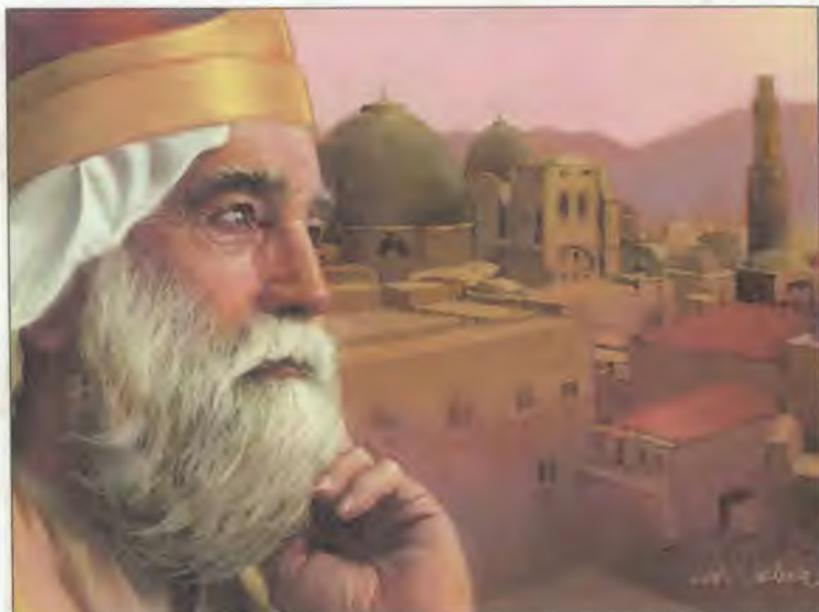


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Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (ISSN 1096-7400) (Standard Edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193, U.S.A. One-year subscription in U.S.A., \$8.79; single copy, \$3.99. One-year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$11.79; single \$3.99. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Periodicals postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (Standard Edition), P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353. Printed in the United States of America.

Editions in Braille available. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.
Easy Reading Edition available. Contact Pacific Press®, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687.

Copyright © 2000 by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A.

Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (ISSN 1096-7400)/No. 422/October-December 2000.

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The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the authors.

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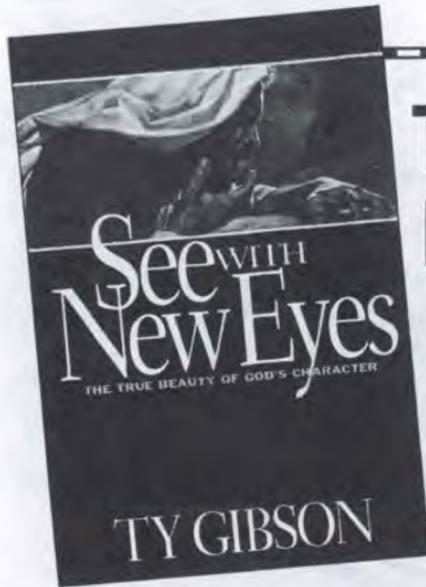
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**But our prayers do make
a difference.**

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whether in another country or
in your backyard.**

**And remember the
Trans-European Division
this Thirteenth Sabbath.**

Proverbs

Wisdom to Live By

The book of Proverbs was written primarily by Solomon, son of David, in the early part of his reign as king of Israel. "In the proverbs of Solomon are outlined principles of holy living and high endeavor, principles that are heaven born and that lead to godliness, principles that should govern every act of life. It was the wide dissemination of these principles, and the recognition of God as the One to whom all praise and honor belong, that made Solomon's early reign a time of moral uplift as well as of material prosperity." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 33, 34.

The last two chapters of the book are attributed to "Agur" and "Lemuel." Some scholars have assumed that these two names refer to Solomon. Others have concluded that they were unknown compilers or authors.

We know from 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon "uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five" (RSV). His fame spread abroad; the wisdom with which he was endowed was the wonder of the whole world. "And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind" (1 Kings 10:24, RSV).

The purpose of these lessons on Proverbs is to demonstrate that only as we have a living fellowship with God can we maintain purity of heart and conduct. Knowing God through Christ as Savior and King affects every area of our lives. True religion is the power for moral and ethical purity. Proverbs is a book of practical religion designed to demonstrate the results of faith in action. It is a tool for the purpose of enabling believers to act wisely, to think about what they do and why they do it, and to be more sensible and sensitive citizens as a result of integrating learning and faith.

We will study the book of Proverbs topically rather than verse by verse because the issues and themes raised in the book are not in any apparent order, and some of them recur a number of times.

The major purpose of education is the redemption of the individual—to impart God's character to those who are willing, so that their thoughts, words, and deeds are truly representative of Him. The proverbs and these lessons were designed: (1) to provide a view of our need; (2) to lead us to the Source of wisdom, power, and salvation; and (3) to furnish a practical guide for every motor area of life. Hence the title—*Proverbs, Wisdom to Live By*.

First Things First



Sabbath Afternoon

LEARNING IS INTENDED TO MAKE US WISE. What, though, is wisdom? Education is a vital component to success in today's world. But when we think it is the only means to success, we usually lose sight of the purpose and importance of true education. Then education becomes a frantic struggle for academic success, with financial security as the ultimate aim.

"Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man."—*Education*, p. 13.

William Cowper stated, "Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one, have oftentimes no connection." Unless our learning acquaints us with the Source of all wisdom and righteousness, unless through His power we are being restored to His image, unless we fix our sights on the far reaches of eternity and value everything in this life accordingly, all acquired knowledge, learning, and skill will fall short of true education, for they do not make us truly wise.

This week's lesson will answer the following questions: *What are wisdom and righteousness?* and *Why does the Lord invite us to seek them?*

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. What Is Wisdom? (Prov. 1:1-7; 2:10, 11).
- II. The Value of Wisdom (Prov. 4:5-7).
- III. How Do We Get Wisdom? (Prov. 2:1-6; James 1:5).
- IV. What Is Righteousness? (Prov. 2:7-10; 21:3).
- V. Righteousness and Wisdom (Prov. 2:1-6, 9).

MEMORY TEXT: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

WHAT IS WISDOM? (Prov. 1:1-7; 2:10, 11).

The value of receiving God's wisdom forms the theme of the book of Proverbs. Solomon emphasizes that wisdom is to direct every area of our lives. Wisdom unites holiness and the common duties of life. Wisdom is to think and act as God would think and act in any situation.

What is a proverb? What does Solomon state as the purpose of his proverbs? Prov. 1:1-6.

DEFINITION. *The Hebrew word translated "proverb" means "to compare." A proverb comprises a brief statement of practical wisdom in which one truth is briefly expressed through comparison or contrast (see Prov. 10:20). Most of the proverbs contain two or three lines corresponding in structure and length and arranged for purposes of comparison and contrast.*

What is wisdom? (Prov. 1:7) _____

How is it related to knowledge? (Prov. 2:9, 10) _____

To whom is wisdom available? (Prov. 1:20-23; 8:1-5) _____

There is no true wisdom apart from "the fear of the Lord" (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Where the context indicates, this fear does not refer to being afraid but to reverence and deep respect. (See Exod. 20:20.) The ability to act wisely stems from a heart united with God and an ear listening for His guidance—"This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21).

In some eras of history, people regarded philosophical knowledge as having supreme value. In our age, many people view scientific knowledge as of greater value than either philosophical or religious knowledge. The kind of knowledge God invites us to receive, however, is an experience in holiness. To know by experience Christ's saving grace opens for us the gates of God's eternal city.

What is of greater value to you, an education that the world respects or a personal union with Christ? Explain. How would you advise a young person if she or he were confronted with a choice between achieving recognition in the world and obeying the commandments of God?

THE VALUE OF WISDOM (Prov. 4:5-7).

How do the following scriptures describe the value of wisdom? Why are these descriptions so appropriate?

Prov. 4:5-7 _____

Gal. 5:17-26 _____

Nothing can compare in value with the life that is “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). When we put away the old life of sin and let Christ control our mind, body, emotions, motives, and plans, our ethical and moral practices will be wise. (See Col. 3:5-10.)

In contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:19-21 lists the fruit of the flesh. How is today’s society exhibiting this fruit? How can having the fruit of the Spirit in our lives improve our lifestyle? (Examples: Joy, peace, and patience can reduce stress. Temperance gives us a foundation of self-control through Christ upon which all grace and victory depends. For further study, see *Temperance*, p. 201.)

List some of the advantages enjoyed by those who obtain true wisdom. Prov. 2:10-22; 4:6-13; 8:14-16, 18; 9:10, 11.

Prov. 2:10-22 _____

Prov. 4:6-13 _____

Prov. 8:14-16, 18 _____

Prov. 9:10, 11 _____

“Discretion will protect you” (NIV). “Love for truth leads to a consideration of right and wrong and a purposing in the heart to avoid that which is evil. Daniel had thus counted the cost and determined not to partake of meats offered to idols, . . . whatever might be the outcome. Such preconsideration arms against temptation and protects from failure under sudden pressure (Dan. 1:8).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 953.

What other people in the Bible can you think of who, because of their love for truth, purposed in their hearts to avoid evil? What do their lives teach us about wisdom?

Are you seeking the kind of wisdom that comes from God or that which the world respects? How would you define the difference between these two kinds of wisdom?

HOW DO WE GET WISDOM? (Prov. 2:1-6; James 1:5).

How should we seek for wisdom? Prov. 2:1-6; Jer. 29:13; James 1:5.

Jesus' parable of the treasure hidden in a field provides a classic illustration of the value of the heavenly treasure and the effort we need to make to obtain it. (See Matt. 13:34.) Spiritual wisdom is part of this treasure, and while it is a gift of God, He gives it only to those who earnestly seek it.

"Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul temple, proclaiming, 'I stand at the door, and knock.' As a heavenly merchantman, He opens His treasures and cries, 'Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' The gold that He offers is without alloy, more precious than that of Ophir; for it is faith and love. The white raiment He invites the soul to wear is His own robe of righteousness; and the oil for anointing is the oil of His grace, which will give spiritual eyesight to the soul in blindness and darkness, that he may distinguish between the workings of the Spirit of God and the spirit of the enemy. 'Open your doors,' says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, 'and transact your business with Me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of Me.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 965, 966.

To buy requires more than mere desire or words of appreciation. It suggests a covenant contract. Notice that the above Spirit of Prophecy quotation illustrates this relationship.

God gave Solomon wisdom that "excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 4:30). "The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17, NIV).

Time is money and life. Every day each of us spends time in trade for one kind of treasure or another. With whom are you doing your business? Of what character are your transactions?

Have your priorities become confused as to what constitutes true wealth? What do you put first each day?

What influences do you allow to govern your decisions? What goals direct your conduct?

WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS? (Prov. 2:7-10; 21:3).

What characteristics do the righteous have? Prov. 29:6, 7; 11:30; 12:3. How do we obtain righteousness? Prov. 2:7-10.

The Bible never separates the believer's righteousness from Christ's dwelling in the heart. The covenant relationship with God, by which His Spirit reigns within, is the only source of righteousness. (See Rom. 8:9, 10; 10:6-10.) The power to think righteous thoughts and do righteous deeds is available only to the person who has friendship and fellowship with Christ.

"So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

What two types of activity does Proverbs 21:3 contrast, and how does God relate to each? Compare Isaiah 1:10-18.

Can't you almost hear the Lord's frustration mingled with heartbreak for His wayward people? "Come!" He pleads. "Let Me give you a solution to your situation. I can change your sinful heart. Sacrifices were intended to remind you of the Messiah to come, but only I can take away your sin. Even though your sins are like crimson, I can make them as white as snow." (See Isa. 1:10-18; Amos 5:21-24.)

Unless the carnal mind is crucified, there is no salvation. (See Rom. 8:6.) Any kind of sacrifice with an unsurrendered heart is only a form of godliness without the power. God rejects all rituals and human performances in the absence of His righteousness. This alone renders the heart right and just.

Jesus became human that He might reveal beyond all question what God is like and what He really wants of His people. The Lord declared, "Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7; see also Ps. 40:8). It was not merely to prove it could be done that Jesus lived a life of harmony and obedience. His life revealed what was in His heart. He offers this same experience to all who will receive it. (See Ezek. 36:26; Heb. 8:10.)

As you examine your heart critically, on whose righteousness do you tend to depend: Christ's or your own?

