclear weapons must be named for what it is: the chief manifestation of human sinfulness and rebellion against God in our age. What is distressing in our present situation is that Christians are not talking about nuclear questions as Christians. We talk about the arms race as a national security issue, or in terms of the Russian threat, or out of concern to protect our standard of living. Very seldom do we gather to talk about the arms race on the basis of our confession of Christ as Lord. Little do we realize that everything we say or don't say about the nuclear threat is a deeply spiritual matter. Our public witness or lack of it is going to affect the credibility of the church's life and proclamation on every level—our prayer, preaching, pastoral ministry, and worship. The idolatry inherent in the arms race permeates the life of the church. To bring the nuclear question into the center of the church's life has become a pastoral obligation and not only a prophetic vocation. We in this generation who have been rendered deaf and dumb by the nuclear demon require a healing that only Jesus can bring.

**"Everything we say or don't say about the nuclear threat is a deeply spiritual matter."**

Excerpted from *The Call to Conversion* by Jim Wallis, pp. 88-94. Copyright © 1983 by Sojourners. Used with permission from Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

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# The Biblical Mandate for Deterrence

by Col. Don Martin, Jr.

We face a real and serious threat to human freedoms and to the continuation of a Western civilization erected in large part upon biblical values. Soviet ambitions and fears will continue to drive them to expand their empire. Unless we are willing to submit to their will, we must maintain effective military forces and alliances that hinder Soviet expansionism.

Some may object, "But our trust must be in God, not in man's armaments!" That is true. We must always remember that God is our hope. But that does not mean we either choose to trust God or to trust in weapons. Another option exists: to maintain strong military forces while trusting in God to help us use them wisely.

When Abram learned that Lot had been captured by the four kings, "... he led forth his trained men, born in his house, ... and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night ... and routed them and pursued them. ... Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his goods, and the women and the people" (Gen. 14:14-16). Abram's actions were approved by God (Gen. 14:18-20).

God calls our nation to be prepared to defend itself against aggressors and evildoers. As we do so, however, we must recognize God as the one whom we trust with our hopes for peace.

The government of the United States has a biblical mandate to maintain its "sword" (Rom. 13:4) in condition to be terror to evil works. Thus we justify internal police forces to deter and punish evil. Similarly we justify the maintenance of military forces to oppose evil outside of our borders and to provide our citizens with a reasonable security from foreign domination. So long as our people and military forces are organized and employed by the state for those purposes, American Christians are bound by God's command to support them (1 Pet. 2:13-17; Rom. 13:2, 3, 5, 6). Otherwise we invite the righteous punishment of the state.

These biblical principles are true of any state and its citizens. The question is, are the forces of *our* country being used for righteous ends, and in righteous ways?

Let's apply these principles to America's nuclear forces. America has the biblical obligation of protecting its own citizens from the threat of Soviet domination by blackmail or by armed attack. Where possible, we should seek to defend other nations against such domination.

We cannot match Russia's conventional forces in Europe, even through NATO. The Soviet strategic nuclear threat is most effectively deterred by a strong nuclear triad (land-based missiles, strategic bombers, sea-based missiles). Therefore, America has spent vast sums of money and of human energy since 1948 to develop and to keep a credible nuclear deterrent force.

American foreign policy has sought to fulfill our obligations of self-defense and to help other nations, especially those that are free from foreign domination. We are not a pure nation. Our means

## OPINION

### Part 2

Key text:

Romans 13:1-6

**"America has the biblical obligation of protecting its own citizens."**

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Col. Don Martin, Jr., USAR, is editor of *Command*, the journal of the Officer's Christian Fellowship.

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from foreign domination. We are not a pure nation. Our means have not always been worthy of our ends. At times we have been insensitive to the true effects of our actions. We have acted as though we could control our destiny and the destiny of others. We could act in such ways again.

But we must recognize a deep moral conviction that forms the heart of our foreign policy. Our ultimate goal is peace and freedom for ourselves and for all others. We do not act from an inherent desire to expand our territory or to see innocent people harmed.

Because of this, and because our present nuclear forces offer an effective deterrent against Soviet nuclear aggression, I believe Christians should support the maintenance of such forces. The purpose and intent of our nation's political and military leaders conforms to the biblical demands regarding a nation's responsibilities.

But this does not permit us to be complacent about the world armament situation. The nuclear pacifists' concerns should also be deep concerns for those who support our current nuclear armament policies.

**"Our ultimate goal is peace and freedom for ourselves and all others."**

The nations of the world *should* reduce their nuclear armaments, especially the USSR and the USA. We should seek ways to negotiate with Russia to this end. We must do so in a way that offers reasonable guarantees that both nations will live up to their agreements.

Are such reductions possible? Is there, in fact, any hope that mankind can control and limit nuclear terror? We cannot see the future. National leaders around the world seem to be confused as to how to accomplish this goal. Perhaps we are already experiencing that "distress of nations" that will characterize the times immediately before our Lord's return (Lk. 21:25).

What we can see is that we, as Christians are responsible to God, to our country and to other peoples around the world. We can seek to be peacemakers by supporting military forces that will deter evil and aggression. We can also be peacemakers by supporting American initiatives to bring about a lessening of international tensions and a mutually agreed upon cutback in the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons.

Even more important, from a biblical perspective, is that Christians everywhere unite in asking the Father to guide their national leaders in ways of peace. Because we are seated in Christ at the right hand of God the Father (Eph. 2:6), we have unique access to the one who directs human history. Intercession with him is the most powerful means available to the Christian to fulfill the biblical injunction to be peacemakers.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 8**

1. How would you define "idol"? Is there potential for idolatry in any of the following? How might one possess them without their being idols?

wealth	religion	personal achievements
career ambitions	patriotism	devotion for another

2. Do you see idolatry reflected in the vignettes in this week's Introduction? In what ways?

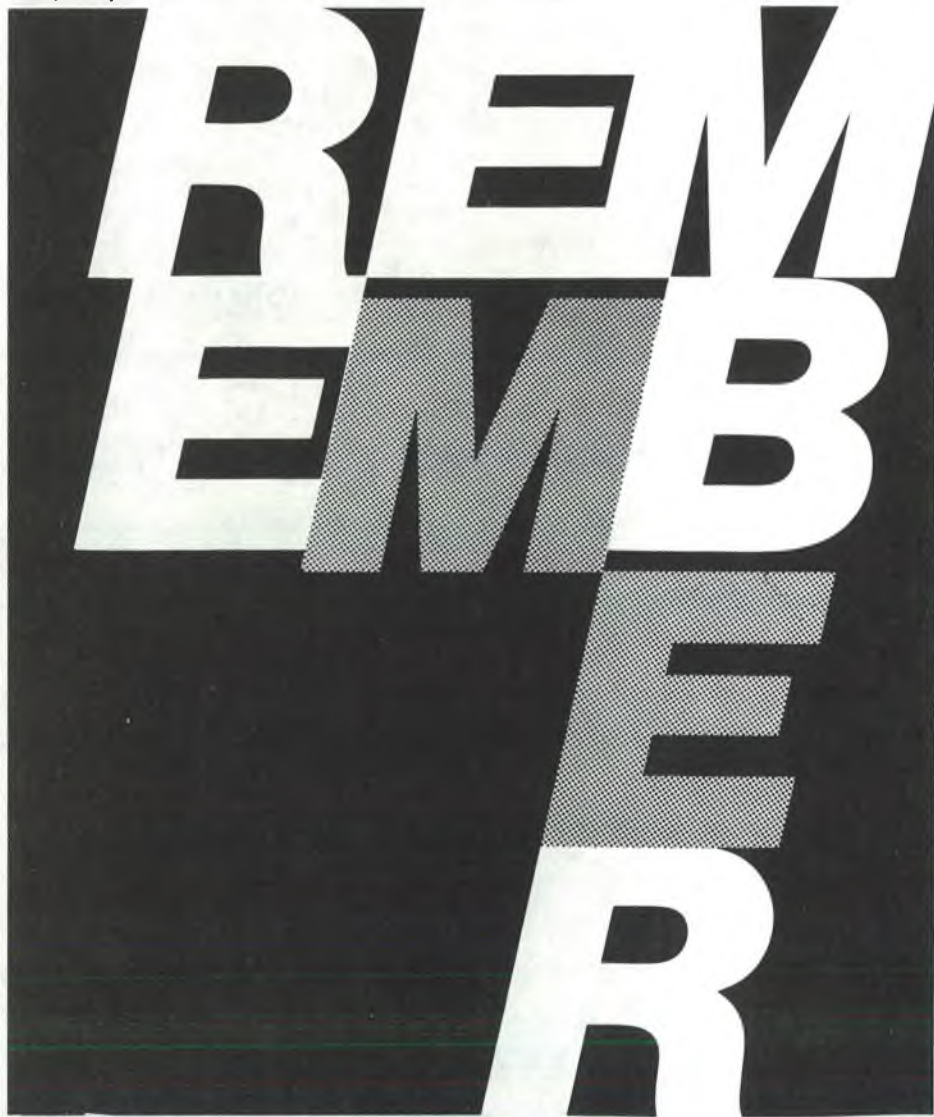
3. *Why* should God have our exclusive worship? Does Exodus 20:2-4 offer any specific reasons? Does this passage suggest anything about the relationship between forgiveness and exclusive allegiance to God?

4. Notice Bonhoeffer's four categories of idolization in Evidence. Which do you find most threatening in your own life and in the life of our church? How can the idolization be avoided?

5. Does the problem of nuclear weapons in any sense involve the spiritual issue of idolatry (see Opinion)? How do you think Christians can relate to nuclear weapons in a way that is not idolatrous?

# Freedom to Celebrate

“Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:15, NIV).



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# Lord of the Sabbath and the Law of the Lord

by Jim Ponder

## INTRODUCTION

Around the vast and somewhat fuzzy precincts of Adventism in the 1980's, three major categories of thinking about the Sabbath clamor for attention.

1. It is an obsolete injunction of the Old Covenant that was abolished at the cross;

2. It is a symbolic commitment to the relationship of rest from human efforts to earn salvation enjoyed by Christians.

3. It is the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue whose strict observance is a mandate for those who wish to obey God.

I have seen scriptural evidence cited for all three views. Why such confusion on so fundamental an issue in a church whose very name proclaims that the Sabbath is important?

When Rachel Oakes Preston introduced it to the founders of the church, they were skeptical. But hours of study convinced the forefathers (and mothers) of the validity of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They immediately began to preach the new light of the Fourth Commandment.

Their zeal knew no bounds. Everywhere they went they were noted for two major divergences from mainstream theology—the day of judgment and the day of rest. Unfortunately, as years went by, they lost sight of the most important doctrine of all—salvation by faith. At one point Ellen White noted the over-emphasis on law had left the

church as dry as the hills of Gilboa.

In 1888, however, God sent a strong new emphasis to the teaching and preaching of the denomination through a series of lectures on righteousness by faith in Jesus.

That new emphasis—so different from the law-centered preaching of many earlier Adventist sermons—really shook up the troops. Some refused to accept it and continued proclaiming a legalistic set of doctrines. Others accepted it and re-oriented their lives and ministries around the central focus of the Atonement. Still others decided it gave them license to toss out all evidence of God's leading in the past, including his indication of the continuing importance of the Sabbath.

Today, almost a century later, the three viewpoints continue their ongoing debate. Which one is right?

Personally, I hold to the second option. Like the first it centers in the cross. Like the third it establishes the significance of divine law. But unlike the others, it avoids the opposite dangers of lawlessness and legalism. It integrates grace and faith, gospel and law.

In context of the relationship with Jesus, the Sabbath reminds us of God's completed work in creation and celebrates his completed work at Calvary. It reverberates with rest from "do-it-yourself religion" and all efforts to a behaviorally-attained salvation.

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Jim Ponder is associate pastor of the Newbury Park, Calif. Church.

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# God's Holiday

**LOGOS** Congress recently established a new national holiday to commemorate the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Most Americans hold Dr. King in high esteem as a powerful force for equality and justice. And if any public figure ventured to defame his name openly, there would undoubtedly be a great outcry with severe implications.

God, too, has a holiday in his honor—commemorating his act of creation. Unfortunately, millions of Americans who gladly take a day off for a national hero will seldom take a day off for God. They seem to think nothing of dishonoring God's name.

Two commandments at the heart of the Decalogue have apparently been largely forgotten in today's society. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Exodus 20:7, NIV). Then regarding his holiday: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. . . ." (Exodus 20:8-10, NIV).

Although we are dealing here with two separate commandments, they comprise a single concept—reverence for God. By not misusing God's name, either in conversation or in lifestyle, and by observing his holiday, we show our acknowledgement of his infinite power and majesty. And, we thus demonstrate our attitude of submission, trust and respect toward him. So, a largely apathetic, nearly deaf humanity is called to "fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

Sabbath observance is not only to show reverence for who God is, but to celebrate his liberating deeds on behalf of his people. The statement of the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy concludes, "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15, NIV). How unfortunate that many of God's avowed people go through the weekly motions as if the Sabbath were some sort of empty ritual, rather than a memorial of the liberation from sin.

Keeping the Sabbath does not aid in our salvation—it is simply an indication of our relationship with our Saviour. If we treat lightly our responsibility to reverence God and worship him, how can it be said that we are children of his? He gave us the Sabbath in part to test our love for him. "Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy" (Ezekiel 20:12, NIV). If we fail to reverence him by keeping his Sabbath and avoiding the misuse of his name, we are actually denying the importance of our Saviour—and henceforth our salvation. That's a mistake we can ill-afford to make.

L. R. C.

# An Invitation to Celebrate

The Sabbath was hallowed at the creation. As ordained for man, it had its origin when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. Peace brooded over the world; for earth was in harmony with heaven. "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good;" and He rested in the joy of His completed work. Genesis 1:31.

Because He had rested upon the Sabbath, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,"—set it apart to a holy use. He gave it to Adam as a day of rest. It was a memorial of the work of creation, and thus a sign of God's power and His love. The Scripture says, "He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered." "The things that are made" declare "the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world," "even His everlasting power and divinity." Genesis 2:3; Psalms 111:4; Romans 1:20, R.V.

All things were created by the Son of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1:1-3. And since the Sabbath is a memorial of the work of creation, it is a token of the love and power of Christ.

The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day. And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that created all things is that which speaks life to the soul. He "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6.<sup>1</sup>

God gave to men the memorial of His creative power, that they might discern Him in the works of His hand. The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator. And it was because He desired us to do this that Jesus bound up His precious lessons with the beauty of natural things. On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature. We should study the Saviour's parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love.<sup>2</sup>

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ's creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key texts:

Genesis 1:31;

Job 38:7

**"The Sabbath bids us behold the glory of the Creator."**

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 281, 282.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 25, 26.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

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# A Creative Peak

by R. David Trapero

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Genesis 2:2, 3

What did the Genesis Sabbath feel like to God? It must have been a tremendously exhilarating experience to have known that he had just finished composing a living, multi-dimensional symphony. The whole planet was a beautifully complex organism, perfectly integrated and harmonious. "Oh, what a feeling!" to quote a well-known TV commercial. His Genesis Sabbath was that intensely satisfying "high" which comes from knowing and enjoying one's own unique creative process. His experience of the Sabbath was a coming to a "peak" in his creative activity. Artists, musicians, poets, and many others, are quite familiar with this kind of creative experiential "peak." This creative process/experience has certain stages or characteristics which are not necessarily concrete.

- 1) A desire to create and/or be creative
- 2) Restless energy (a positive boredom or mild frustration)
- 3) A shaping of thoughts and energy toward a problem or idea
- 4) Intense energy with increasing desire to create
- 5) A "letting go" or relaxed detachment (otherwise known as "incubation")
- 6) The created product bursts free with a reality all its own
- 7) A blissful, exhausted feeling of holistically realizing that you've given birth to something which previously did not exist. An almost child-like wonder at what you've created

It is this writer's understanding that God experienced (albeit in a cosmic, infinite way) a somewhat similar process as he created this world. In fact, stage seven fits perfectly with day seven in the Genesis account that states that he *rested* (had a creative peak experience) on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. (See Genesis 2:2.)

At the end of the sixth day and the dawn of the seventh, God said to himself, "It is finished, and I feel great. I would like to share this unique experience with someone else. There is only one basic requirement for someone to share this with me, they must also be a creator." And so it is that God turned to us, the only creatures he designed to be "creators," reflecting his infinite creativity. Only as we discover and express our inborn creativity can we share and celebrate the Sabbath rest with *the* Creator. As we experience our own creative peaks (Sabbaths), God experiences through us the joys of Sabbath rest anew.

Inherent in God's creative peak experience (Sabbath), was a desire to share the experience. So we see that even in his "resting" he was creating. God created the Sabbath "day" to facilitate "creative peaks" of our own. A genuine Sabbath would be typified by people excited, energized, and anxious to facilitate the creative process in others. It would be a time to share the insights and joys of being "creators," with a world caught in a web of self-destructiveness. Until we can somehow learn to experience and share the joys of creativity, the Sabbath rest experience will be a mysterious object that we peer at from afar off in emotionless curiosity.

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R. David Trapero is the youth pastor at the Glendale City Church.

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# A Space in Time

by Otilie Stafford

We all think of the Sabbath as a reminder of God's creative power. His presence at the beginning of time when chaos and disorder were shaped by His word and the formless seas given dimensions, when the moon and the stars were established, is told anew every seventh day. The mastery of time is implicit in all the Sabbath symbolism. God shapes a period of time as we shape a dimension of space, constructing the great architecture of the Sabbath as we construct a dwelling place, filling it with evidences of His nature, as we fill our rooms and houses and spaces with objects that speak of our personalities. It is His holy time, filled with quietness and sweetness and power, where we enter and worship. We prepare our own spaces for the Sabbath, clean our houses, light the candles, lay the fire, prepare the special meal; but He prepares the time, and we enter that time not to fill it up with our concerns, our work or our wishes, for it has already been filled by Him with holiness and the worship in which the joyous creation sings. . . .

The ninetieth psalm intends the sorrow of the world's change and decay to conclude in joyous recognition of what God's creative power does in our lives and with the work of our hands [see Psalm 90:17]. Then, how carefully that work must be done by God's creatures. How finely we must work, how thoughtfully, how thoroughly. How can God establish in His glorious creation what has been done with carelessness, with shabbiness, with indifference, with contempt? We may not be able to escape the sense of incompleteness, of fraying into the future; but we can, in our own fragile and fleeting work, make it as honest, as beautiful and as good as it is humanly possible to make it.

Each recurring Sabbath brings a reminder of God's power to accomplish and to complete. Each Sabbath is a prayer, a turning to the Creator. By our Sabbath worship, we say: Make us worthy to be a part of your creation. Make our words poems, psalms of hope and praise. Make our acts a part of the order and brightness that your presence calls forth. Help us to enter into the holy time of your holiday with hope and with the joyous knowledge that what we cannot complete you will finish; that what we cannot comprehend you will illuminate. And out of all that seems to be failure and change and decay, teach us to pray: Oh, Thou that changest not, abide with me.

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Psalm 90:17**

Excerpted from "These Bright Ends of Time" by Otilie Stafford in *Spectrum*, Volume 9, Number 1.

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# A Day for Mankind

by Jim Ponder

## OPINION

Key text:  
Mark 2:27

My daughter Anni often reminds me of how important external differences can be in helping children form their own identities vis-a-vis everyone else. Although our family has never made a big deal about the fact that we are vegetarians, Anni frequently chooses to do so. Her four-year-old mind sees great significance in the fact that some of her friends eat meat, but she does not. She often prays like this:

"Dear Jesus, I love you and you love me. And we love each other. And I love Mommy and Papa and they love me. And we love each other. And we don't eat meat. But Georgie eats meat. And that's OK for him, but we don't. Amen."