Do you feel God accepts you because of the good things you do or because of what Christ has done and is doing for you?

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WISDOM (Prov. 2:1-6, 9).

Explain the relationship between righteousness and wisdom. Prov. 2:1-6, 9; 23:23, 24.

In the Old Testament, those having wisdom are not necessarily the “wise” of the book of Proverbs. They may be: (1) those who practice magic arts (Exod. 7:11; Isa. 47:9, 10); (2) those with special skills (Exod. 36:8; 2 Chron. 2:12); (3) those who are clever, sly, or cunning (2 Sam. 14:2); (4) those who have the practical wisdom to handle the perils of life (Prov. 6:6; 14:24); (5) cultured, educated people (1 Kings 4:29); and (6) those who accept commandments and instruction (Prov. 3:1; 8:33).

In contrast, the kind of wisdom that the book of Proverbs discusses is the righteousness that results from a covenant relationship with God. When the Lord has control of a mind through the power of His Spirit, that mind is a wise, righteous mind.

A righteous person is wise in a multitude of ways, many of which the book of Proverbs spells out. The author is not saying that we become righteous in God’s eyes when we act in a wise manner. Rather, the message is that when we come to know the Lord—as it is our privilege to know Him—our thoughts, words, and deeds are wise because Christ has become our righteousness and wisdom. (See 1 Cor. 1:30.)

From a human perspective, wisdom is to engage in both good and evil. Human wisdom seeks to become wise in *all* things and does not settle on anything as absolute truth.

God’s wisdom, on the other hand, is to know the difference between good and evil and to choose only the good. The power to choose the good and practice it is made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

Humankind lost ready access to God’s wisdom at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Everyone seeks wisdom, but how many really comprehend what wisdom truly is? In the book of Proverbs, God reveals His wisdom as the answer to human inquiry.

It is notable that all so-called sacred writings outside the Bible basically teach the necessity of a balance between good and evil as the foundation of wisdom. In contrast, Proverbs explains wisdom as being centered in God, with each proverb depicting a contrast between God’s way and the world’s way. The message of Proverbs is indeed the good news that a divine power is available to help us live in harmony with God. “He guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones” (Prov. 2:8, NIV).

**How can you recognize God as the Source of all true wisdom?
What are you doing about it?**

FURTHER STUDY: Study the following New Testament passages on the subject of wisdom: 1 Cor. 1:25-30; 2:6-16; 3:19.

Read "The Source and Aim of True Education," pp. 13-19, in *Education*.

"A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. . . . This knowledge is the essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 409.

"The fear of the Lord lies at the very foundation of all progress; it is the beginning of wisdom. Your Heavenly Father has claims upon you; for without solicitation or merit on your part He gives you the bounties of His providence. . . . As you are bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, He requires that you make a right use of the privileges you enjoy. Your intellectual and moral faculties are God's gifts, talents entrusted to you for wise improvement, and you are not at liberty to let them lie dormant for want of proper cultivation, or be crippled and dwarfed by inaction. It is for you to determine whether or not the weighty responsibilities that rest upon you shall be faithfully met, whether or not your efforts shall be well directed and your best."

—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 85, 86.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is wisdom so important, and why do we need to search it? Why isn't it easier to acquire? Or is it? Explain.
2. Why aren't people more interested in looking for and finding wisdom? Why do people find it so hard to revere and respect God?
3. How can you prove to a nonbelieving friend that God's wisdom gives greater rewards than the world's wisdom?
4. You will notice as you study that Proverbs refers to wisdom in the feminine. Why do you think this is so? See Revelation 12: 21:9. As you read Proverbs, could you substitute the word *church* for the word *wisdom*? How would doing so increase your understanding of the church?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the questions asked at the beginning of the week: What are wisdom and righteousness? Why does the Lord invite us to seek them?

The fear of the Lord—a relationship of reverence, admiration, and trust—puts the seeker of wisdom in touch with its Source. It enables us to view life from the perspective of eternity and to make decisions accordingly, placing us in the line for ultimate success.



The Robbers Repent

J. H. Zachary

Every week Pastor Karro Rao gathered the tithes and offerings from the churches of his district in the South Western Mission of Papua New Guinea to take to the mission office. The week's offerings usually amounted to close to 3,000 *kinars* (U.S. \$1,500).

As he made his way along the narrow road, a bamboo pole suddenly fell across his pathway and four robbers surrounded him. One wielded a knife; another a homemade gun. "Are you carrying money?" they asked.

"Yes," the pastor answered truthfully.

"Then hand it over," one man ordered.

"I can do that," the pastor answered. "But you must know that this money does not belong to me. I am a pastor. This money was given by my church members for the work of God. I have 5 *kinars* of my own money that I will give to you, but I urge you to not touch God's money."

"Give us all of the money!" the robbers ordered threateningly.

Pastor Rao gave the bandits all the money he was carrying. After the bandits disappeared, Pastor Rao hurried to a telephone and called the mission office to report the theft. Then he asked the office staff to pray that God would help get the money back.

Six days later Pastor Rao was walking along the same pathway when a bamboo pole again dropped across the path in front of him. This time the pole had a plastic bag attached to it. It was his money bag. Before he could retrieve the bag, the same four criminals surrounded him. "Please take this money and give it for God's work," one man said.

Curious, the pastor asked, "What happened to make you change your mind?"

"We wanted to buy some beer and get drunk. But when we tried to open the bag of money, our hands began to shake so violently that we could not open it."

Pastor Rao answered, "Thank God! He loves you so much, and He has a better life planned for you. I am sure that you do not want to spend the rest of your life hurting people."

Pastor Rao developed a friendship with these men, and within a few months one of them was baptized. The others are still preparing to experience that better life that Pastor Rao has promised them.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Produced by the Office of Mission

Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference

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A Star to Guide the Humble



Sabbath Afternoon

WHAT IS TRUST, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Faith, the hand that lays hold upon God's resources, consists of more than just belief; trust is a vital part. What, though, is trust? How does it work?

Does trust belong in a compartment separate from daily life, preserved only for religion? Is it practical? Can it benefit anybody?

These questions deserve answers. Indeed, we need these answers in order to survive.

Trust includes the willingness to commit oneself to the care of the one trusted. It is one thing to agree that a tightrope walker is capable of wheeling a person in a wheelbarrow on a rope strung over a thundering waterfall. It is quite another to volunteer to ride in the wheelbarrow.

A dictionary defines trust as complete assurance regarding the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. Trust involves placing confidence in someone, depending on that person, committing oneself to her or his care, and relying totally on her or his integrity.

Jesus is the only One we can fully trust. He is like a gleaming star on a clear night to whom each believing traveler may look for guidance and comfort. This week's lesson will answer the questions *What is trust?* *What is it for?* and *Whom is it for?*

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. What Trust Is Versus What Trust Is Not (Prov. 22:17-19).
- II. Is Our Trust Misplaced?—Part 1 (Prov. 28:26).
- III. Is Our Trust Misplaced?—Part 2 (Prov. 11:4).
- IV. A Star to Guide the Humble, Part 1 (Prov. 3:5, 6).
- V. A Star to Guide the Humble, Part 2 (Phil. 4:19; Prov. 16:9).

MEMORY TEXT: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV).

WHAT TRUST IS VERSUS WHAT TRUST IS NOT (Prov. 22:17-19).**How do we acquire trust? Prov. 22:17-10.**

Trust is God's gift to us that develops as we admit our weakness and submit to His enabling might. God does not make us trust Him when we wish to doubt. Real trust is based on an intimate knowledge of the one trusted. Because we learn of and accept God's love and ability to sustain us, we trust Him. Willingness to trust God enables us to trust human beings whom we have discovered to be trustworthy.

"While God has given ample evidence for faith, He will never remove all excuse for unbelief. All who look for hooks to hang their doubts upon will find them. And those who refuse to accept and obey God's word until every objection has been removed, and there is no longer an opportunity for doubt, will never come to the light.

"Distrust of God is the natural outgrowth of the unrenewed heart, which is at enmity with Him. *But faith is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it will flourish only as it is cherished.* No man can become strong in faith without a determined effort. Unbelief strengthens as it is encouraged; and if men, instead of dwelling upon the evidences which God has given to sustain their faith, permit themselves to question and cavil [complain], they will find their doubts constantly becoming more confirmed."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 527; emphasis supplied.

What can you learn from the following scriptures concerning how trust grows and becomes strong?

| Scripture | What Did You Learn? |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Prov. 29:25 | |
| Prov. 30:5 | |
| Matt. 8:5-10 | |
| Matt. 9:2 | |
| James 1:2-8 | |

Suppose friends of yours are suffering the tragedy of losing a child in a car accident or to a fatal illness. What could you say or do to help them trust in God?

IS OUR TRUST MISPLACED?—PART 1 (Prov. 28:26).

Faith is no problem for some people—they have faith in just about anything! Trust, however, is worthless if not anchored in that which is trustworthy.

What warning does Solomon sound in Proverbs 28:26?

Self-confidence in questions involving eternal salvation and the ability to overcome sin are a sure passport to ruin. (See John 15:5; Jer. 10:23; 2 Cor. 3:5.)

“The Jewish leaders were impenitent and self-sufficient. The religious life of the Jewish nation had become a pretense. . . . When Christ came in person to set before them the principles of the law [Matt. 22:34-37], they rejected Him.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 276.

Who else is unsafe to trust besides ourselves, and why does Scripture warn us against trusting such people?

Prov. 2:11-15 _____

Ps. 41:9 _____

Jer. 17:5 _____

Scripture sends us this invitation: “Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart” (1 Pet. 1:22, NRSV). Obviously, such love involves a measure of trust. We trust those who trust the Lord—at least in regard to some things. We also trust unbelieving friends in regard to some things. It would be a fatal mistake, however, to trust fellow Christians to keep us from falling into sin. They might help, but the ultimate deliverance comes only from Christ.

Many people “have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment, questions and subjects that are new and that are ever liable to arise. They wait to see what others will think. . . . Unless these become sensible of their wavering character and correct it, they will all fail of everlasting life; they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 129, 130.

If we are sincere about our Christianity, how will God prevent us from becoming self-confident in matters of salvation?

IS OUR TRUST MISPLACED?—PART 2 (Prov. 11:4).

In our materialistic age, the tendency is to rely upon things for security. The inspired counsel is that the Lord is our only security. He expects us to do what we can to provide for ourselves and our families, but ultimately our dependence must be totally upon Him. When it is no longer possible for believers to buy or sell (Rev. 13:17), they will know from past experience the value of trust in God to carry them through the time of tribulation and persecution.

List some things that are unworthy of our trust, stating briefly why they are untrustworthy.

Prov. 3:31, 32 _____

Prov. 10:18 _____

Prov. 11:4 _____

Prov. 31:30 _____

What special blessings are given to those who trust in the Lord?

Prov. 8:17, 18.

God invites us to trust in Him to receive His righteousness. Goodness, love, mercy, and wise counsel flow from the life of the one who constantly relies upon the Lord. Self-dependence, self-assurance in spiritual life, is a snare that Satan has prepared to destroy God's people. Satan's studied purpose is to lead us to trust our own efforts and to respect our own goodness. If he were to succeed in this, we would become his victims, and the life of victory would escape us.

Proverbs 8:17, 18, says that when we trust God, He gives us “durable riches.” What are some of these riches, and how can we use them as a means of serving God?

Ps. 9:9 _____

Ps. 73:24 _____

Isa. 45:22 _____

Matt. 28:20 _____

A STAR TO GUIDE THE HUMBLE, PART 1 (Prov. 3:5, 6).

Explain why God wants us to trust Him. Prov. 3:5, 6; Matt. 6:25-34.

"If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. . . . When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101.

What principle did Paul express in 2 Corinthians 12:10?

Paul did not enjoy pain and suffering but was glad he could share in the sufferings of Christ. In times of trial and pain, he recognized more fully the need for total dependence upon the Lord. After he had prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed (2 Cor. 12:7, 8), God assured him that His grace was sufficient, that His "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul's response amounted to the declaration: "Then I am willing to acknowledge my weakness so that I can have the grace (the power) of Christ. Now I see in trials and persecution the means by which I am led to rely more fully upon the Source of my power."

List some prerequisites for answered prayer. Matt. 7:7; 1 John 3:22; 5:14, 15. Under what circumstances will God not answer our prayers? James 4:3; Ps. 66:18.