It makes me laugh every time. Not out loud, of course, but inside I crack up. Sometimes I imagine God is laughing, too.

The way we relate to the Sabbath seems a lot like Anni's vegetarianism. Maybe we don't say it in so many words, but we often give the impression that we believe our Sabbath observance makes us better than Christians who worship on Sunday.

Nothing could be more off the track. If we think ourselves holier than others we fall into the oldest rut in the religious world. The biggest problem with the idea that keeping the Sabbath makes us holy is that it takes the focus of our lives off Jesus and onto our own works. The subconscious reasoning goes something like this:

"We keep the Sabbath and all the other commandments. Therefore, we are holy." In other words, our efforts at keeping the Sabbath make us holy. We end up sanctifying ourselves.

That is really quite ironic. Even before the New Covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made it very clear that he does the sanctifying, not we. "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ezekiel 20:12).

When we think God is going to love us more or give us heaven because we keep the Sabbath, then we also reason that people who keep Sunday can't make it unless they change their ways. The biggest burden of our witness to the world becomes the Sabbath instead of the Lord of the Sabbath.

And that's too bad because nowhere in Scripture does it say anything about the Sabbath as the basis for our salvation. Sabbath-keeping is never the condition on which we receive eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent" (John 17:3).

Jesus pressed the point even further in a discussion with the most zealous Sabbath-keepers in the world. He told them that all their efforts at obedience amounted to nothing at all unless they became acquainted with God through his Son. "I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The major theme of the New Testament is that people must believe in Jesus to be saved.

All in all, it adds up to one more affirmation of the truth that in

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the plan of salvation there is not one thread of human devising. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.) The Sabbath is the day in which we celebrate God's continuing salvation in our lives.

Seen in that context we look forward to the day when other Christians who enjoy the wonders and benefits of a saving relationship with Jesus will be led by the Shepherd to drink deeply of the Sabbath—the day that was made for all mankind, and not man for the day.

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1. How would you summarize the significance of the Sabbath for modern Christians, using 50 words or less?

**REACT**  
**Lesson 9**

How does your view compare with the three suggested in the Introduction?

2. What do each of the following passages suggest about why celebration of the Sabbath is important? You should be able to find a different reason in each passage.

Gen. 2:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Ex. 20:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 5:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Eze. 20:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 14:6, 7 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do we really need to keep a *day* to recognize God as our creator and redeemer? Aren't those spiritual realities that we experience by faith and which transcend specific time periods?
  4. Suggest some practical ideas for making the Sabbath a joyful celebration of God's greatness and goodness, rather than a legalistic burden. Should we make it more a celebration of the creative process (see Evidence)? If so, how?
  5. What are the chief ways in which God's name is wrongly used in today's society? What about in the Christian church and in our own lives?
  6. How can we develop and maintain the proper sense of awe and reverence for God's name while at the same time relating to him as an intimate friend who is involved in every aspect of our lives?
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# Freedom to Love

"All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV).

## OPERATORS MANUAL

### Section C

#### Model Type

*Human Being*

#### Service Life

*Average 70 Years*

#### Standard Feature

*Free Will*



### Section Contents

<b>Fifth Commandment</b>	<b>C-5</b>
<i>Honor</i>	
<b>Sixth Commandment</b>	<b>C-6</b>
<i>Love of Life</i>	
<b>Seventh Commandment</b>	<b>C-7</b>
<i>Fidelity</i>	
<b>Eighth Commandment</b>	<b>C-8</b>
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	

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# Designer Commandments

by Ray Tetz

## INTRODUCTION

Ninth and Los Angeles Street. The heart of LA's garment district. Here to the dresses and suits which will be bought by millions is added that one last item: the label. Now the clothes may be shipped across the country for retail sales.

To this busy place come consumers—like me—looking for a bargain. Before the label is attached many of the latest styles and products are available, and often at a fraction of their retail cost. The label, after all, somehow determines the marketable value.

In the rush of the crowd I detect a strange transaction. Two men are talking. One holds a single sheet of Alligator Labels. The other holds a roll of bills. A price is discussed. The merchandise is examined. A deal is made. For a few dollars the precious Alligator has been stolen and sold, and with it the prestige of a manufacturer's good name. By attaching the symbol to a cheap shirt, the consumer can appear to be wearing something much more valuable.

The scene changes. Here are desert people, wearing clothes that never wear out. They eat the bread of heaven and are participants in the great adventure called Exodus, God's daring rescue of man from slavery, stupidity, and homelessness. This nation of slaves is also his chosen people and having gathered wordlessly about the mountain's base they hear him say:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. . . . Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV).

His commands are the label. The Symbol of quality. The Mark of Salvation. For some it will be a true label, one carefully worn and rigorously protected. For them the label is the mark of ownership, the mark of quality. It is the ever present reminder of who they are, and who their maker is.

But others will wear the label. Others will clothe themselves in the words and symbols of Yahweh God. Others will claim to be true. For them the label is only a facade, a fake. It means nothing attached to an unrepentant heart. It has no value except to deceive. Those who thus wear it will eventually find it a burden, an ever present reminder that what they are is phony, false, untrue.

The commandments are the labels. For the true follower of God they are the symbols of his goodness, grace, and character. They are worn with pride and kept as treasures.

For the false however, they are a burden. They are a reminder of sin, of deceit, of slavery, stupidity, and homelessness. They bring no freedom. Only the truth will set you free.

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Ray Tetz is the associate pastor of the Eagle Rock Adventist Church in Los Angeles, and associate youth director of the Southern California Conference.

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# The Best for His Children

## LOGOS

At first glance, the last six commandments of the Decalogue seem to consist of clauses in some sort of ultimatum delivered to helpless subjects by a tyrant wielding absolute power. A closer look, however, reveals that God's apparent harshness with the Israelites in this case was simply the best way to get his law of love across to them—much as a parent's positive desire to keep a two-year-old from harm must be translated into specific negative restrictions. In our study of the fifth through eighth commandments (we will save commandments nine and ten for subsequent weeks) we will explore the underlying, positive principles which reveal the care of a loving Father, not a tyrant.

The fifth commandment is the only one of this group which is expressed in positive terms. **"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you"** (Ex. 20:12, NIV). Paul notes that this principle is **"the first commandment with a promise"** and urges, **"children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"** (Eph. 6:2, 1, NIV).

The positive principle upon which the sixth commandment, **"you shall not murder"** (Ex. 20:13, NIV) is based is a broad affirmation of life. God seeks to impress upon his creation the sanctity of life—for he is the originator of it. Rather than to destroy our enemies, Jesus' command is to **"love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"** (Matt. 5:44, 45, NIV).

The seventh commandment is much like the sixth in its specific abruptness: **"You shall not commit adultery"** (Ex. 20:14, NIV). God is the loving creator who established marriage, so we can be confident that deviation from his plan can bring nothing but harm. Scripture advises not only a diligent avoidance of adultery but a fostering of a marital relationship that renders the adultery temptation impotent (see Eph. 5:21-32).

The force of the eighth commandment, **"You shall not steal"** (Exodus 20:15, NIV), suggests the larger concept of integrity. Integrity comprises principles such as faithfulness to commitments, devotion to justice, implicit truthfulness, and respect for the rights and property of others. Peter urges that Christians live out this integrity in secular society. **"Live such good lives among pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us"** (1 Peter 2:12, NIV).

God gave these commands in specific, negative terms because his people at that time were unable to grasp the universal principles of his character. He had to break it down for them. How is it today? Are we any more mature than they? Can we comprehend the implications of the great commandments: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"** and **"Love your neighbor as yourself"** (Matthew 22:37, 39, NIV)?

L. R. C.

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# To Love . . .

## . . . Parents

Children should be educated to love and care tenderly for father and mother. Care for them, children, yourselves; for no other hand can do the little acts of kindness with the acceptance that you can do them.

Let children carefully remember that at the best the aged parents have but little joy and comfort. What can bring greater sorrow to their hearts than manifest neglect on the part of their children? What sin can be worse in children than to bring grief to an aged, helpless father or mother?<sup>1</sup>

## . . . Others

The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and it led him to put to death the Son of God. Whoever cherishes malice or unkindness is cherishing the same spirit, and its fruit will be unto death. In the revengeful thought the evil deed lies enfolded, as the plant in the seed. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3:15.

. . . In the gift of His Son for our redemption, God has shown how high a value He places upon every human soul, and He gives to no man liberty to speak contemptuously of another. We shall see faults and weaknesses in those about us, but God claims every soul as His property,—His by creation, and doubly His as purchased by the precious blood of Christ. All were created in His image, and even the most degraded are to be treated with respect and tenderness. God will hold us accountable for even a word spoken in contempt of one soul for whom Christ laid down His life.<sup>2</sup>

## . . . Spouse

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. "Everyone," He said, "that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." R.V.

When the Pharisees afterward questioned Him concerning the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. "Because of the hardness of your hearts," He said, Moses "suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19:8. He referred them to the blessed days of Eden, when God pronounced all things "very good." Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one" (Genesis 2:24), He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the Eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

**Key text:**  
**Colossians**  
**3:12-25**

1. *Adventist Home*, p. 360.

2. *The Mount of Blessing*, pp. 56, 57.

3. *The Mount of Blessing*, pp. 63, 64.

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# Four Commands—Situational or Inflexible?

by Casey Bahr

## EVIDENCE

**Key text:**

**Exodus 20:12-15**

When we deal with any moral code there are two extremes towards which we are prone to go. The first is the "situational only extreme." In this view, the law gives absolutely no serviceable guidelines to help one choose the right in all situations. One makes a judgment based on the present circumstances in which he finds himself. The second extreme might be labelled "inflexible Pharisaical." This approach is typified by the Pharisees, who expanded the law into 613 rules, called "halakhah," which mapped out practically every detail of Jewish daily life. The problem comes when one tries to bridge the gap between the principles contained in the second extreme with the changing situations to which the first extreme is sensitive.