Before we ask, we must realize our need. This is one of the first conditions of effective prayer. Cherished sin makes it impossible for God to answer our prayers. When we put away sin and trust the Lord to answer us, we can be assured that He will give us whatever is for our best good.

How can we weaken our faith in God by the way we pray?

A STAR TO GUIDE THE HUMBLE, PART 2 (Phil. 4:19; Prov. 16:9).

Yesterday, we studied about why God wants us to trust Him and the part prayer has in establishing that trust. Today's lesson continues that study.

As shortsighted human beings, we tend to pray for things that would do us more harm than good. The beautiful truth is that God may deny us what we have asked for, but in its place He will give us that which is best for us. Our faith should not fail when God does not answer our prayer right away. From His divine perspective, He is able to see perfectly the results of any course of action. He knows best where we should work, with whom we should associate closely, where we should live, and what influences are most likely to prepare us effectively to spend eternity with Him. Trust Him!

After accepting Christ and the advent message, a young man went to college to prepare for the ministry. Halfway through the year he realized that he did not have enough money to continue. Earnestly he shared with a religion teacher his deep conviction that he should be a minister, but how could he ever fulfill the Lord's will if he could not afford an education? The teacher encouraged the student to remain in college for two more weeks, and they both agreed to take the young man's financial need to the Lord every day. At the end of the two weeks, the student received a letter containing a check for the amount he needed to continue in college. "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19, NIV).

What special blessing can we claim when we trust the Lord to guide us? Prov. 16:9; Ps. 32:8.

The various translations of Proverbs 16:9 help us grasp the full meaning of this blessing: "You may make your plans, but God directs your actions" (TEV). "A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure" (Amplified).

Of course, there is a definite condition to such guidance. We can expect it when we are committed to Christ and, by His grace, doing His will. Proverbs 16:8 reads: "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice" (Prov. 16:8, NIV).

Think of an example from your own experience of God's leading you in a direction that you never would have chosen for yourself. Why did His way prove to be better than the way you could have planned for yourself? Plan to share your experience with your Sabbath School class.

FURTHER STUDY: Consider the following counsel regarding the importance of trusting the Lord: Psalm 37:3-6; 118:5-8; Isaiah 26:3, 4. Also consider the following regarding the dangers of distrusting Him: Isaiah 30:1, 2; Jeremiah 5:17; 17:5.

Read *Steps to Christ*, pp. 121-124.

"If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have—the great mercy and love of God—we should have more faith and greater joy. No tongue can express, no finite mind can conceive, the blessing that results from appreciating the goodness and love of God."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 122.

"Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List and discuss some of the things that keep us from trusting God. How can we resist those influences that threaten to destroy our trust in Him?
2. What New Testament stories support Proverbs 11:4, 28; 23:4, 5? Why is it so difficult for rich people to enter God's kingdom?
3. How can we develop faith that the Lord will direct us in the practical affairs of daily life?
4. To what extent can we cooperate with God in the growth of our faith?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the following questions: What is trust? What is it for? and Whom is it for?

It is impossible for a proud heart to trust in God, but only He has the solutions for our personal and corporate problems. His blessings are available in abundance as we ask and submit ourselves to His perfect and gracious will.



A Faithful Son

Charlotte Ishkanian

Cicero was the fifth of fourteen children living in a remote region of northeastern Brazil. He was a quiet boy who worked hard. His father worked for an Adventist farmer, and when Cicero was 12 years old, the farmer invited him to work on the farm, too.

Cicero proved to be an honest and faithful worker, and the farmer's family invited him to live with them. When the family went to the city, they trusted Cicero to take care of the farm. They often talked to Cicero about God and invited him to attend church with them. Thus Cicero met God. He had never attended school, but he taught himself to read so he could read the Bible with his new family. Often the farmer saw Cicero standing among the trees, preaching to an invisible audience.

Cicero was baptized when he was 16. He enjoyed taking part in church activities and dreamed that one day he would preach in church. The lay elders often preached when the pastor was absent. Finally, Cicero found the courage to offer to preach. He carefully wrote his own sermon. After that he often preached.

As they worked together on the farm, Cicero talked to his younger brothers, José, 15, and Ricardo, 13, about God and invited them to attend church with him.

One day José and Ricardo were weeding when they heard a noise and looked up to see Cicero stumbling toward them. The boys ran to their brother. They saw that he was sick and remembered he had been spraying insecticide that morning. They realized he must be suffering from insecticide poisoning. Ricardo wanted to run for help, but Cicero stopped him. "I am going to sleep now," Cicero said. "You boys follow Jesus and tell everyone to be ready, for His coming is soon. I want to see you in heaven." Cicero was losing consciousness as Ricardo raced for help.

Cicero was unconscious when a neighbor arrived. He loaded the young man into the car for the 20-minute drive to the nearest hospital. When they arrived doctors tried to revive the boy, but he did not respond. Within an hour Cicero was dead.

Ricardo and José told their mother what Cicero had said before he died. She had attended church when Cicero preached, but her husband would not permit her to be baptized. After Cicero's death she did not ask permission. She and her children began attending church regularly. She and her daughter and José were baptized. Cicero's testimony led them to Christ. Now they want to carry his spirit of service to others.

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What I Am Versus What You Think I Am



Sabbath Afternoon

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARACTER AND REPUTATION? We have all heard that a good name is a precious thing. What is a "good name"? Is a good name the same as a good character? If someone slanders our good name, does that person destroy our good character? What can we learn from the relationship between character and reputation in human experience that will enable us to understand God's concern in the great controversy? How will that understanding help us relate to the crises in our lives?

We will look for answers to these questions in the Word of God, and especially, in the book of Proverbs. As you study, remember that it is more important to do what is right than to have a good reputation.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Pride Goes Before a Fall, Part 1 (Prov. 16:18).
- II. True Goodness (Prov. 25:6, 7).
- III. The Value of a Good Name, Part 1 (Prov. 22:1).
- IV. The Value of a Good Name, Part 2 (Prov. 30:5, 6; 14:31).
- V. The Value of a Good Name, Part 3 (Mal. 3:6; Rev. 3:12).

MEMORY TEXT: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:1, NKJV).

PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL, PART 1 (Prov. 16:18).

Many people talk and write about self-esteem. As evidence that we should love ourselves, Christian authors often quote Jesus' words " ‘Love your neighbors as yourself’ " (Matt. 19:19, NIV). It is true that when people no longer doubt their self-worth, they are more likely to love others. However, some authors suggest that personal pride is essential to success, while others regard self-respect as a humble recognition of self-worth, despite realistic awareness of one's weaknesses.

Review what self-esteem did for Lucifer. Ezek. 28:11-19.

When one's self-esteem blurs supreme love and respect for God, the result is self-idolatry. Awareness of our dependence upon the Creator for life, health, talent, wealth, and success preserves a realistic view of our own worth in relation to other created beings. Lucifer's self-esteem became unholy self-love.

What results of pride do the following verses emphasize?

| Verse | Result |
|-----------------|--------|
| Prov. 11:2 | |
| Prov. 13:10, 18 | |
| Prov. 15:25 | |
| Prov. 17:19 | |

The results of pride illustrated:

***Nebuchadnezzar** responded positively to Daniel's message (Dan. 2:47). Sometime later, however, he forgot the one true God and gave himself all the credit for his prosperity. Read Daniel 4:28-33. (As a result, he suffered from insanity for seven years.)

***Herod Agrippa I**, grandson of Herod the Great, was hailed by Tyre and Sidon as a god (Acts 12:22). Read the results in Acts 12:23.

***The disciples of Jesus** spent much time arguing over which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). This desire for self-exaltation kept them spiritually weak and disqualified them for the test of their faith during Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

Give an example from your own experience that illustrates the truth in Proverbs 16:18.

TRUE GOODNESS (Prov. 25:6, 7).

Explain why pride is so objectionable to God. Matt. 11:29; Prov. 6:16, 17.

"God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, . . . but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the eyes of God. . . . The drunkard is despised, and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character. . . . He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the blessings He came to give."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 30.

In what manner does pride often express itself? Prov. 20:6; 25:6, 7; 26:12; Luke 18:9-14.

To the majority, goodness is something that "makes you feel good." It brings you some unexpected pleasure. Or it is being kind or able to succeed in the legitimate pursuits of life.

Others believe that goodness is a cultural or societal expression of values. In some instances this is true. For example, society usually dictates the way people dress or wear their hair. To deviate from these accepted styles may mean that a person is not considered to be good.

However, in Psalm 25:8, we read the true definition of goodness. "Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Jesus said, "There is none good but one, that is God" (Matt. 19:17). God's goodness is illustrated in Jesus' life. Therefore, we must focus on Him.

What is another way in which people sometimes display pride? Prov. 31:30.

In your attitude toward others, how do you sometimes demonstrate personal pride? How would your relationships with others improve if, by Christ's grace, you learned to be humble? If pride is blinding, how does a person come to see her or his need? What internal work are you neglecting that would prevent pride from developing and manifesting itself?

THE VALUE OF A GOOD NAME, PART 1 (Prov. 22:1).

Someone has said, "Given the choice between the name of a great company and its material assets, I would choose the name." Why? Without the name, the assets would remain at a fixed value or even depreciate, whereas the name itself could rebuild the assets lost and then gain even more.

What value did Solomon place on "a good name"? Prov. 22:1.

What is a good name? Hebrew poetry is known for parallelism and pun, or its play on words, rather than for rhyme. In parallelism, a statement is made twice but expressed differently the second time. Besides adding interest, comparison of the parallel phrases achieves a deeper understanding of the subject. For instance, in Proverbs 22:1, "great riches" is echoed in "silver and gold," and "a good name" finds its counterpart in "loving favor." Solomon was not referring to a business deal. He was extolling the excellence of a good character.

In Bible times, a name was more than a mere title or identification. It represented reputation or character. It often told who you were, what you were like, what you had done, and even what you might become. (See Gen. 16:11; 17:5, 15; 32:28.) Some family names today reflect this: Mr. Cooper made barrels, while Mr. Fuller washed clothes. Smith made the anvil ring in the blacksmith shop and fashioned useful implements, and, of course, Johnson was the son of John.

"The Hebrews, like other ancient Near Eastern peoples, attached great significance to personal names. Their names had a literal meaning sometimes symbolic of the character and personality of the one it designated, and sometimes reflecting the moods or feelings of the one giving the name. . . .

"Perhaps the most popular type of name among the Israelites was one that contained some reference to the true God. Such a name was often a pious declaration of faith."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, article, "Name."

So we find Joel—"Yahweh is God," Elijah—"Yahweh is my God," Nathanael—"God has given," and Ishmael—"God hears."

This also is why the third commandment (Exod. 20:7) directs us to revere God's name. His name symbolizes His infinitely holy character (Exod. 34:5-7), so when we misuse His name, we depreciate His character. Using the Lord's name carelessly or as an exclamation demonstrates a lack of love and respect for Him, as well as a lack of trust in Him.

Why should the church as a corporate body have a good name? Explain why the actions of individual members are important in establishing a good name for the church?

THE VALUE OF A GOOD NAME, PART 2 (Prov. 30:5, 6; 14:31).

Yesterday we ended our daily study by learning about the importance of God's name and the need to respect it. Because His name symbolizes His holy character, we show disrespect for His name when we misuse it (Exod. 20:7). The third "commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 306, 307.

In what other ways can we take God's name in vain? Prov. 30:5, 6; 14:31.

When you become a Christian, you take Christ's name. "God sends you into the world as His representative. In every act of life, you are to make manifest the name of God. . . . You cannot hallow His name, you cannot represent Him to the world, unless in life and character you represent the very life and character of God. This you can do only through the acceptance of the grace and righteousness of Christ."

"It is because men take upon themselves the name of Christ, while in life they deny His character, that Christianity has so little power in the world."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 107, 137.

"The misuse of the divine name was especially heinous among people who believed that the name was an essential part of the personality. The very naming of the name invoked the power of the whole person of whom the name was a part."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 983. (See yesterday's study.)

We do not use the names of people we love and respect to curse with. By instructing us not to take His name in vain, God is telling us how worthy He really is of our admiration and love.

If we break this commandment, we are letting others know that we do not really think highly of God. The way we spend our money tells others what we consider to be important. Likewise, the words we use tell others whether or not we truly believe God is worthy of our praise.