Are there times when the loving response would be to kill someone in self-defense, defense of another nation or our own? Can we honor our parents by going against their orders sometimes? How much friendship can one cultivate outside of his or her marriage without being guilty of adultery? Are there higher values than honesty?

The Ten Commandments, four of which we are dealing with this week, can be made to cover the whole of life. But if one of the commandments is given unconditional priority over the others then all of them cease to be effective for the whole life. Each of the commandments defines and limits each other's territory. In order to carry them all out with some balance we must allow them to balance themselves.

**"Are there times when the loving response would be to kill someone?"**

Honoring one's parents to the extent of breaking down the relationship with a husband or wife is giving more priority to the fifth commandment than you give to the seventh one. In order for the fifth through the eighth commandments to be guidelines which create loving relationships for Christians, none should be applied so rigidly and extremely that it violates another.

Studying to know how each of these commandments is applied in the Bible is an important step in discovering how each commandment is limited and how it can be expanded. There are examples of how Bible characters dealt with the problem of two principles being in conflict with each other due to changing times or situations (see Mark 2:23-28; Josh. 2:1-6).

One must also recognize that there is much more which is essential to Christian relationships than just these four commandments. There is expanded truth in and outside of the Scriptures that will teach a Christian how to carry out the broad principles underlying these commandments. And, there are additional broad principles left out of these four that ought to be included in the life of a Christian—lack of prejudice, women's rights (and men's), going the second mile, to name a few.

The commandments we've considered show direction for the Christian without describing each step of the way in detail.

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Casey Bahr is an associate pastor at the Glendale Adventist Church in Southern California.

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# Keeping the Commandments

by Ray Tetz

It remains as one of the earliest memories of my childhood Sabbath Schools. In addition to picture rolls, Loma Linda labels, and a ceramic birthday cake that no one ever got to eat, bright in my memory are the shining letters of the first acronym I ever learned: J-O-Y: Jesus—Others—You.

Joy was something I was very interested in. And Jesus—Others—You made good sense.

I was taught other things as I grew up, not many of them so helpful. Some of them came close—the ABC's of prayer for instance. ASK, BELIEVE, and CLAIM may sound a bit trite but it started me praying. Once again I found a simple symbol moving me closer to what I wanted to be.

Jesus—Others—You was easy to understand. It started with Jesus—the one I already loved—and began to explain what it was he wanted of me. The ABC's were the same. By starting with a need I already felt—the need to talk to God and know his will—they moved me into a closer relationship with him.

Perhaps that's what God had in mind with the commandments. Symbols of the relationship. A Nation's First Ten Words About God. A rule for each finger to be written in the heart. Perhaps they were the pointers, the acronym, the ABC's of his care.

We need to keep the commandments like we keep J-O-Y, or the ABC's of prayer. As treasures. As cherished early letters from a friend. As *keepsakes*. As Adam and Eve were instructed to dress and *keep* the garden (Genesis 2:15), let us tend and preserve and maintain the commandments.

As Mary observed the worship offered the Christ child by the shepherds and the wise men, and heard the blessings and prophecies of Simeon and Anna spoken over her little boy, and *kept* those things in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51), let us keep the commandments.

As reminders of his love, as markers of his character, as cherished symbols of his expectations, let us keep the commandments.

This does not mean neglecting the other aspects of keeping something. But let us do more than observe the commandments. Let's treasure them.

If my wife and I go on a trip we look around for someone to keep our dog. I call my most trustworthy friend—the one who best understands how much I love my dog—and I ask him a simple question: "Will you *keep* my puppy?" When I say keep I do not mean merely retain her at his house. I mean feed her, and play with her, and make her feel comfortable. I mean watch out for her, and keep her well, and enjoy her. I mean love her. And if he says yes, I assume that he is also accepting all my expectations.

God didn't say observe these. He didn't say live up to these. He didn't say don't break these. He said keep these. And so like J-O-Y and the ABC's we keep them in our hearts. We are keeping them in every sense of the word. Hoping that when he returns for us they will be found safely written in our hearts.

## HOW TO

Key text:

Psalm 119:9-16

**"Let us do more than observe the commandments. Let's treasure them."**

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# Prophylactic for the Heart

by Gayland Richardson

## OPINION

Key text:  
1 Corinthians  
6:15-20

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." This is a straightforward command regarding sexual conduct. No qualifications are made, no unique circumstances are allowed. Society today openly scoffs at such absolutes. Our culture tries to convince us that sexual purity is unimportant or even harmful. Why all the pressure to forsake the idea of fidelity? One reason is the concept of "temporality." This is the idea that there is nothing beyond the present; nothing has lasting value or eternal meaning. Therefore—live fast, love hard, die young.

Another reason is the emphasis on self-identity. Anything that is seen as standing in the way of my freedom to do as I please becomes the enemy. "Free to be me" is the theme song of our society, and everything from pantyhose to Buicks promises to help the process. Unfortunately, identity, significance, purpose, and meaning are not found in the discovery of some mystical self. These qualities are the result of commitment. Absolute freedom and significance are mutually exclusive. Significance in a relationship demands responsibility and accountability, and sexual fidelity is one important way to affirm commitment and give significance to a relationship.

In looking at the issue of fidelity we must first realize how powerful and universal the sexual urge is in humans. The desire is within most people and urged on by every type of media. Of course, if we are honest we will admit that the desire needs little help in taking a large corner of our conscious thoughts. But is sexual monogamy important?

**"Absolute freedom and significance are mutually exclusive."**

I think it is, for it reflects our views of the value of people. If people, like dolls, are just for fun then we must view them as objects to be used rather than persons to be treasured. Elton Trueblood notes, "The real sin in fornication or adultery is not the act itself, which is purely biological, but in the degrading effect on human character." The human personality is sacred, and anything that degrades human affections degrades the person. Therefore adultery is wrong for the same reason murder is wrong—it violates the sacredness of the human character.

To recognize the philosophical and theological basis for fidelity is one thing; to live accordingly is something else. How is it done? The same way you learn to jog a mile or play an instrument—you commit yourself to doing it. First and foremost, fidelity is a decision of the mind, a decision: "I will act this way." Secondly, it requires action parallel to the decision: "Don't build a fire you can't afford to fan."

As a pastor, I see many people who have chosen to ignore this commandment. They claim the pill makes it obsolete. Abortion or adoption cares for accidents. But as they talk about the hurts and fears, the longing for significance, I see that God was right: "I will be true" is the only prophylactic for the heart.

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Gayland Richardson is pastor of the Alhambra, Calif. Church.



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**REACT**  
**Lesson 10**

1. What does it mean to "honor" one's parents? Are honor and obedience synonymous?
  2. Discuss the implications of the sixth commandment for
    - participation in military forces
    - the death penalty
    - abortion
    - euthanasia
  3. Why do you think the sexual fidelity called for by the seventh commandment is important? Does the concept of sexual fidelity (see Opinion) necessarily exclude all sex outside of marriage?
  4. In what practical ways can we cope with the challenge of keeping the seventh commandment in a social environment that has continual and powerful allurements to disregard it?
  5. Do you see a sense in which "keeping the commandments" is distinct from observing them, living up to them, or not breaking them (see How To)? Explain.
  6. Can you think of situations in which the commandments we've studied this week might conflict with each other? For example, what about the man who, having lost his job and exhausted all other sources of income, robs a drug store, taking only the expensive drug needed to keep his wife alive? What principles might guide us in such potential conflicts?
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# Freedom for Truthfulness

"... Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Ephesians 4:15, NIV).



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# Some Truths About Lying (Maybe)

The Lord detests lying lips,  
but he delights in men who are  
truthful.

—Proverbs 12:22, NIV

Falsehood is in itself mean  
and culpable, and truth is no-  
ble and full of praise.

—Aristotle

When regard for truth has  
been broken down or even  
slightly weakened, all things  
will remain doubtful.

—St. Augustine, "On Lying"

By a lie a man throws away  
and, as it were, annihilates his  
dignity as a man.

—Immanuel Kant

What harm would it do, if a  
man told a good strong lie for  
the sake of the good and for  
the Christian church. . . . A  
lie out of necessity, a useful  
lie, a helpful lie, such lies  
would not be against God, he  
would accept them.

—Martin Luther,  
cited by his secretary

If any, in fact do this: ei-  
ther teach men to do evil that  
good may come or do so  
themselves, their damnation is  
just. This is particularly ap-  
plicable to those who tell lies  
in order to do good thereby. It  
follows, that officious lies as  
well as all others, are an

abomination to the God of  
Truth. Therefore there is no  
absurdity, however strange it  
may sound, in that saying of  
the ancient Father "I would  
not tell a willful lie to save  
the souls of the whole world."

—John Wesley, *Sermon*

Of every malice that gains  
hatred in Heaven the end is  
injustice; and every such end,  
either by force or by fraud,  
afflicts another. But because  
fraud is an evil peculiar to  
man, it more displeases God,  
and therefore the fraudulent  
are the lower, and more pain  
assails them.

—Dante, *Inferno*

The great masses of the  
people . . . will more easily  
fall victims to a big lie than to  
a small one.

—Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

Certainly, it is heaven upon  
earth to have man's mind  
move in charity, rest in provi-  
dence, and turn upon the  
poles of truth.

—Bacon, "Of Truth"

"For this reason I was  
born, and for this I came into  
the world, to testify to the  
truth. Everyone on the side of  
truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate  
asked.

—John 18:37, 38, NIV

## INTRO- DUCTION

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All quotations, except  
for the Scripture pas-  
sages, are cited in *Ly-  
ing: Moral Choice in  
Public and Private Life*  
by Sissela Bok.