John the revelator saw "the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1, NIV; see also 22:4). Explain the significance that the name of God and Christ is written on the foreheads of the redeemed.

THE VALUE OF A GOOD NAME, PART 3 (Mal. 3:6; Rev. 3:12).

What statement does God make regarding His character? Mal. 3:6; see also Heb. 13:8; James 1:17.

God's *character* is what He is, demonstrated by how He thinks and acts toward those He created. His perfect character is changeless. As a transcript of His character, His law also is perfect. To alter any feature of His character or His law would damage it. This He *will* not do, nor can anyone else do.

God's *reputation* is an entirely different matter. By misrepresenting His character, Lucifer gave God a bad reputation. Stirred by jealousy, he charged God with being arbitrary, harsh, unfair, and untruthful. He argued that if he were in control, things would be different.

In order to reveal the true nature of Satan's work, God must both allow sin to fully develop, and He must demonstrate His own character in contrast to that of Satan. The controversy begun in heaven continues here on earth. God gives each of us the freedom to choose whose character our lives will demonstrate—God's or Satan's. Although personal redemption is an aspect, the plan of salvation involves so much more. God wants to do more than just proclaim us righteous (forgive our past sin). He also wants to make us righteous (restore us). Through the grace and power that Jesus bought for us at Calvary, we can live out His character. Then, even though others may give us a bad reputation, they can never give us a bad character.

In heaven, what will symbolize our experience as Christians? Isa. 62:2; Rev. 2:17; 3:12.

A young groom gave his bride a new name on their wedding day—his name. For a wedding present, he gave her a small white stone inscribed with her new name. After more than twenty years, that white stone is still a treasure, for the writing on it symbolizes an experience. Everyone who knows her, knows her name. But no one else knows the precious and multi-faceted friendship the white stone symbolizes. The bride is still honored to carry her husband's name as her own and is committed to honoring him in the way she lives it.

Each overcomer, through Christ's grace, will be growing in such a unique, personal relationship.

Rank the following in order of importance to you:

What God thinks of me?

My co-workers?

My relatives?

My friends?

My church members?

My neighbors?

FURTHER STUDY: What does Hebrews 11:1-34 teach us about developing a character worthy of a Christian?

Read *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 86, 173; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 61-63.

"Banish no longer your self-respect; for I have bought you with the price of My own blood."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 520.

"Real greatness can dispense with outward show."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 242.

"A great name among men is as letters traced in sand, but a spotless character will endure to eternity. God gives you intelligence and a reasoning mind, whereby you may grasp His promises; and Jesus is ready to help you in forming a strong, symmetrical character. Those who possess such a character need never become discouraged because they have not success in worldly affairs. They 'are the light of the world.' Satan cannot destroy or make of none effect the light that shines forth from them."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 579.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What do modern philosophies teach regarding self-esteem? What does self-esteem have to do with educational achievement?**
2. **Explain what pride has to do with the great controversy. What is true humility?**
3. **How is an understanding of an experience in humility a key to developing an attitude of reverence?**
4. **Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in character development. Support your explanation with texts from the Bible.**

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the questions in Sabbath's introduction.

A good name is a priceless treasure. It increases the effectiveness of our witness. Reputation is easily destroyed by gossip or slander, but slander does not have to destroy character. The slander of God's character by the evil one and those who follow him has in no way changed His perfect purity and infinitely loving disposition. Who you really are is more important than another person's opinion about you.



The Preacher in the Forest

Andrejs Arinsh

The land in Latvia lies flat and fertile. Farmland and forest surround small clusters of homes. Life in these villages has changed little over the years. Most people farm or work in nearby textile mills, much as their parents did. And most people die in the faith into which they were born.

During Communist times the few Adventists who lived in such villages had no ordained pastor. They worshiped quietly in their homes. The young leader of one such group had a zeal for sharing his faith with others. He could never hope to study theology in a seminary, but he studied his Bible and became an active soul winner.

Word of this young man's evangelistic efforts spread, and eventually the government learned of his religious activities. They tried to quiet him through threats, but that did not work. Finally the government sent him to live and work in the forest. His job was to gather pitch to be used in the manufacture of plastics and chemicals. This assignment, the officials felt, would keep him from causing trouble for them, and since few people lived in the forest, he would have few people to influence.

But the man found that his new job did not require him to work long hours. He had even more time to visit people and share his faith. After work he rode his motorcycle into the surrounding villages, where he shared the Bible with anyone who would listen.

For years the young man worked in the forest, gathering pitch by day and visiting people at night. He traveled to every village in the region, sharing his love for Christ and studying the Bible with anyone who was interested. He organized home worship groups and encouraged the believers. Some groups had only a few members, but others had 30 or 40 members. And because he faithfully gathered his quota of pitch in the forest and limited his visitation to the small villages, the government officials seldom bothered him.

When Communism in Latvia fell and people were again free to worship publicly, these small groups of Adventists sponsored Bible seminars and evangelistic meetings, inviting their neighbors and family members. A large number of people were baptized, primarily because of the quiet work of the preacher who lived in the forest.

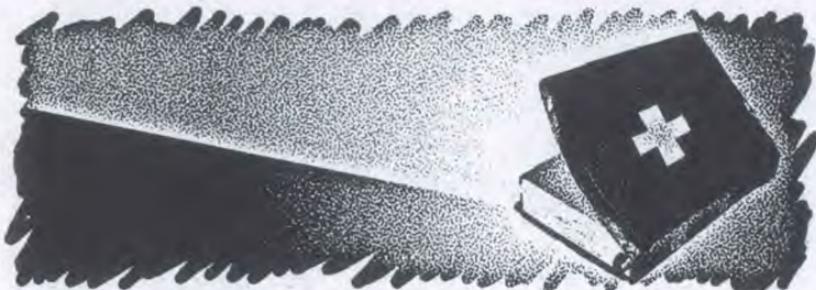
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Produced by the Office of Mission

Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference

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An Ounce of Prevention



Sabbath Afternoon

CHRIST'S POWER IS THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. Even as righteousness involves more than refraining from evil, so health is more than the absence of disease. It includes the well-being of all our capabilities.

By enticing us with many acts of intemperance, Satan seeks to destroy our mental, moral, and physical powers. He used many temptations to entrap Jesus but failed every time because Jesus relied fully on His Father's strength. Tragically, the rest of humanity has been all too responsive to evil. Noah sought refuge in alcohol. Abraham bowed to dishonesty and self-dependence. David fell prey to immorality. Moses lost his temper, and Peter contradicted his faith. The Corinthian Christians gave loyalty to men instead of Christ, and the Galatians substituted a gospel of human invention for the gospel of Jesus.

As you study this week's lesson, remember the bright side of the picture—Satan is a defeated foe. When we unite our weakness to God's might, we are more than a match for the devil's clever illusions. The choice is ours, but the power is of God.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Health and Temperance (Prov. 17:22; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).
- II. A Brawling Mocker (Prov. 20:1).
- III. Temptation to Sexual Lust (Prov. 5:1-9).
- IV. Treasure the Word (Prov. 7:1-5).
- V. Sure Defenses (Prov. 14:7; 23:17).

MEMORY TEXT: "The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their way preserve their lives" (Prov. 16:17, NRSV).

HEALTH AND TEMPERANCE (Prov. 17:22; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Temperance is to life, health, and character as mortar is to a brick building. Without temperance, one can neither build nor maintain health. The word *temperance* is an old English word used to indicate abstinence and moderation. The word's basic root meaning refers to an act of separation. The Latin root is *tempus*, meaning time, the thought of separating the past and the future. The word *temple*, also based on the root *tempus*, gives the idea of a place of separation.

Temperance then, as it relates to wisdom, is through Christ's power and our choice to separate the good from the bad. Thus, intemperance results from mingling good with evil. (See Gal. 5:23.) Temperance is exercising self-control and separating ourselves from evil, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Intemperance is the loss of self-control and joining with evil.

First Corinthians 6:19, 20 is a good prescription for preventive medicine. What does prevention imply? How does prevention apply to spiritual health?

What close relationship between the mind and body is revealed in the following verses? Prov. 17:22; 18:14.

Modern science is discovering that the bonds between the mind and the body are much closer than previously thought. What affects the body affects the mind and vice versa. Mental power is dependent on physical health, and physical well-being is fostered by a mind at peace. Spiritual power is related to both mental and physical health. As we realize that the brain is the only medium of communication between God and a person and that the mind is affected by the body, the importance of temperance comes into proper focus. (See *Temperance*, p. 13.)

"Dr. William Fry, Jr., of the Department of Psychiatry at Stanford Medical School, likens laughter to a form of physical exercise. It causes huffing and puffing, speeds up the heart rate, raises blood pressure, accelerates breathing, increases oxygen consumption, gives the muscles of the face and stomach a workout, and relaxes muscles not involved in laughing. Twenty seconds of laughter, he has contended, can double the heart rate for three to five minutes. That is the equivalent of three minutes of strenuous rowing."—Norman Cousins, *Head First, The Biology of Hope* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1989), p. 132. (For a further account, see also pp. 132-134.)

Examine your life carefully. How can you add more cheer and laughter to your day?

A BRAWLING MOCKER (Prov. 20:1).

What warnings regarding intemperance do the following verses emphasize? Prov. 20:1; 23:20, 21, 29-35.

It is a well-documented fact that alcohol impairs the mental, physical, and social well-being, thus, impairing the spiritual life. It seems to drinkers that alcohol lifts them above the cares of reality into a world of happiness, strength, and intelligence. In truth, the opposite takes place. Just one ounce of alcohol retards muscular reaction by 17.4 percent, increases the time required to make a decision by 9.7 percent, causes an increase in errors due to a lack of attention by 35.3 percent, and accelerates errors due to a lack of muscle coordination by 59.7 percent. Proverbs 31:4, 5, especially warns leaders that alcohol will destroy their capacity to make good judgments and administer wisely.

"Satan gathered the fallen angels together to devise some way of doing the most possible evil to the human family. One proposition after another was made, till finally Satan himself thought of a plan. He would take the fruit of the vine, also wheat, and other things given by God as food, and would convert them into poisons, which would ruin man's physical, mental, and moral powers, and so overcome the senses that Satan should have full control."—*Temperance*, p. 12.

Some studies seem to indicate that a little fermented wine with a meal is good for the heart. Is alcohol ever an acceptable medicine, though? According to Ellen White, the answer is No. "Physicians are responsible for making many drunkards. Knowing what drink will do for its lovers, they have taken upon themselves the responsibility of prescribing it for their patients. Did they reason from cause to effect, they would know that stimulants would have the same effect on every organ of the body as they have on the whole man."—*Temperance*, p. 42.

*"Drunkenness has killed more men than all of history's wars."
—General John J. Pershing.

*"The sight of a drunkard is a better sermon against that vice than the best sermon that was ever preached on that subject."—Sarah E. Saville.

*"Whisky is a good thing in its place. There is nothing like it for preserving a man when he is dead. If you want to keep a dead man, put him in whisky; if you want to kill a live [man], put whisky in him."
—Thomas Guthrie.

Intemperance occurs to a large extent at the social level. What solutions can we suggest and personally implement to alleviate this problem?

TEMPTATION TO SEXUAL LUST (Prov. 5:1-9).

"Much of the book of Proverbs is devoted to warnings against illicit sex experience. Sexual sins are considered especially deadly. More space is given to the warnings against this kind of sin than against any other.

"These warnings are addressed entirely to men. Here women are the seducers. Men are tempted either by a prostitute or by an adulteress. More often it is a married woman who is using her wiles in involving another married man. One reason why women were not warned against the approaches of men is that the social conventions of the time were believed to protect and guard the woman who wanted to live a chaste life. A stronger reason why these warnings were addressed to men only was that it was an age of male supremacy, and only the men were given the benefit of the instruction of the sages. Today a modern parent would be as eager to warn his daughter against the dangers of illicit sex expression as he would be to instruct his son in the evils of promiscuity....

"Illicit sex experience was considered foolish since it led to some very undesirable consequences. Instead of pointing out moral factors and the wrong that is done to others, Proverbs here [5:1-23] appeals to self-interest."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 812-814.

How can we protect ourselves from temptation to sexual immorality? Prov. 5:3-9.