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# Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver

**LOGOS** “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16, NIV).

Though the specific intent of the ninth commandment is to prohibit perjury in court cases, P. C. Craigie points out that it also embodies the larger principle of integrity in all human interaction: “Though the immediate context of the commandment was in the sphere of legal process, the implications applied to the activities of daily life. A God of faithfulness, who did not deal deceitfully with his people, required of his people the same transparency and honesty in personal relationships.”<sup>1</sup>

This week we are particularly concerned with what the ninth commandment means for the integrity of our communication. Our use of words, Jesus tells us, is of critical importance. “For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:37, NIV).

James also sees speech as a matter of special concern because the tongue is so volatile, with vast potential for causing harm. “Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. . . .

“All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:5-8, NIV).

The tongue indeed at times seems impossible to control. But in the presence of God’s grace and the community of believers, the “impossible” is known to happen. Thus Paul urges, “each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. . . .

“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. 4:25-29, NIV).

When our speech is thus under the control of Christ, we will avoid some types of communication, such as:

1) *Slander*. “Do not go about spreading slander among your people” (Lev. 19:16, NIV).

2) *Controversy over theological trivia*. “. . . Avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless” (Titus 3:9, NIV).

And, conversely, our communication will then have the positive effects described by the wise man:

“An anxious heart weighs a man down,  
but a kind word cheers him up.”

“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 12:25; 25:11, NIV).

Paul articulates the heart of the ninth commandment this way: “. . . Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4:15, NIV). D. F. M.

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1. *New International Commentary on the Old Testament—Deuteronomy*, by P. C. Craigie, p. 163.

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# Without Deviation or Prevarication

## Truth in Business

The Bible condemns in the strongest terms all falsehood, false dealing, and dishonesty. Right and wrong are plainly stated. But I was shown that God's people have placed themselves on the enemy's ground; they have yielded to his temptations and followed his devices until their sensibilities have become fearfully blunted. A slight deviation from truth, a little variation from the requirements of God, is thought to be, after all, not so very sinful, when pecuniary gain or loss is involved. But sin is sin, whether committed by the possessor of millions or by the beggar in the streets. Those who secure property by false representations are bringing condemnation on their souls. All that is obtained by deceit and fraud will be only a curse to the receiver.

... In the transaction of business, falsehoods are uttered and acted by God's professed people that bring His frown upon them and a reproach upon His cause. The least departure from truthfulness and rectitude is a transgression of the law of God.<sup>1</sup>

## Wise Use of Truth in Medical Work

... There are physicians who consider it wise policy to conceal from the patient the nature and cause of the disease from which he is suffering. Many, fearing to excite or discourage a patient by stating the truth, will hold out false hopes of recovery, and even allow a patient to go down to the grave without warning him of his danger. All this is unwise. It may not always be safe or best to explain to the patient the full extent of his danger. This might alarm him and retard or even prevent recovery. Nor can the whole truth always be told to those whose ailments are largely imaginary. Many of these persons are unreasonable, and have not accustomed themselves to exercise self-control. They have peculiar fancies, and imagine many things that are false in regard to themselves and others. To them these things are real, and those who care for them need to manifest constant kindness and unwearied patience and tact. If these patients were told the truth in regard to themselves, some would be offended, others discouraged. Christ said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." John 16:12. But though the truth may not all be spoken on all occasions, it is never necessary or justifiable to deceive. Never should the physician or the nurse stoop to prevarication. He who does this places himself where God cannot co-operate with him, and in forfeiting the confidence of his patients he is casting away one of the most effective human aids to their restoration.<sup>2</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
John 16:12

**"Though the truth may not all be spoken on all occasions, it is never justifiable to deceive."**

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 311, 312.

2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 245.

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# In the Service of Truth

by George W. Forell

**EVIDENCE**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Corinthians**  
**13:8**

What does the eighth [ninth] commandment mean once it is looked upon from the point of faith? What does it say about the Christian life under the Gospel? It describes the Christian life as a life where language, understood in its widest sense, is used to the glory of God and in the service of the neighbor, that is, in truth. Luther, in his *Treatise on Good Works* relates this commandment very clearly to the Christian responsibility for truth. He says, "Where such faith and confidence (in Christ) are, there is also a bold, defiant, fearless heart, that ventures and stands by the truth, though it cost life or cloak, though it be against pope or kings; such as the action of the martyrs. For such a heart is satisfied and rests easy because it has a gracious, loving God. . . .

This commandment has all kinds of implications for the Christian's responsibility in art and literature, in science and history, and for freedom in general. Frequently in history Christian people have felt that such matters were none of their business or that they had an obligation to suppress truth for the sake of some ecclesiastical line of propaganda. Whenever this has happened the eighth [ninth] commandment has been transgressed. The Christian life under the Gospel must concern itself with the use of language for the sake of truth. The realm of literature has always been a place where Christians have tried to serve the truth. From the writings of the early church fathers to those of Dorothy Sayers and C. S. Lewis today, Christian people have attempted to bear witness to the truth in prose and poetry. Similarly and perhaps more indirectly through pictorial art, architecture and music, through scholarly research in the humanities and the sciences, Christians have fulfilled the eighth [ninth] commandment in faith. . . .

. . . To live the eighth [ninth] commandment means also to defend man's integrity and right to search for truth even though their search may lead them far away from what we know to be the truth. Not to bear false witness means also that we must not attempt to tell people that truth can be found by accepting implicitly the opinions of people who have the truth. You cannot inherit truth; you cannot learn the truth as you can learn the Gettysburg Address. Ultimate truth must be believed. Nobody can be forced to believe, and any effort to bring about faith in this manner is a tragic offense against the eighth [ninth] commandment. If God refused to force men into faith, who are we to dare to tamper with a human integrity which God himself respected? The Christian faith has always made its impact when it was seen as clear alternative to other faiths. In the chaos of faiths in the Mediterranean world of the first three centuries, Christianity emerged victorious. When accepted merely as part of our heritage the Christian faith decays.

Again, the Christian life fulfills the eighth [ninth] commandment when Christians live as courageous witnesses to truth.

Excerpted from *Ethics of Decision* by George W. Forell, pp. 142-145. Copyright © 1955 by Fortress Press. Used by permission.

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**George W. Forell has authored several major works on Christian theology and ethics.**

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# Truth and Consequences

When I first saw this article among the assignments I'd received for this quarter, I was rather pleased. I've always enjoyed the challenge of attempting to differentiate between gray truths and white lies—situation ethics just intrigues me. I've whiled away many a delightful hour arguing the implications of hypothetical situations. So, I savored the chance to have a go at it on paper. But then I realized that a fancy treatise on the fine distinctions between truth and falsehood wasn't exactly what was desired. Instead, I was supposed to write a practical, step-by-step outline for developing truthfulness. That dampened my anticipation considerably. After all, telling someone *how* to tell the truth is either very easy—hence, very trite—or very hard—depending on how you interpret it. It's one thing to define truth and to advocate its exclusive use; it's quite another thing to *inspire* a desire to be absolutely truthful.

In attempting to accomplish the latter, I submit three biblical examples of truthfulness in varying degrees. The degree of integrity exhibited by each produced vastly different effects.

1. Ananias exemplifies deficiency of integrity. Although it may seem at first that he hardly deserved such harsh punishment for a simple lie (see Acts 5:1-10), two characteristics of his prevarication distinguish it. First, it was directed against God's appointed representative—which was equivalent to lying to God. Such action represents the ultimate in human arrogance and blasphemy. Second, his motive was purely selfish—it wasn't in any way an expression of love.

2. Abraham was a liar, too. The fib he told the Philistine king Abimelech about Sarah being his sister (see Gen. 20) certainly wasn't what you'd expect from a great patriarch—the “friend of God,” especially since he'd already told the same lie in Egypt years before (Gen. 12:10-20). But God didn't strike him dead like Ananias—in fact, the Scriptures don't even record the slightest divine reprimand. Why such distinctly different outcomes? One possible answer is that Abraham's deception was a “white” lie—Sarah was, in fact, his half-sister. Another could be that Abraham was motivated by a desire to save life—albeit his own. At any rate it seems likely that God's standards of truthfulness may differ from the rigid ones some moralists have set up.

3. The type of truthfulness that really impresses me, however, belongs to Micaiah. “Mike who?” you ask. Well, he's the prophet who refused to tell king Ahab what he wanted to hear (1 Kings 22). His honest defiance made a powerful statement for integrity. Micaiah refused to diverge from the truth even in the presence of royal intimidation. His reward? A prison cell with only bread and water—possibly until his death. But his impeccable example remains.

Which will it be for you? One, two, three? The choice may have permanent effects.

L. R. C.

## HOW TO

Key text:

Proverbs 12:22

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# Speaking the Truth in Love

## OPINION

**Key text:**  
**Ephesians 4:15**

Should Christians tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, all the time? Some biblical incidents suggest that absolute truth is not always the very highest priority from God's perspective. Rahab lied through her teeth about the presence of the Israelite spies in her business establishment (see Josh. 2), and yet, because she sheltered the spies, the author of Hebrews gives her a place in his gallery of faith heroes (Heb. 11:31). In another story, we find the Lord himself recommending to Samuel a certain manipulation of the facts to obscure the full truth (see 1 Sam. 16:1-3).

The Revelator is explicit about the fact that liars will face the second death (Rev. 21:8). Yet it does seem that truth in Scripture is subordinated to the principle of love. Paul tells us to speak the truth "in love" (Eph. 4:15). This suggests that we should not be so dedicated to full disclosure of the truth that we unnecessarily hurt or endanger others.

**"How much long-term pain might be avoided if we risk the temporary hurt truth might cause?"**

Having argued that truth should be in the service of love, I would hasten to add that in many instances in which avoidance of the truth *seems* an act of love, it is actually more like the easy way out of a tough situation. In these instances, telling the truth may cause short-term pain, but in the long term it's really more loving.

There may be the pain of mutual embarrassment if you tell a classmate or colleague about his powerful body odor. But telling him the truth will be for his good and certainly that of those around him. A more difficult example is when you see a friend's life going in the wrong direction. How easy it is for many of us to say nothing, rationalizing that we shouldn't set ourselves up as judges or be pious meddlers, and that our friend couldn't handle the truth very well anyway. How much long-term pain might be avoided if we were willing to risk the temporary hurt and misunderstanding telling the truth might cause?