In the cities of the world today, sexual indulgence is brazenly advertised as a normal aspect of human existence. Television programs, films, magazines, newspapers, theatrical performances, and billboard ads capitalize on the human fascination with physical beauty and sexual satisfaction. For the masses of humanity, long gone is the biblical principle that sex is a gift of God to be exercised only within a happy marriage. Long gone is the principle taught by Jesus that covetous thought regarding the opposite sex is sin.

How do you as a Christian cope with the sexual bombardment of the modern world? Do you find yourself unconsciously tolerating attitudes and practices that you cannot change? Do you give in to sexual indulgence or do you resist it? How would you suggest that a sexually motivated person control his or her natural appetites?

What would you say to a young person who comes to you for counsel on today's topic?

TREASURE THE WORD (Prov. 7:1-5).

Based on the following texts, explain what can keep us from sinning.

| Texts | What Keeps Us From Falling Into Sin? |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Prov. 2:10-12 | |
| Prov. 7:1-5 | |
| Prov. 14:16 | |
| Prov. 16:6 | |

Our imaginations, our physical, emotional, and psychological impulses, urge us to nourish desires that are impure and contrary to God's will. Not all the power of brain or brawn can enable us to resist the lure that leads to death. Only God can heal us.

Fear is sometimes justified. A healthy respect for the danger ahead will lead a wise person to avoid it if at all possible. In the final analysis, however, victory over temptation is found only in honest fellowship with Christ. "This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4, NKJV). When confronted by temptation, we must ask Jesus for the victory. (See Matt. 7:7, 8.) He is always willing to empower those who are tempted. Having asked, we must next praise Him for hearing and answering our prayer (see 1 Thess. 5:18), for praise demonstrates faith!

"Sir Matthew Hale told his children, 'If I omit reading a portion of Scripture in the morning, it never goes well with me through the day.' *Treasure* it up carefully, not on our shelves, but in our hearts. Let the whole Word of God be our precious treasure. Receive the promises from His grace with simple trust and *the commandments* from His holiness with ready obedience. Stand with your eye in the land of promise; but with your feet 'on level ground.' . . . If wisdom is not loved, lust will be indulged. The Bible therefore—not merely read, but the cherished object of familiar conversation—proves a sacred exorcist to expel the power of evil."—Charles Bridges, *A Modern Study in the Book of Proverbs* (Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1978), pp. 82, 83.

Psalm 119 is labeled in many Bibles as "meditations on the excellencies of the Word of God." In verse 11, David exclaims, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (NKJV). In what different ways can we hide God's Word in our hearts? How is His Word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path? (v. 105).

SURE DEFENSES (Prov. 14:7; 23:17).

In yesterday's lesson, we studied how treasuring God's Word is a sure defense against temptation. What else guards against evil? Prov. 14:7; 16:29, 30; 22:24, 25.

The British poet John Donne wrote that "no man is an island." This is certainly true when it comes to the influence we all have on one another, for we are all influenced negatively or positively by our associates. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German poet and philosopher, stated, "We are shaped and fashioned by the things we love," and most assuredly that is true regarding the people we love. While we are not to be exclusive in our social lives, we should form our closest friendships with those who will be a help on our journey, rather than a hindrance. (See 2 Cor. 6:14.)

It is not always possible to avoid situations to which we would rather not be exposed. However, with the Lord in our hearts, we can be on guard and inaccessible to wrong influences.

How does Proverbs 23:17 portray the constant communion between the true believers and their Lord?

The Lord promises to deliver us when Satan tempts us (1 Cor. 10:13). "When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. . . . It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. . . . But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. . . . We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

How do you maintain your Christian principles when you cannot avoid those who do not accept Christ?

What approaches would you suggest in relating to the following people: (1) a spouse who is not a believer; (2) an employer who does not respect your religious convictions; (3) a close friend who feels your religion is unimportant to daily life?

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 44:5-8; Romans 6:1-14; 8:37; Jude 24, 25.

Read *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 77-81, and *Counsels on Health*, p. 42.

"Through intemperance, Satan works to destroy the mental and moral powers that God gave to man as a priceless endowment. Thus it becomes impossible for men to appreciate things of eternal worth. Through sensual indulgence, Satan seeks to blot from the soul every likeness to God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 122.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This week's lesson discussed temperance in terms of alcohol and sexual lust. List and discuss other areas for problems with intemperance.
2. Many people who have succumbed to intemperate, addictive behaviors find help in 12-step programs.* These steps are: (1) admit that you were powerless over alcohol (drugs, etc.); (2) believe that a Power greater than yourself can restore your sanity; (3) decide to turn your will and life over to God's care; (4) make a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself; (5) admit to God, to yourself, and to another person the exact nature of your wrongs; (6) be entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character; (7) humbly ask Him to remove your shortcomings; (8) list all persons you have harmed and be willing to make amends to them; (9) make direct amends to these people except when to do so would injure them or others; (10) continue to take personal inventory, and when you are wrong, promptly admit it; (11) seek through prayer and meditation to improve your contact with God, praying to understand His will for you and for the power to live accordingly; (12) share this message with others and practice these principles in all aspects of life. *(Adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and printed by permission. Please refer to page 113 of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for a complete listing of the twelve steps in their original form.) Write the number of the step above that corresponds with each one of the following texts: _____ Ps. 119:28-40; _____ Mark 5:18-20; _____ Rom. 7:18-20; _____ Gal. 6:3-5; _____ Ps. 121; _____ Prov. 28:13, 14; _____ Ps. 32:1; _____ Phil. 4:6-9; _____ Acts 2:21; _____ Mark 14:38; _____ 1 Thess. 5:15; _____ Rom. 12:9, 14, 17.

SUMMARIZE why temperance is such an important part of the gospel. Include ways we can break and remain free from bad habits.



A Faithful Bus Driver

J. H. Zachary

Sachu believed that salvation came from total devotion to Muruga, the Hindu god he worshiped. He had made 16 pilgrimages to Muruga's distant shrine, determined to earn salvation through total obedience to Muruga.

Then one day Sachu's neighbor told him, "Muruga is not the true god; Jesus is." The neighbor told him many stories about Jesus from the Bible. Sachu noticed parallels between the Hindu sacred writings and the stories his neighbor told him about Jesus.

One day Sachu's neighbor invited him to attend the Adventist church. "I will come if your Jesus will relieve me from my bus duty on Saturday," Sachu told his neighbor. He was certain that this would never happen, for he always worked on Saturday.

But when he reported for work on Saturday morning, he found that he had not been assigned to work that day. Stunned, Sachu returned home to keep his promise to his neighbor and go to church. He was impressed with the Christians' worship service and began attending regularly.

Abraham, a blind church member, spent time talking with Sachu about spiritual matters. Sachu was surprised to find that the Bible contained so many answers to his questions and taught many of the same principles that Hindus teach, such as ceremonial uncleanness, tithing, and Saturday worship. Before long Sachu committed his heart to Christ and followed His command to be baptized.

Friends, family members, and his supervisors at work persecuted Sachu until he thought he would break under the pressure. But his friend Abraham helped him realize that his life and all he had belonged to God and that he must trust God.

Sachu dedicated his talents and his time to God. He began spending his time caring for the sick, visiting the lonely, and encouraging the discouraged. As his ministry grew, he cut back his work hours to make time to serve God. Many months he receives only half his normal salary, for he spends the rest of his time meeting the needs of the suffering ones in his community. People have begun calling Sachu their "elder brother."

Sachu testifies, "I have never been happier than when I am serving Jesus. I do not work for God to earn salvation; I serve God because He has made my salvation certain."

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Produced by the Office of Mission

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Your Choices Determine Your Destiny



Sabbath Afternoon

GOD'S LAW IS BINDING UPON ALL CREATION. Because Proverbs is such a practical book, it tends to deal with absolutes and ultimates. In effect, it says to us, "This is what will happen if you do that." We see this in its references to God's law. The guidelines for human life, as well as the principles governing matter and energy, are in accordance with this law.

Of course, there are always some who choose to disregard God's law. Solomon calls such people "fools," because in their quest for freedom, they become victims and captives. We cannot break God's law without suffering the consequences. Because it stands forever, the results of choosing to disregard it are inevitable.

As you study this week's lesson, remember that our salvation rests upon our willingness to enter into a faith relationship with God that results in conformity to His law.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. The Divine Standard, Part 1 (Prov. 3:1-8).
- II. The Divine Standard, Part 2 (Rom. 7:12, 14).
- III. The Folly of Lawlessness (Prov. 15:21).
- IV. The Reaping Time, Part 1 (Prov. 22:8).
- V. The Reaping Time, Part 2 (Prov. 11:3; 15:25).

MEMORY TEXT: "Folly is a joy to one who has no sense, but a person of understanding walks straight ahead" (Proverbs 15:21, NRSV).

THE DIVINE STANDARD, PART 1 (Prov. 3:1-8).

The term *law* raises varied mental images in different people. Some envision row upon row of massive bound volumes in an attorney's library. To others, it brings to mind discussions regarding the law in the Bible, whether moral or ceremonial. Still others are fascinated by the laws that govern the natural world. Which of these are God's laws? To which are we rightfully accountable?

Why is it important to live by God's law? How can we obey His law?

| Texts | Why Is It Important To Live By God's Law? | How Can We Live By God's Law? |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Prov. 3:1-8 | | |
| Prov. 4:1-4 | | |
| Prov. 6:20-23 | | |
| Prov. 7:1-5 | | |
| Prov. 13:13-15 | | |

In the book of Proverbs, we listen to a wise father teaching his child about God's law. Proverbs includes mothers as teachers of God's law, as it does all adults in Israel. Such teaching impresses upon young minds the great truths of God's Word, never to be erased.

Some Bible students have concluded that the Old Testament presents law as the means of salvation, while the New Testament presents grace. Such a distinction is unbiblical. We can obey God's holy law only by trusting in the Lord (Prov. 3:5). As the believer acknowledges the Lord in all of his or her ways, "He [God] shall direct your paths" (v. 6, NKJV). Only the one who fears (has reverence for) the Lord is able to "depart from evil" (v. 7). Fear of the Lord is the living faith of which the New Testament speaks. It results in choosing to obey God's law. (See Rom. 3:31.)

Proverbs 3:1, 2 suggests that obedience to God's law helps us live a long life. Verse 8 takes verse 2 a step further, stating that keeping God's law "will bring . . . nourishment to your bones" (NIV). Do you think this really means that following God's laws will make us healthier physically?

THE DIVINE STANDARD, PART 2 (Rom. 7:12, 14).

What attributes of God's law does Paul mention in Romans 7:12, 14?

All of God's laws work in harmony with each other and reveal His character of love and the order in His kingdom. The laws of nature are God's laws as surely as is the Decalogue. No conflict exists between true religion and true science, for God is the Author of both.

How does Psalm 19:1-3, 7 illustrate the working of God's law?

"We would do well to read often the nineteenth psalm that we may understand how the Lord binds up His law with His created works."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1143.

Just as a thistle lies dormant in its seed, so death is inherently bound up in sin. The declaration, "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek. 18:4, NIV) is not a threat of punishment but a warning of natural consequences. While God desires obedience born of love rather than of fear, at the same time He wants us to be able to make intelligent choices. He tells us what will be the ultimate consequence of obedience and disobedience and leaves us free to decide between the two.

How do Isaiah 5:1, 2 and Matthew 21:33 symbolize God's law?

The vineyard represents God's chosen people, Israel. "To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 287, 288.

"That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, 'This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan.' There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and Live."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1105.

What provision has God made that we may be able to live according to His law? Heb. 8:10; Ezek. 36:26. How have you availed yourself of this provision lately?

THE FOLLY OF LAWLESSNESS (Prov. 15:21).

The book of Proverbs refers to fools, folly, and foolishness in 84 verses. This is 9 percent of the book. The authors of Proverbs must have been impressed with the seriousness of being a fool!

How does the fool relate to wisdom and understanding? Prov. 17:16, 24; 23:9; 24:7.

“In the gate they do not open their mouths” (Prov. 24:7, NRSV). “The wise men and judges sat in counsel in the city gates, where business was made legal and public matters were discussed. The fool would have nothing to contribute.

“‘Silence is the virtue of fools.’ It is also a virtue of the wise (see 17:27). So a silent fool and a wise man can very seldom be told apart. As long as a fool keeps quiet and nods wisely now and again, he can enjoy the esteem held out to a wise man of sound judgment and few words (17:28). If the fool, however, picked up this pearl of wisdom in a rare moment of attention in the classroom, we should not be too hopeful that he will keep his mouth shut. He could not possibly conceive that it applied to him. In any case, he has a happy knack of picking up words of wisdom and letting them drop at all the wrong times and places. He thinks he is being very clever when he can come out with a pithy saying, but it invariably falls flat on its face (26:7) and makes not the slightest impact (26:9). So even if the fool says something wise, his sense of timing will usually give him away.”—Kenneth T. Aitken, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 98, 99.

Proverbs mentions several things that are inappropriate for a fool. List the ones found in Proverbs 19:10; 26:1, 7-9.

People who are wise in their own conceit cannot be told anything, however desperate the situation. Proverbs graphically describes their tendencies (17:12, 21; 26:6, 11, 12; 27:3). Because fools choose to reject God’s love and law, there is no way for them to enjoy eternity with the righteous. When the Lord repays “according to everyone’s work” (Rev. 21:12, NRSV), fools, being “an abomination,” will be shut out from the kingdom of glory (21:7).

One characteristic shared by all fools is the tendency to substitute their own way for God’s way. How would you help a fool? What approaches would you use to wean a foolish person away from folly?

THE REAPING TIME, PART 1 (Prov. 22:8).

What sharp contrasts between the righteous and the wicked does Proverbs draw?

Prov. 10:24, 25 _____

Prov. 10:27-30 _____

Prov. 11:6 _____

God is the ultimate Source of truth, righteousness, and everlasting life. To commit oneself to His principles, to choose righteousness as a way of life, to follow His directions for success, and live with Him in a fellowship of trust and admiration is to connect one's soul with the Infinite One and share in His life. On the other hand, to choose a lifestyle opposed to the principles of life, to despise righteousness and live for self, is to cut off one's soul from its Source, a choice which ultimately can end only in destruction.

By what are all people judged, and according to what are they rewarded? Why? Prov. 12:14; 24:12; James 2:12, 13; Rev. 22:12.

We are saved by grace, not by works of the law. (See Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10.) The experience of salvation by grace, however, results in obedience to God's law. (See Rom. 8:1-4.) Works of faith demonstrate that Christ's grace is operating in the life to bring us into accord with the righteous principles of His law. We are judged by the law, the great standard of righteousness because Christ's grace has been made available as the power to obey it. Our works are judged because grace makes possible works that are acceptable to God.

Obedience is a sign of our love for God (John 14:15) and of our willingness to render Him true worship. Obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit is not legalism. "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us" (1 John 3:24, NIV).

How would you explain to a friend that God's grace saves us from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin? What texts would you use in your explanation?

THE REAPING TIME, PART 2 (Prov. 11:3; 15:25).

Who destroys the wicked? Prov 11:3; 15:25.

In the book of Proverbs, we find evidence for two distinct views of the judgment. One places the responsibility for destruction on God; the other places the responsibility on sinners themselves. Could it be that Solomon and the other writers of Proverbs are presenting two sides of the same coin?

"When a man has given his heart to his Saviour, when his only aim in life is to please God, then he need have no fear that he will be led astray (John 7:17; Isa. 30:21). On the other hand, the persistent disobedience of the sinner . . . leads him into eternal destruction in the great consummation."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 983.

Mercy and justice work together in the operation of law. Therefore, mercy, no less than justice, designates the end of those who reject that law. God is responsible in that He designed the laws in the first place—a description of how the universe works. But He also built into the system freedom of choice, which gives individuals ultimate responsibility for their destiny. In the final end of the wicked, God gives them over to the consequences of their foolish choices: eternal annihilation.

What plea does the Lord make with those whose foolish choices are leading to destruction? Ezek. 33:11.

Sin becomes unpardonable only because the sinner chooses to reject pardon. With every knock on the heart's door, unheeded, the inclination to open the door becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit, disregarded, will not be as easily distinguished the next time. The heart becomes less and less impressionable.

Finally, God must say "They are joined to their idols; let them go." His heart of love, however cries, "Oh, how can I give them up! How can I let them go!" (See Hos. 4:17; 11:8.)

"The thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel shows that God's government is a government of personal responsibility. Each one must stand for himself. No one can obey for his neighbor. No one is excused for neglecting his duty because of a similar neglect on the part of his neighbor."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1164.

Each day presents us with many choices that will lead us down one path or the other. Pray that God will help you to make the best choices.

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following examples regarding the importance of making good choices. How do these examples help you to understand what motivates our choices? Lot: Genesis. 13:1-12; 29; Mary and Martha: Luke 10:38-42; Moses: Hebrews. 11:24-28.

Regarding some of the first choices ever made, read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "The Creation," pp. 44-51.

"The history of nations that one after another have occupied their allotted time and place, unconsciously witnessing to the truth of which they themselves knew not the meaning, speaks to us. To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."—*Education*, p. 170.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This week we studied that God's law is like a hedge or wall. Is this to say that God's law is a wall of resistance, a wall of isolation from sin, a wall of isolation from the world, or a wall of protection? Explain your answer. In what other positive terms would you describe God's law, and why?
2. Why is Solomon correct in the contrasts he makes between wisdom and folly?
3. Is it important for Christians to offer nonviolent opposition to those within and without the church who limit religious liberty or to those who neglect or abuse the downtrodden of society? Explain your answer. How do we relate such needs to "not resisting evil"?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by completing the following sentences: (1) The choices we make _____.

(2) It is important to keep God's law because _____.

(3) The folly of lawlessness consists of _____.

(4) In the end, ultimate responsibility for a person's destiny rests with _____.

Remember that if you choose to be a fool, you will not be condemned for your weakness but for refusing the help that God offers. However, you can always choose to live in harmony with the laws of life and receive the necessary help from God to choose the harvest unto eternal life.



Malawian Muslims Turn to Christ

Len Atkins

Golden Lapani is a lay evangelist working in Malawi. Recently he completed an evangelistic effort in the Muslim town of Mkwinda. Some 254 people accepted Christ, and 48 people have already been baptized. Among those is the Muslim sheikh who had to postpone baptism until he could divest himself of two of his three wives and a Muslim leader who asked many questions before he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. The village chief gave land on which the believers could build a church.

Because so many former Muslims became Christians, the Muslim mosque no longer was needed. It was dismantled, and the bricks were used to build the Adventist church. Now, instead of the early morning Muslim call to worship, villagers hear the sound of singing as voices praise the one God in heaven.

God has blessed Lapani with many souls during his 13 years as a Christian. But the one he treasures the most is the conversion of one woman.

Edda Oliver had raised her seven children to be faithful Muslims. But her second son, Golden, accepted Christ as his Savior and began sharing his new faith. He won his older brother, father, and four sisters to Christ. But his mother refused to listen when he talked about Jesus. Golden prayed that his mother would find Jesus as her Lord.

Then in 1998, while he was conducting a group Bible study in his mother's village, he saw his mother sitting among the old women at the meeting. His heart leaped. He wondered if she would disturb the study, and he prayed that the Holy Spirit would speak to her heart.

She listened attentively to his lesson, and when he invited those present to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, his mother raised her hand. He wondered if she understood what he had said.

After the meeting those who had indicated they wanted to accept Christ came forward to sign their names. Lapani's mother wrote her name as well. Then she approached her son and begged forgiveness for having refused his invitation to accept Jesus for so long. "I have wasted 62 years in my former faith," she told him. But all Lapani could think of was that his 13 years of prayers had just been answered.

Following his mother's baptism, Golden Lapani said joyfully, "Now all my family are Adventists. God has given me a miracle today."

Len Atkins wrote this while he served as pastor of the Kabula Hill Adventist Church and chaplain at Blantyre Adventist Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi. He has since returned to North America.

Produced by the Office of Mission

Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference

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Live Within Your Means



Sabbath Afternoon

MANAGERS OF THE LORD'S GOODS. How we handle our money and the way we live are closely related. Similar principles govern both. In fact, "stewardship" is not merely a matter of finances. It also relates to every aspect of life—time, talent, energy, and influence.

Undergirding and enabling the true stewardship of life is the understanding that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). We are not owners but managers of the Lord's goods. As Christians, we have accepted the responsibility of acting in the Master's stead, doing as He would do were He presiding directly over His own. As stewards, then, we should be interested to hear the counsel of the Owner, to learn what His priorities are, what methods bring the most permanent benefits, and how best to represent Him in all we do.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Honor the Lord (Prov. 3:9, 10).
- II. Love of Money (Prov. 11:28).
- III. Generosity and Contentment (Prov. 11:24, 25).
- IV. Work and Plan Ahead (Prov. 14:15; 22:3).
- V. Debt and "Surety" (Prov. 22:7; 6:1-5).

MEMORY TEXT: "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9, 10).

HONOR THE LORD (Prov. 3:9, 10).

"Bible religion is to be interwoven with all we do or say. Divine and human agencies are to combine in temporal as well as in spiritual achievements. They are to be united in all human pursuits, in mechanical and agricultural labors, in mercantile and scientific enterprises."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 349, 350.

Describe one way we can honor the Lord. Prov. 3:9.

"[God's] glory must be the motive of all who are laborers together with Him. All our work is to be done from love to God and in accordance with His will. . . .

"But God will not accept the greatest talents or the most splendid service unless self is laid upon the altar."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 350.

What results does God promise if we honor the Lord? Prov. 3:10; 10:3; Mal. 3:10, 11.

Many and varied are the blessings God pours out upon those who honor and trust Him. Sometimes He gives temporal prosperity. Sometimes, for reasons we do not understand, He withholds it. He always bestows upon His faithful children forgiveness from sin and offers assurance of eternal life.

The experience of one literature evangelist illustrates how God honors those who honor Him: "I recall having visited homes all day, introducing *The Desire of Ages*, without one interest. How was I ever going to earn enough money to make a living? But deciding to adopt a different strategy, I kept at it. At around 6:00 p.m., I was struggling to give yet another presentation, this time praying that the woman to whom I was speaking would accept the book and the truth it contained.

"She replied, 'Yes, I'll order it. My family needs it.' I was enlivened and refreshed. I went next door and once again prayed for the person to whom I was giving the presentation. That person also bought the book. By 7:15 p.m., I had visited four more homes, receiving orders in each of them. Three of those families later took Bible studies, and four persons joined the church."

When we keep our focus on the spiritual goal of witnessing, the Lord consistently supplies the need.

If you have little or nothing of this world's goods, how can you follow the instruction to "honor the Lord with your wealth" (Prov. 3:9, NIV)?

THE LOVE OF MONEY (Prov. 11:28).

Explain how the love of money is “the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Prov. 28:20, 22.

The material status of an individual does not necessarily indicate the direction of her or his affections. A poor person can love money as dearly as a rich person, perhaps even more so. The danger lies in misplaced priorities, often leading to dishonest means of acquiring more money.

What principle, applied to business, shields a person from being “eager to get rich” (Prov. 28:20, NIV)? Prov. 13:11.

It is rarely easy to be patient! But far better to make progress slowly than to damage one’s character by sinful, hasty acquisition.

“It is abomination to fools to depart from evil” (Prov. 13:19). “The very idea that he [the fool] should behave in any other way is unthinkable to him, quite abhorrent in fact (13:19); for he thinks it would soil his fun (10:23) and make life very drab (15:21).”—Kenneth T. Aitken, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 100.

What is the ultimate end of anyone who trusts in riches? Prov. 11:28; 23:4, 5.

To many of Jesus’ hearers, the present life was all that existed, and providing for its temporal needs was all that mattered. As something strange and new, Jesus’ words fell on the ears of the wondering multitude. (See Matt. 6:24-34.) He taught that even as this earth offers no permanent safety for material possessions, so it can provide no eternal refuge for the soul. Our hearts will be where our treasure is. In view of this fact, Jesus recommended we store up our treasure in heaven, seek first God’s kingdom, and not be anxious about our needs.

In your view, why does the Lord allow some people to be wealthier than others? What is the responsibility of rich believers in Christ to their poorer sisters and brothers? Should they give them all their money? Explain your answer.

What is the responsibility of poor believers to the rich? Should they regard themselves as inferior? Explain your answer.

GENEROSITY AND CONTENTMENT (Prov. 11:24, 25).

Why is it important to share? Prov. 11:24, 25; 22:9; 28:27.

Jesus taught that we should not favor the rich for the sake of social acceptance. We have a responsibility to minister to the poor.