Applying the principle to an entirely different setting, how much of the cynicism and loss of faith we see in the church today might have been avoided if, throughout the denomination's history, there had been a little more confidence in the members' ability to handle the truth about the nature of Ellen White's inspiration and work?

Revealing more of the truth earlier on would no doubt have caused some pain, but might not that have been preferable to the disruption of having it forced out in an atmosphere of acrimonious dissent? And might many today who are disillusioned instead have a strong faith in Ellen White's gift and a receptiveness to her counsels, if there had been greater openness? Of course, hand-wringing about the past isn't the point. Nor is it to cast scorn on conscientious church leaders who did what they thought best. The question is, will the church of today see a lesson in all of this?

We all face difficult decisions about when to tell the truth, when to partially disclose it, and when to withhold it altogether. Thankfully, those decisions can be made in the fellowship of One who is himself the Truth (John 14:6).

D. F. M.



1. Is it ever right to lie? What about lying
  - to avoid hurting someone's feelings?
  - to protect a friend from embarrassment?
  - to save a life?
  - to comfort the sick and dying?
  - for the sake of the Christian church?

In more specific terms, what would you do if

—you noticed some classmates cheating on a lab assignment.

They convince you it's justified this time and they won't do it again. So, you promise not to tell on them. Later, the teacher asks you if you know if any cheating has been going on.

—a friend of yours got pregnant and had an abortion. She's trying to make a new start with God. The dean, however, has become suspicious and asks you what you know.

—you were a student missionary in Central America and terrorists accost you, asking if you know the whereabouts of a certain individual (and you do know).

Discuss the probable consequences of your choices.

2. What lessons do you derive from the biblical incidents cited in this week's lesson about the following people?

Ananias

Rahab

Abraham

Samuel

Micaiah

3. Do church members have a right to know the full truth about every foible and misdeed of their leaders? Or could there be times when it would be more helpful to the cause of God if certain facts are not revealed?
  4. If a teacher or minister employed by the church holds views that are at variance with the church's official position, is it dishonest for him or her to keep silent about those convictions in order to retain employment?
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# Freedom for Self-Giving

“... Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant ...”  
(Matthew 20:26, NIV).



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# What Does It Profit?

by Sam Vigil, Jr.

## INTRODUCTION

There once were three men who grew up together. They were of the same faith, and attended religious schools all the way through college. One had studied to become a medical doctor, so he went off to the great medical school in the south land where many of his faith had gone before him. Another decided he would be a man of jurisprudence and he, too, headed for a school of great prestige in the south, not far from the seaside and the land of the beautiful people. The third man decided to make his fortune in the world of business. So he packed his bags and headed to that lauded business school in the east.

As in their youth, each of these men was diligent in his studies and in his work to earn money on the side. For you see, each of these men was driven by ambition, seeking his place of prominence and fortune.

The medical doctor soon completed his residency and was hailed as a great heart specialist with much talent and leadership ability. The one who had studied law was much sought after when his bar exam score was revealed. He joined a prestigious, well-known firm in the city by the bay in the north, the land from whence he came.

The businessman in the east settled in the land of sunshine and tropical breezes to the south. He had grown accustomed to the sunny weather of his western homeland. He soon was busy buying and sell-

ing real estate and building his business in international trade.

Now through the years these men did come together and compare their successes. Each wanted to hear of the others' accomplishments, comparing them to his own. Each family had its three-car garage, big station wagon and sports car, catamaran in the third garage stall and 42-foot sailboat tied safely in its slip at the marina.

Now these men worked long, hard hours to be successful. At times the children complained that daddy was not home enough to do the fun things a family should do. Often the wives complained to their husbands and pleaded that they spend the time they should with their families.

The years passed, the children grew, and the families moved to bigger houses with larger garages and deeper swimming pools.

Then one day the lawyer in the north clutched his chest as the pain surged through his chest and left shoulder. He died before the paramedics arrived.

A few days after the funeral, the lawyer's wife was briefly cheered when she received letters from the wives of the medical doctor and the businessman. Alas, she did cry as she read the newspaper clippings of the deaths of the heart specialist and businessman.

What does it profit a man. . . .

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Sam Vigil, Jr. was living in Modesto, California at the time of this writing.

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# The Secret of Contentment

**LOGOS** One of the most significant trends in our society seems to be an increasing preoccupation with materialism. People sue with little provocation for prohibitive damages. Workers strike to gain increases in wages and benefits at the risk of their jobs. Pro athletes with salaries greater than that of the President of the United States hold out for more simply because a teammate is making more. It seems that never have so many been so affluent yet so dissatisfied. The eighties might be more accurately described as the "age of greed."

God, of course, has always known about this inclination in human nature, and he gave the tenth commandment to counteract it. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex. 20:17, NIV). This commandment is the only one (with the possible exception of the first) that deals primarily with thoughts and motives rather than actions. The others all refer specifically to physical acts an individual commits. But covetousness becomes sin long before thoughts are translated into actions. The underlying principle of love, however, remains the same. If we love God, our lives will be characterized by generosity rather than greed.

Paul attributed his contentment in all situations to the realization that God would supply whatever was necessary for him. ". . . I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether being in plenty or in want." "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:11, 12, 19, NIV).

Love is by definition unselfish. Love expressed by God must therefore be the supreme example of unselfishness. Christ's mission on earth was characterized by constant, generous giving. As he put it, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18, 19, NIV). But Christ was not to be the only herald of this message of unselfish love. His people are to follow his example of self-giving. All must grapple with the challenge given the rich young ruler: "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Luke 18:22, NIV). For if we do follow him, our love for him will gradually translate into an unselfishness like his. Otherwise, the consequences are invariably severe. Greed has the nasty habit of eventually devouring the person who indulges in it. Greed seems to be mutually incompatible with happy endings—lending credence to the haunting query of Christ: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

L. R. C.

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# Warnings Against Avarice

selected by Frederick J. Mantz

A young man came to Christ, and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus bade him keep the commandments. . . . Jesus looked with love upon the young man, and faithfully pointed out to him his deficiency in keeping the divine law. He did not love his neighbor as himself. His selfish love of riches was a defect, which, if not remedied, would debar him from heaven.

Christ would have the young man understand that He required nothing of him more than to follow the example that He Himself, the Lord of heaven, had set. He left His riches and glory, and became poor, that man, through His poverty, might be made rich; and for the sake of these riches, He requires man to yield earthly wealth, honor, and pleasure. He knows that while the affections are upon the world, they will be withdrawn from God. . . .

Here is the danger of riches to the avaricious man; the more he gains the harder it is for him to be generous. To diminish his wealth is like parting with his life; and he turns from the attractions of the immortal reward, in order to retain and increase his earthly possessions. Had he kept the commandments, his worldly possessions would not have been so great. How could he, while plotting and striving for self, love God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself?<sup>1</sup>

The people of God, . . . are to put off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let no man set up his idols of gold, or silver, or lands, and give the service of his heart to this world, and to its interests. There is a mania for speculating in land, pervading both city and country. The old safe, healthful paths to competence are losing their popularity. The idea of accumulating substantial means by the moderate gains of industry and frugality, is an idea that is scorned by many, as no longer suited to this progressive age.

The desire to engage in speculation, in buying up country and city lots, for anything that promises sudden and exorbitant gains, has reached a fever heat; and mind, and thought, and labor are all directed toward securing all that is possible of the treasures of earth in the shortest possible time. Some of our youth bid fair to be hastened on to ruin, because of this feverish grasping for riches. This desire for gain opens the door of the heart to the temptations of the enemy. And the temptations that come are of such an alluring nature, that there are some who cannot resist them. . . .<sup>2</sup>

I saw that many souls will sink in darkness because of their covetousness. The plain, straight testimony must live in the church, or the curse of God will rest upon His people as surely as it did upon ancient Israel because of their sins. God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them. If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins."<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

**Key texts:**  
**Luke 12:15-21;**  
**Philippians**  
**4:11, 12**

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Frederick J. Mantz, D.D.S., M.S., is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon in Modesto, Calif.

1. *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 210-212.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 231.  
3. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 269.

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# Shaking the "Me-First" Syndrome

by  
Annette Pappas

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Mark 8:35-37

When we think of the meaning of the tenth commandment, we usually think of the obvious—the inordinate desire or affection for the person or property of someone else. But there is an even deeper meaning. Indeed, this commandment strikes at the root from which all other sins spring—selfishness or what we could call the "me-first" syndrome. Unlike most of the other commandments, which are primarily oriented toward deeds or objective actions, this command seeks to control our inward desires, "the motives that give birth to deeds."<sup>1</sup> Those laws instituted by man go no further than the deed, but this commandment teaches us that we are just as responsible to God for our thoughts as for our actions.

More than this, the tenth commandment involves the basic question of our allegiance—supreme love and regard for God versus the idolatry of self. The law demands that we love and serve God with the best that is in us—all our affections, spiritual and intellectual powers, and strength. Where supreme love to God reigns, the natural outgrowth is love and tender regard for the needs of others, and idolatry ceases to exist. In light of this commandment, we could never say that we are simply victims of fate, but having been granted the God-given gift of free moral agency, we are free to *choose*, through the power of the Spirit, to control every thought and motive.

The tenth commandment is based on one of the most fundamental of all truths, a basic principle of life in this universe: to give is to live and to take without thought of others is ultimately to destroy life. Taylor Bunch, in his book *Bible Paradoxes*, puts it this way: "It is the principle operating everywhere that he who shares what he values is rewarded by its increase, and he who hoards it for his own selfish use will eventually lose it. . . . Love bestowed brings love in return, and the person who does not love becomes both loveless and unloved."<sup>2</sup>

Keeping the tenth commandment thus involves giving up on ourselves, a factor so basic and essential to our salvation. Life can be sustained only as we are in connection with him who is the source of all life. Separated from him, we may exist, but we do not, in essence, possess life. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6).