What does it mean to be a Christian? "It is to be Christlike, to do others good, to be divested of all selfishness, and to have our lives marked with acts of disinterested benevolence [free from self-interest]. Our Redeemer throws souls into the arms of the church, for them to care for unselfishly and train for heaven, and thus be co-workers with Him. But the church too often thrusts them away, upon the devil's battlefield. . . . Cannot God return into their granaries and increase their flocks, so that instead of loss there shall be increase?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 331.

If we do not have a lot of money and material possessions, what else can we share? Prov. 25:25; 31:9.

Be generous, and give what you have—even if it is only good news or a smile and a greeting! Try to understand the inner needs of each individual you meet. Look beneath the surface. Ask for divine help that you may strengthen, cheer, and help the needy person to the best of your ability and according to that person's needs. When possible, help others to help themselves. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, offered "soup, soap, and salvation," in that order.

Plead the cause of the needy to those who may be better able to assist. And above all, deal with the needy in such a manner as to represent the Father in heaven: with genuine caring, mercy, and justice.

What assurance does Proverbs give to anyone obliged to live in poverty? Prov. 15:16; 16:8; 28:6 (see also Heb. 13:5).

A graceful, positive attitude, whatever the circumstances of our lives, is a source of health and happiness. (See Prov. 15:15; 30:7-9.)

How can you testify to the Lord's many blessings in times when you have been poor?

How can you testify to the joy you experienced as you shared with someone more needy than yourself?

WORK AND PLAN AHEAD (Prov. 14:15; 22:3).

What basic principle does Proverbs 27:18 illustrate? Compare James 5:1-6.

"Every laborer is to receive his or her just due. It may be thought to be a good plan to allow persons to give talent and earnest labor to the work of God, while they draw nothing from the treasury. But this is making a difference, and selfishly withholding from such workers their due. God will not put His sanction on any such plan."—*Evangelism*, p. 491.

How does a person who is wise relate to the future? Prov. 14:15; 22:3.

There is wisdom in planning for the future. To put aside savings to take care of future expenses is not contrary to God's will. Insofar as this is possible, it is the wise thing to do.

The counsel Ellen White gave to one person applies, in principle, to each of us: "Every week you should lay by in some secure place five or ten dollars not to be used up unless in case of sickness. With economy you may place something at interest. With wise management you can save something after paying your debts."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 329.

What warning does Proverbs 28:8 give us about wrong methods of earning money?

Usury is lending money at interest. Today it sometimes refers to lending at a rate of interest that is excessive or unlawfully high.

"The Israelites lived in a simple state of society, and hence they were encouraged to lend to each other in a friendly way, without any hope of gain. But the case was different with foreigners, who engaged in trade and commerce, borrowed to enlarge their capital, and might reasonably be expected to pay interest on their loans. Besides, the distinction was admirably conducive to keeping the Israelites separate from the rest of the world."—Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 136.

How can we apply God's counsel to Israel regarding usury to our financial practices today?

DEBT AND “SURETY” (Prov. 22:7; 6:1-5).

Why do you think “the borrower is servant to the lender”? (Prov. 22:7).

In a letter written in 1877, Ellen White counseled an individual, “Be determined never to incur another debt. Deny yourself a thousand things rather than run in debt. . . . Avoid it as you would the small-pox.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 257.

On the other hand, White also wrote, “To make no move that calls for the investment of means unless we have the money in hand to complete the contemplated work, should not always be considered the wisest plan. . . .

“It is right to borrow money to carry forward a work that we know God desires to have accomplished. We should not wait in inconvenience, and make the work much harder, because we do not wish to borrow money. Mistakes have been made in incurring debt to do that which could well have waited till a future time. But there is danger of going to the other extreme. We are not to place ourselves in a position that will endanger health and make our work wearing. We are to act sensibly. We must do the work that needs to be done, even if we have to borrow money and pay interest.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 277, 278.

What counsel does the wise man give regarding the risk involved in acceptance of legal responsibility for someone else’s debt? Prov. 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18.

A “surety” (KJV) is someone who has become legally liable for another person’s debt, responsible for guaranteed payment even if that person must take it out of his or her own pocket. This can become a dangerous snare, especially in the case of guaranteeing payment on behalf of a stranger. While we are to “bear one another’s burdens,” the Lord does not expect us to be responsible for another’s foolishness.

“There is no indication here [Prov. 6:1-5] that a person should never help another to carry a debt [see 14:21; 17:17; 18:24; 27:10]. Times may come when a great favor can be done to someone who needs to borrow money and who needs someone to underwrite the debt. But such a commitment ought not to be thoughtlessly undertaken.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4, p. 817.

Examine your spending habits prayerfully. Are you living outside of your means at the expense of cheating God? (Mal. 3:8-10). What can you do without, and what steps can you take to begin doing so?

FURTHER STUDY: How do the following verses add to our understanding of this week's topic: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17, 18; James 2:1-6; Revelation 2:9; 3:14-18.

Also read the sections titled "Money" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 351, 352; "Usury," *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 534-536; and "Business Integrity," *The Adventist Home*, pp. 391-394.

"It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others in their secular business. . . . Let no one, when brought into a strait place, take money consecrated to religious purposes, and use it for his advantage, soothing his conscience by saying that he will repay it at some future time. Far better to cut down the expenses to correspond with the income, to restrict the wants, and live within the means, than to use the Lord's money for secular purposes."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 79.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we teach to others the principle that God honors those who honor Him as part of God's message for believers in the last days?
2. Does occasional giving fulfill a person's duty to work for those in need? Why, or why not?
3. Why do Christians have a responsibility to help others?
4. Discuss what is wrong with keeping up with your neighbors and friends in terms of material possessions.
5. "Plan your work and work your plan" is a sound business principle. How can we apply it to the Christian lifestyle?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by indicating whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F). Then rewrite the statements that are false to make them true. _____ My money and all my possessions are my own to be used as I deem necessary. _____ Money is only as valuable as it is used for good purposes. _____ The security of treasure on earth is not a valid indicator of where I should place my priorities. _____ To share what I have with someone in need will not necessarily deplete my own resources. _____ God designed work to be a blessing to us. _____ Planning ahead is denying that we need to rely on God for our needs. _____ Debt is sometimes necessary and justifiable.



Some Seeds Take Time

Mere Narabe

Several years ago while Mere Narabe was teaching school in an Adventist village in Fiji, she felt a burden for a neighboring village that had no Adventists. She started a story hour there on Sabbath afternoons. She went alone to the village and invited the children to join her for songs and stories from the Bible.

She started her story hour in the local school teacher's house, but so many children came that the teacher's house could not hold them all. The school teacher arranged for her to hold her meetings in the basement of the village church.

One girl, Susi, attended regularly until her grandmother learned about it and told her she could not attend. But Susi was determined to come. She would sneak away from her work and stand outside the church, listening through the window.

Mere knew nothing about Susi's plan. She only knew that the girl's grandmother had told her she could not come any longer. But Susi faithfully came every week.

After holding the story hour for several months, Mere Narabe had to stop because of commitments at her own school. She often wondered whether the story hour had made any difference in the lives of the children who attended.

Then last year Mere returned to the village, where there is now an Adventist church. During the church service the congregation enjoyed a time of testimonies. One young woman stood and told how she had first learned about the Adventist truth. She said, "When I was a child a woman came to our village to hold a Bible story hour for children. My grandmother found out where I was and prohibited me from coming any more, but I continued to come and stood outside to listen. It was there that I learned to love Jesus, and I learned about the Sabbath. When the Adventists came to our village, I knew that they were teaching the truth, and I joined the church. My husband and children and I are Adventists today because of that story hour."

The young woman was Susi. Later she told Mere that most of the other children who had attended the story hour had eventually become Adventists too.

Mere had conducted this story hour for just three months. Yet the seeds that God planted during those happy times bore fruit in years to come.



Mere Narabe (left) is a teacher in Fiji.

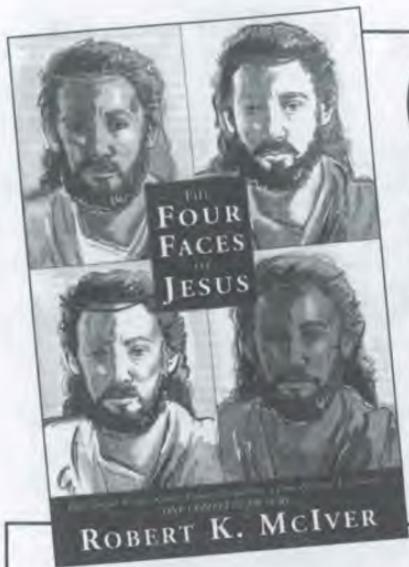
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PACIFIC
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LIGHT FOR A
NEW MILLENNIUM

As the Needle to the Pole



Sabbath Afternoon

GOD IS THE ULTIMATE MODEL OF INTEGRITY. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). James refers to “the Father of all lights, with whom there is never the slightest variation or shadow of inconsistency” (James 1:17b, Philips). Eugene Peterson renders the same verse, “There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle” (*The Message*). God is the epitome of authenticity.

As King of the universe, God is also the Pattern for rulers and persons of authority on earth, mingling justice and mercy, righteousness and peace. Revenge is a temptation to those with power, as is deceit, but those who are committed to integrity find that “God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you a way out” (1 Cor. 10:13, TEV).

The majority of us are not “kings,” but we do bear various levels of responsibility. Integrity is for us, as well.

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is *true to duty as the needle to the pole*, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—*Education*, p. 57 (emphasis supplied).

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. The King—The Model For His People, Part 1 (Prov. 29:2).
- II. The King—The Model For His People, Part 2 (Prov. 20:8).
- III. Mercy Or Revenge? (Prov. 11:17).
- IV. Justice Or Injustice? (Prov. 21:15).
- V. Honesty Or Deceit? (Prov. 20:17).

MEMORY TEXT: “The integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them” (Proverbs 11:3).

THE KING—THE MODEL FOR HIS PEOPLE, PART 1 (Prov. 29:2).

In Bible times, both in Israel and other nations, kings were supreme judges. The author of most of the proverbs was a king whose wise judgments were recorded for future generations, but Solomon was not always wise. Tragically, he wandered away from God's ideal of just and faithful kingship.

The practices of the king usually became those of his people. He either set a pattern of purity, truth, justice, and honesty, or he led his people down the path of disloyalty to God into impurity, idolatry, injustice, and dishonesty.

In what type of king do the people rejoice? Prov. 29:2.

Of course, none of us are kings, but each of us can appreciate a just ruler. Moreover, God gives each of us some responsibility, some important trust for which we are accountable to the Master. In the advice given for long-ago rulers, we will discover valuable gems that can enable us to deal fairly with those whose lives we touch.

"Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under greater obligation to serve his fellows."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

By what is the king preserved? Prov. 20:28.

Proverbs 20:28 mentions the characteristics of God. (See Ps. 85:9, 10.) The delightful paradox is that God is both perfectly just and perfectly merciful. He is so just that He cannot save for eternity a sinner who refuses to accept His atonement for sin. He is so merciful that He can forgive completely and restore to Himself the one who accepts the atonement provided by His Son. (See John 3:16, 36.)

"It is the mingling of judgment and mercy that makes salvation full and complete. It is the blending of the two that leads us, as we view the world's Redeemer and the law of Jehovah, to exclaim, 'Thy gentleness hath made me great.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1072.

We may not have a choice regarding the appointment of earthly "kings" under whom we live. What two choices, however, do we have regarding spiritual "kings"?

THE KING—THE MODEL FOR HIS PEOPLE, PART 2 (Prov. 20:8).

List what a good king should do.

Prov. 20:8 _____

Prov. 25:2, 4, 5 _____

Prov. 29:14 _____

Prov. 31:8, 9 _____

Rulers who choose to serve Christ share God's characteristics. In His reign, Christ mingles perfect justice (Matt. 3:12) with infinite mercy (Eph. 2:4, 5). All who enter into fellowship with the heavenly King will exhibit the same characteristics. Because His love rules supreme in their hearts, they are not only unwilling to deny facts but equally unwilling to dethrone God as the ultimate Judge. Even so, secular authorities are appointed to pass judgment on those who break the law of the land. The church as a corporate body has the duty of deciding if a member fails to conform to the standards governing church membership. (Compare Matt. 7:1-5 with 1 Cor. 5:12; 6:2, 3; Rom. 13:1-4.)

If a person in authority pays attention to false information, what will the official who serves under that person most likely be like? Prov. 29:12. Why do you think this is so?