History teaches us the fearful result of cherishing the "me-first" syndrome, of allowing it to grow until it completely possesses the soul. We remember the doom of Achan, of Ananias and Sapphira, of Judas Iscariot, of Lucifer. Self-surrender is such a small price to pay, when the demands that might be made upon the entire universe could not compare with the boundless gift of heaven for a sinful world.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

1. Taylor G. Bunch, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 163.
2. Taylor G. Bunch, *Bible Paradoxes*, p. 28.

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Annette Pappas is a registered nurse living in Modesto, California.

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# What? Me Give?

by Brad and Jeanie Benson

Perhaps the best way to deal with covetousness is to look on the opposite, positive concept of self-giving rather than dwelling on the problem. Whether you are a college student short on funds, a young couple just starting out, or a few years removed from your alma mater and established, it may seem difficult to find something to give to others. But God has given each of us one or more gifts that we can share with someone else. Stop and look at all the things you can give.

1. **Time.** This is a commodity that everyone has the same amount of, 24 hours each day. How can you share time? You can't give an hour to your busy friend so he has 25 hours and you have 23, but you can use some of your time to make your friend's life easier. What about the student next to you struggling with the chem lab? Give your time to help him understand the concepts. Remember your neighbors who haven't been able to get out to do their grocery shopping? Give them some of your time by combining their list with yours. If you try, you'll be able to think of many other ways you can give time.

2. **Money.** This one is obvious . . . or is it? We can all contribute to the offering plate or to special appeals, but how can we make it more personal and helpful? Giving cash is not the only way of giving money. Providing job training or work opportunities may be much more helpful to the individual in the long run. Think of the skills or hobbies you have that you could teach someone else. What about your stained glass know-how or your auto mechanics expertise?

3. **Friendship.** Giving friendship is related to giving time but involves much more. It involves giving a part of yourself, sharing your life and values. Think of the people you know only superficially and would like to know better. Then think of the ones who would enjoy an invitation to lunch, who would like a jogging partner, or who would like to be involved in a babysitting co-op.

4. **God's Love.** You may be saying, "Yeah, yeah. This is an obvious one, too." And yet when you have experienced God's love and then give of your time, money, and friendship, you are in effect sharing the love, too. Your acts of self-giving convey to others God's ultimate, self-giving love. And that, of course, is the greatest thing that can be given.

"Dear friends," wrote John, "since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11, NIV).

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Acts 20:35

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Brad is a podiatrist in private practice and Jeanie is a speech pathologist. They live in Modesto, California.

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# I Don't Like Me

by Glenn Sayers

**OPINION** Most Christians today would agree that "coveting" our neighbor's things—whether it is their money, car, house, wife, what-  
**Key text:** ever—is wrong! We are to be satisfied with the things we have.  
**Jeremiah 1:5**

But what about us? What if we don't like ourselves? Is it wrong to try to "improve" upon who we are? What if we don't like the way we look? Is it "coveting" to try to improve the features we were given (or allowed to have) by God at birth? Does God expect us to be satisfied with our physical characteristics? Is it wrong to want to look like our "neighbor," or someone who we think "has it together"?

What views should a Christian take in a world where physical beauty and outward attractiveness are coveted by the masses, and are assumed by many to be the equivalent to success?

"It's a dull child who fails to notice that the ugly do not win Miss America contests; the ugly do not become cheerleaders; the ugly seldom star in movies, the ugly may not get married, the ugly have fewer friends; the ugly are less desirable!"<sup>1</sup>

"Research shows that at least half of the working women who get a face-lift can expect to receive salary increases in the months that follow. It is clear that beauty is a highly marketable commodity in the business world. Most bosses seek attractive secretaries and receptionists, whereas homely women often find it difficult to obtain a job of any kind."<sup>2</sup>

"Ugly salesmen are less successful than their handsome competitors. Homely politicians are asked to kiss fewer babies, and we all know what that means on election day. But perhaps the most common form of masculine discrimination is directed against the short man, who faces lifelong disadvantages. It is interesting to note that the taller of the two American presidential candidates has won every election since 1900, with the exception of Calvin Coolidge in 1924, and Richard Nixon in 1972. (Someone commented that both of these choices were mistakes, but I'll leave that matter to the reader.)"<sup>3</sup>

Consider the case of an Adventist young person today who is told not to wear jewelry, or "too much" makeup, because, "you look just fine the way you are." At the same time mom is spending \$25.00 every Friday morning for her professional shampoo, cut, style, and "special effects" tint—to look younger, naturally. Dad has long since lost his "golden locks," but not wanting to look old before his time, he has acquired a custom-fitted, \$400.00 toupee.

Where does the Christian view of coveting begin and end? Most Christians would agree that it is wrong to covet our neighbor's things—but is it any better to "covet" our neighbor's looks?

"Is it 'coveting' to try to improve the features we were given by God at birth?"

1. James C. Dobson, *Hide or Seek*, pp. 25, 26.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 37.  
3. *Ibid.*

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Glenn Sayers is the Associate Pastor of the Modesto Central Church in charge of youth education.



1. Do you think the three men described in the Introduction are at all typical or true to life? What were they missing out on? What could one do while still in college to avoid the plight of these individuals?
  2. How would you distinguish between legitimate desire and sinful covetousness?
  3. Which of the following best summarizes the point for us today in Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler?
    - we should never let wealth or anything else take Christ's place as the most important thing in our lives.
    - anyone wishing to follow Jesus must divest himself of all accumulated wealth, giving it to the poor and needy.
    - though we are not all required to give away everything we have, followers of Jesus will live simply and make the needs of the poor a higher priority than their own ease and luxury.What is your reaction to Ellen White's comment (see Testimony) that if the rich young ruler had truly "kept the commandments, his worldly possessions would not have been so great." Does this mean that financial success is a probable indication of commandment-breaking?
  4. Should covetousness or greed ever be cause for church discipline? Why or why not?
  5. The early Christian community in Jerusalem "had everything in common" (Acts 2:44)—they shared all of their wealth and possessions. Why don't we do that in the church today? Should we?
  6. Why do you think Paul was able to be content in all circumstances (see Logos)? Could such contentment weaken one's resolve to change things that need to be changed?
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# Freedom to Walk

“ . . . If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed’ ” (John 8:36, NIV).



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# The Serenely Sensible Shoemaker

by Jan Eastman

## INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, at the end of a steep, narrow path, there was a quaint mountain village, filled with friendly families, positive people, and a serenely sensible shoemaker. To understand how happy the villagers were in those days, you have to understand how important the Shoemaker was to the villagers. You see, the Shoemaker was renowned for the high-quality, custom-designed shoes he styled for the villagers. Whenever the Shoemaker made a pair of shoes they not only fit comfortably, but were flawlessly crafted from the highest quality of durable materials.

No two pairs of shoes that the Shoemaker made were exactly the same. It seemed as though he understood just what each person needed and carefully created a pair most suitable for that person's needs. The only criterion the Shoemaker emphasized was that whenever the villagers experienced problems with their shoes, they should bring them to him to be restored.

At one point various villagers purchased ready-made shoes from a pushy peddler anxious to pawn his wares from the big city. But it only took just a few wearings of the ready-made shoes to convince the villagers that these shoes would not endure the narrow mountain paths. The ready-made shoes were designed for the flat, open roads of the big city. And the villagers really preferred the healthful, invigorating climate

of their mountain village to that of the polluted big city.

One day, a distraught villager, who had unfortunately purchased a ready-made pair of shoes from the pushy peddler, limped into the Shoemaker's shop. "These ready-made shoes are too tight and have horrible holes in the soles after just two wearings," he complained. "Shoemaker, would you please design a new pair of shoes like the ones I neglected to have you repair?"

The Shoemaker smiled thoughtfully at the man, and quietly knelt down to measure his feet. Gently lifting each foot, and carefully noting the man's blisters and bunions, the Shoemaker set about designing a new pair of shoes, precisely suitable for the man's needs.

When the shoes were finished, the villager was of course delighted with the results. As he prepared to leave, the man could not refrain from asking the Shoemaker a question which pressed upon his mind. "How is it," he inquired, "that your shoes are so superior to those of the pushy peddler?"

The Shoemaker looked up from his workbench at the man. With a twinkle in his eye, and a sparkle in his voice, he kindly replied, "No one knows the shoes' 'soul' like I do." And with that, the serenely sensible Shoemaker turned to help another villager limping into the shop, obviously needing to be fitted for a durable pair of shoes.

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Jan Eastman is a fourth grade teacher at Portland Adventist Elementary School in Portland, Oregon.

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# Freedom in Following

**LOGOS** This quarter we've noted the freedom from guilt that forgiveness brings, and how that freedom leads us to other freedoms—those which come from living in harmony with the "Law of liberty." The liberated lifestyle of the forgiven involves more than compliance to a set of rules, however. Scripture often refers to this lifestyle as a "walk." The idea of walking subsumes the observance of a particular checklist of laws under the broader concept of experiencing the guidance and companionship of Christ, moment by moment, in every aspect of life.

Since we all have a natural bent away from God, the walk of freedom begins by *turning*—redirecting one's life. The Lord says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Eze. 33:11, NIV).

What are the characteristics of this walk that begins when one turns in the direction of life? First, it is a joyful walk. The psalmist declares, "Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11, RSV).

Second, it is an enlightened walk. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12, NIV). Though we may never have all the answers, and at times may perceive the light only but dimly, if we have Jesus we have what is essential, and we will never be overwhelmed by darkness. In the well-known imagery of the psalmist, Christ's word "is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV).

And as we continue the walk with Christ, the light seems to increase in brilliance. Our perception gains greater clarity, our understanding grows, our commitment deepens. "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Prov. 4:18, NIV). Thus the Christian walk is, third, a progressive walk. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:6, 7). We cannot help but become firmly bonded with Christ and increasingly like him if we open our lives to his presence each day.

Finally, the Christian walk is a guided walk. When John saw in vision 144,000 on Mt. Zion who had been redeemed from the earth he described them as those who "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev. 14:4, NIV). Such following subordinates comfort, expediency, short-term pleasure, and even life itself, to the higher value of always staying with the Lamb's guidance.

All the elements of our walk with Christ add up to one precious reality—*freedom*. "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts." "I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free" (Psalm 119:45, 32, NIV).  
D. F. M.

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# Know That Your Hand Is Firmly Held

by Linda  
P. Rippey

The greatest freedom to reach a chosen destination is found in knowing the way and in having expert guidance in following the path. In order to *run* (not walk) on this path without falling, the Christian must know the route.

We have so often heard about the "strait gate" and "narrow, rugged way" the Christian must travel that the way seems discouraging and impossible. Without knowledge of the path this is true. What we must not forget is the guidance offered to all who want to reach the destination.

"Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves."<sup>1</sup>

God desires so strongly that we reach the heavenly destination that he has provided all we need for the trip. "If we take Christ for our guide, He will lead us safely. The veriest sinner need not miss his way. Not one trembling seeker need fail of walking in pure and holy light. Though the path is so narrow, so holy that sin cannot be tolerated therein, yet access has been secured for all, and not one doubting, trembling soul need say, 'God cares nought for me.'

"The road may be rough and the ascent steep; . . . but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet.

"And all the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are wellsprings of joy to refresh the weary. Those who walk in wisdom's way are, even in tribulation, exceeding joyful; for He whom their soul loveth, walks, invisible, beside them. At each upward step they discern more distinctly the touch of His hand; . . ."<sup>2</sup>

"No path is safe, save that which grows clearer and firmer the farther it is pursued. The foot may sometimes slip upon the safest path. In order to walk without fear, you must know that your hand is firmly held by the hand of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

"If you will seek the Lord and be converted every day; if you will of your own spiritual choice be free and joyous in God; if with glad-some consent of heart to His gracious call you come wearing the yoke of Christ, the yoke of obedience and service, all your murmurings will be stilled, all your difficulties will be removed, all the perplexing problems that now confront you will be solved."<sup>4</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Psalm 119:32

**"God's love has made it hard for the headstrong to destroy themselves."**

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

3. *Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 169.

4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*

p. 101.

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Linda P. Rippey is a clinical nurse specialist in Portland, Oregon.

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# Liberation Through the Lamb

by Tyrone L. Greene

**EVIDENCE**  
**Key text:**  
**1 Corinthians**  
**5:7**

For years prior to the "Exodus," God's chosen people were enslaved in Egypt by cruel and exacting taskmasters, princes and pharaohs. Finally, the Lord sent them the message that salvation from Egypt was at hand. As long as they were slaves in Egypt, they were not free to worship God as they should. To have freedom to walk with God, they had to leave Egypt.

In due time, the Lord would send the destroying angel to slay all first-born males within the borders of Egypt. In preparation for this event, he directed the people to take a year-old male lamb or goat and slay it. Once slain, the blood was then applied to the doorposts. Thus, all who chose to were protected from the destroying angel by that shed blood.<sup>1</sup>

The angel came. Where there was no covering blood there were screams of greatest anguish and horror, for the first-born sons suddenly and mysteriously died. While in the dwellings of the Israelites, all quietly and solemnly contemplated the meaning of the preparations, the meal, and the commands from Moses. The Lord strongly impressed upon their minds, that, if it wasn't for the shed blood covering them, they too would be suffering His judgments.<sup>2</sup> No dwelling was safe if it did not have the blood applied, not even Pharaoh's palace.

After the angel had passed through, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. He pleaded with them and the Israelites to go and take all their possessions with them, to take whatever they needed, and above all else make haste!

The call went out to all. Now was salvation from Egypt. Now was the hand of God bringing them forth to walk in freedom. Now was he setting them up as his redeemed, for all the nations to behold and ponder. So great did the Israelites now appear in the eyes of the Egyptians, that nothing the Israelites asked for was withheld.

In due time, the Lord brought the Israelites and the Egyptians who forsook their land to worship the living God, to the base of Mt. Sinai. There he proclaimed once again that it was he who redeemed them, it was he who provided them with the only means of their protection and deliverance. All that had happened for them was his work. As the people stood before God listening to these words, their minds returned to the Lord's Passover—their hearts were pricked. In solemn awe and humility they stood before the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

With the people in this condition, the Lord of Hosts spoke his statutes in awesome grandeur.<sup>4</sup> Released from bondage they could now walk as God's free people.

Because of the Passover and the blood, they were free of the claims of Egypt. The lamb paid with its life the only price of their redemption. As they began to realize this, the Lord then spoke the foundation of his government, the law of love and showed them that he alone is to be the supreme object of their love, worship and commitment. He points to the blood as the token of freedom and to his laws as the way to walk.

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 279.  
2. *Ibid.*  
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 306, 312.  
4. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

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Tyrone L. Greene is a technical illustrator in Portland, Oregon.

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# How to Walk in Divine Company

by Scot Roskelley

Who would think of climbing Mt. Everest without a talented, experienced guide? Without a guide, the dangers would drastically increase and the odds for reaching the top would diminish considerably.

So it is with the Christian walk. Without our acknowledgement that God is the only "certified" guide, we are destined to fall—and never reach our goal of happiness and eternal life.

Helen Wodehouse, a twentieth-century thinker, once said, "We think we must climb to a certain height of goodness before we can reach God. But he says not, 'At the end of the end of the end of the way, you may find me.' He says, 'I am the Way; I am the road under your feet, the road that begins just as low down as you happen to be.' If we are in a hole, the Way begins in a hole. The moment we set our face in the same direction as His, we are walking with God."<sup>1</sup>

The walk with God as our guide demands two-way communication. Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century Carmelite monk sets forth several excellent steps for communicating with God, and staying on track, as it were.

1. "The most holy, common and necessary practice in the spiritual life is the practice of the presence of God; that is, habitually to take pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and conversing with Him lovingly at all seasons, at every minute, without rule or measure—above all in the time of temptations, sorrows, dryness, distaste, even of infidelities and sins."

2. "One must try continually so that all his actions without distinction may be a sort of little conversation with God; however, not in a studied way, but just as they happen with purity and simplicity of heart."

3. "During our work and other actions . . . let us stop a few minutes, as often as we can, to adore God in the depths of our hearts, to enjoy Him, as it were, in passing and in secret . . . to adore Him interiorly."

"What can there be more pleasing to God than thus a thousand times a day to leave all creatures in order to retire and worship Him in one's interior?"

4. "We must carefully examine which are the virtues most necessary for us, those most difficult to acquire, the sins into which we most frequently fall, and the most usual and unavoidable occasions of our falls. In the time of struggle, we should have recourse to God with entire confidence and remain in the presence of His divine majesty. We ought to adore Him humbly and declare to Him our misery and weakness. . . . By this means shall we find in Him all virtues, even though we do not possess one."<sup>2</sup>

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Colossians 2:6, 7

1. Hallmark, *Springs of Devotion*, p. 5.  
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-38.  
Suggested Reading: *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence, Spire Books; Old Tappan, N.J., 1972.

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Scot Roskelley is a Public Relations specialist from Portland, Oregon.

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# An Exclusive Attachment

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## OPINION

**Key texts:**  
**Mark 2:14;**  
**Psalms 119:45**

What does the text [Mark 2:14] inform us about the content of discipleship? Follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after. It is not a cause which human calculation might deem worthy of our devotion, even the devotion of ourselves. What happens? At the call, Levi leaves all that he has—but not because he thinks that he might be doing something worth while, but simply for the sake of the call. Otherwise he cannot follow in the steps of Jesus. This act on Levi's part has not the slightest value in itself, it is quite devoid of significance and unworthy of consideration. The disciple simply burns his boats and goes ahead. He is called out, and has to forsake his old life in order that he may "exist" in the strictest sense of the word. The old life is left behind, and completely surrendered. The disciple is dragged out of his relative security into a life of absolute insecurity (that is, in truth, into the absolute security and safety of the fellowship of Jesus), from a life which is observable and calculable (it is, in fact, quite incalculable) into a life where everything is unobservable and fortuitous (that is, into one which is necessary and calculable), out of the realm of finite (which is in truth the infinite) into the realm of infinite possibilities (which is the one liberating reality). Again it is no universal law. Rather it is the exact opposite of all legality. It is nothing else than bondage to Jesus Christ alone, completely breaking through every programme, every ideal, every set of laws. No other significance is possible, since Jesus is the only significance. Beside Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters.

**"Beside Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters."**

When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person. The grace of his call bursts all the bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the gospel. Christ calls, the disciple follows; that is grace and commandment in one. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments" (Ps. 119:45).

Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render the discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

Excerpted from *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp. 62-64.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of this century's leading Protestant theologians.



1. John 8:11 (see Logos) promises that if we follow Christ, who is the light of life, we will never walk in darkness. How might the metaphorical concepts of "following" and "light" be translated into specific, practical terms? Through what means does Christ provide "light" and how do we go about "following" someone we cannot see, hear or touch?
  2. Ellen White comments that "God's love has made it hard for the heedless and the headstrong to destroy themselves" (see Testimony). Does this mean it is easier to walk with Christ than it is to walk in the direction away from him? Explain.
  3. What is the experiential significance of the Passover for us (see Evidence)? Does this story suggest anything about the relationship between forgiveness and liberation?
  4. What do you think Bonhoeffer meant by the following statements in the Opinion article?
    - "To follow in his steps is something which is devoid of all content"
    - "The disciple is dragged out of his relative security into a life of absolute insecurity"
    - "It [discipleship] is the exact opposite of all legality"Do you agree with his comments? Why or why not?
  5. This week's How To suggests that we practice the presence of God and habitually take pleasure in his company. Is it really possible to do that in the hectic routine of work and study that most of us are involved in? If so, how?
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# HEAD TO HEAD



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Vail Photo by Peter Runyon

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