Do his servants become wicked? Or are they already wicked? "A king sets his own policy, but he must depend on information from advisers to help him formulate that policy. If he only listens to lies from advisers (like King Ahab who rejected the prophecy of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22), then all the men who surround him will cater to his depravity and become wicked."—Robert L. Alden, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 201.

In what ways may the following counsels given to kings and leaders be applied by every Christian believer? Prov. 16:10, 12, 13; 18:5; 24:23-25; 31:3-5?

Whatever your calling in life, how could you improve your effectiveness by following the instruction the book of Proverbs has for kings?

MERCY OR REVENGE? (Prov. 11:17).

Explain the result of living out in one's own life the principles of righteousness and mercy. Prov. 21:21; 11:17.

There is nothing self-serving in the motives of the genuinely merciful person. But mercy's blessing is twofold. First, kindness reacts on the giver in immediate happiness because mercy is always a happier way to live. Then kindness bears fruit in the words and actions of others in whose hearts the seed was planted, returning to refresh the soul who sowed it there.

Psalm 145:9 teaches that the Lord's "tender mercies are over all his works." This means that cruelty to animals is in direct opposition to God. Read Proverbs 12:10. God gave us dominion over the earth for our mutual benefit, not that we might exploit or ravage it. Scripture classifies those hunters who kill for sport and pleasure and those who treat domestic animals cruelly as wicked.

What are the hazards involved in harboring a spirit of revenge toward those who have wronged us? Prov. 24:17-20.

"Whoever does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:14, NRSV). Thus the person who nurses a vengeful spirit is living outside of Christ. This results in serious damage to one's physical, spiritual, and psychological health, and ultimately, loss of eternal life. It is far better to leave an offense with God; He will make it right. He might even win the offender!

As Christ dwells in our hearts, He enables us to practice the counsel He gives: "If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their head, and the Lord will reward you" (Prov. 25:21, 22, NRSV).

"One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most [destructive] results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer or they would not dare to take it upon their lips. We are dependent upon the pardoning mercy of God every day and every hour; how then can we cherish bitterness and malice toward our fellow sinners!"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 170.

Think of a situation in your life in which you showed a merciful, forgiving spirit toward someone who had wronged you. What was the effect of your attitude upon: (a) the person you forgave; (b) yourself?

JUSTICE OR INJUSTICE (Prov. 21:15)?

List some characteristics of those who are just (righteous). Prov. 4:18; 9:9; 10:20; 20:7.

The just are the righteous who have accepted God as their King and who, by His grace, reflect His character. (See Isa. 51:1, 7; Rom. 8:9, 10; 10:6-10.) They can practice justice in their dealings with their fellow human beings because the righteousness of Christ lives in their hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The just and the unjust cannot respect each other's characters. (See Prov. 29:10, 27.) Yet, the just express their genuine concern for the unjust by praying and working for them. They truly care.

How does Proverbs describe the unjust (the unrighteous)? Prov. 11:5-7; 28:8-10.

The Lord never justifies the unjust, nor does He condemn the just. "Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detests them both" (Prov. 17:15, NIV; see also Exod. 23:7).

Then what hope is there for us? We are all sinners in the sight of a holy God (Rom. 3:10-19). In the light of the Old Testament teaching, how can we explain Paul's statement, "But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness"? (Rom. 4:5, NRSV).

The answer is that when Christ justifies the ungodly (the unjust) they do not remain ungodly. The ungodly are unjustified, unconverted, outside of Christ, and lost (1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 3:7). The justified have been transformed by the power of Christ. They are now willing slaves to righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18). Their lives are in conformity with God's law (Rom. 8:3, 4) because the Holy Spirit is reigning in their hearts (vs. 9, 10).

When probation closes a short time before Jesus' second coming, the just (the righteous) will remain right with God for eternity and the unjust (the wicked) will remain hateful toward God (Rev. 22:11). At the Second Advent, the just will be translated and the unjust will be slain by the brightness of His coming (1 Thess. 4:16-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

If an unjust person comes to you with the plea that he or she wishes to experience a change of character and heart, how would you explain from the Bible the means by which that person can be transformed?

HONESTY OR DECEIT? (Prov. 20:17).

What makes a person dishonest and deceptive? Prov. 11:18, KJV; 12:5, 20.

Unless Christ reigns supreme in a human heart, the evil one will convey his characteristics, and there will be no fortress against deception of any form. Satan will deceive the soul, and that soul, in turn, will practice deception.

List some of the forms of deception practiced by those who do not know Christ.

Prov. 10:10 _____

Prov. 17:23 _____

Prov. 29:24 _____

True Christians faithfully pay their bills and refuse to be bribed in any way. They categorically reject any of the many forms of stealing that people practice and even consider acceptable in our world today. This includes stealing all the credit for a job well done, even though many others were involved in the project. Cheating on examinations or as a means of personal advancement is totally foreign to anyone who serves Christ.

Spiritual toughness is needed. "There is in true Christian character an indomitable quality that cannot be molded or subdued by adverse circumstances. We must have moral backbone, an integrity that cannot be flattered, bribed, or terrified."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498.

How does the Lord bless those who are honest?

Prov. 10:3 _____

Prov. 10:24 _____

Prov. 10:25 _____

Prov. 10:28-30 _____

How did God fulfill these promises to Israel? How does He keep these promises to you now and in the future?

FURTHER STUDY: Consider any or all of the following examples of integrity these passages refer to: Numbers 16:15; 1 Samuel 12:1-4; 2 Samuel 18:9-12; 1 Kings 13:1-10; 2 Kings 5:1-16.

Read "Lives of Great Men," in *Education*, pp. 51-69.

"As far as possible, you should come into harmony with your brethren and sisters. You should surrender yourselves to God and cease to manifest sternness and a disposition to find fault. You should yield your own spirit and take in its place the spirit of the dear Saviour. Reach up and grasp His hand, that the touch may electrify you and charge you with the sweet properties of His own matchless character. You may open your hearts to His love, and let His power transform you and His grace be your strength. Then will you have a powerful influence for good. Your moral strength will be equal to the closest test of character. Your integrity will be pure and sanctified. Then will your light break forth as the morning."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 63.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What truth is there for today's church leaders in the fact that the practices of the king usually became those of his people? Do we as church members have the right to expect church leaders to set a pattern of purity, truth, justice, and honesty? Explain. What should we do if they do not? Is our spirituality dependent upon theirs? Explain.
2. Being kind benefits us not only spiritually but physically. How is this so?
3. Proverbs 4:18 says that the "path of the righteous [the just] is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day." How is this so?
4. Proverbs 10:28 talks about the hope of the righteous. What is this hope? See Joel 3:16; Galatians 5:5; Ephesians 2:12, 13; Colossians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:2; 2:13. What common thread runs through all of these verses?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by examining your heart with the following questions: Am I God's friend as God considers true friendship? Do I receive favors from God without acknowledging their Source? Am I as ready to extend finite, human mercy as I am to ask for God's forgiveness and mercy? How can I in my inmost soul be as true to duty as the needle to the pole? Were the final decision of the judgment to be made today, where would I find my place?



The Fire Storm

J. H. Zachary

Most of us live in a world isolated from the tragedies that befall Christians in other lands. For several years increased violence against Christians in India received little public notice until an evangelical missionary, Graham Staines, and his two young sons were burned alive in their jeep by a group of Hindu extremists early in 1999.

Adventists have not escaped the violence against Christians in India. During a lay training program in Madras, a young man named Samson related his story.

Samson comes from a village in central India. During evangelistic meetings he and his family learned about the Bible Sabbath and decided to follow the clear teaching of God's Word.

The Christian community grew until one in every three villagers was a Christian. The non-Christians began to feel threatened. Who would control community politics?

Then one day concern boiled over into violence. Christians had to flee for their lives. Their livestock was stolen, and their homes were looted and set afire. Fifteen young Christians who tried to resist their attackers were hacked to death. Their bodies were piled up in the village square, dowsed with gasoline, and set ablaze. Samson's church lost one member in the massacre.

The government arrested 54 persons, but the non-Christian majority had so many friends in high positions that soon all of those who had been arrested were released on bail. For nine months the Christians who fled the village lived as refugees in a distant village.

Samson and other Christians have since returned to their village. They are attempting to start over, but it takes time to build a home, build up new flocks and herds, and establish a new farming routine. The Christians pray that they can form new relationships among the many religious communities in the village. But that is difficult when they have watched some of their numbers die.

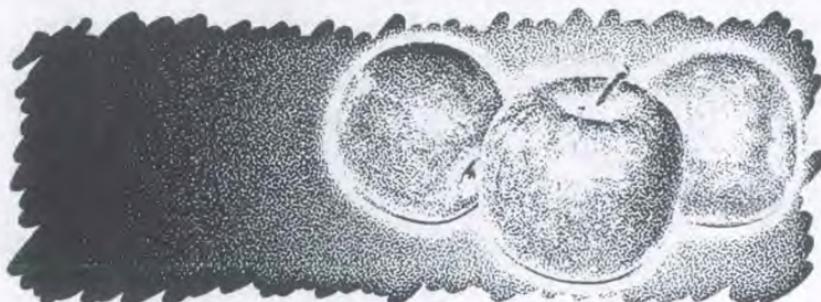
In spite of the terrorism, the Adventist church has continued to grow. It now has more than 110 members, with another 80 members in nearby villages.

It is so easy to become news-hardened. The pictures of tears, death, and suffering barely interrupt our busy schedules. May we do our best to reach out in love and prayer on behalf of those who suffer for Christ's sake.

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Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference
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Apples of Gold



Sabbath Afternoon

THE CAPACITY TO LISTEN IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE CAPACITY TO SPEAK. A young man asked Socrates to teach him oratory. Because he talked so much, Socrates asked for double fees. "Why are you charging me double?" the young student asked. "Because I must teach you two sciences: the one, how to hold your tongue, and the other, how to speak. The first science is the more difficult, but aim for proficiency at it, or you will suffer greatly and create trouble without end."

What goes on in our minds determines the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of our speech. "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34, NIV). "The heart" refers to the mind, the source of thoughts, feelings, actions, and motives. Even as positive and negative actions stem from the mind, so do positive and negative words. The things we say have important consequences not only to the people around us, but to our own souls, as well. As you study this week's lesson, remember that our words are either a source of strength and encouragement or of weakness and despair. They either build up or tear down. As we allow the power of God's Word to control our minds, our words will reflect His love.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. The Power Of The Tongue (Prov. 15:4).
- II. Words That Destroy, Part 1 (Prov. 10:19).
- III. Words That Destroy, Part 2 (Prov. 26:28).
- IV. Words That Inspire (Prov. 10:11).
- V. God's Words (Prov. 30:5).

MEMORY TEXT: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (Prov. 15:4).

Describe the type of power the tongue exercises. Prov. 15:4; James 3:2-12.

Jesus illustrated the importance of mind-control as the basis of speech-control in Matthew 12:34-37. The tongue is an index to the heart. The reason for the abundance of "mouth trouble" that afflicts us is the "heart trouble" with which we were born and to which we have added by our wrong choices.

Jesus said that idle words are sin. In the judgment, we are justified or condemned by our words. This does not mean that we earn justification by good words. It means that consistently good words are evidence of the heart change we have experienced, and evil words are proof that change needs to be made.

The only permanent remedy lies in the power of the Master Teacher, who can transform our minds and enable us to speak pure words. One way Jesus does this is through the medium of Christian education and Christian teachers. "In the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one."—*Education*, p. 30.

How would you express Proverbs 4:23 in your own words?

How can you follow this counsel? Notice the context of Proverbs 4:23. We must cherish God's Word (vs. 20, 21). The question arises, How? "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13, NIV). We choose Christ daily, feeding on His Word, storing in our minds the positive truths and promises it contains. When we are tempted to give voice to evil words, we ask Christ for His power, claim His victory, and praise Him for it. By reminding ourselves of His Word and claiming it by faith, we can speak in a manner acceptable to Heaven.

"In the work of heart-keeping we must be instant in prayer, unwearyed in petitioning the throne of grace for assistance. Those who take the name of Christian should come to God in earnestness and humility, pleading for help. . . .

"He whose conversation is in heaven, is the most profitable Christian to all around him. His words are useful and refreshing. They have a transforming power upon those who hear them, and will melt and subdue the soul."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1157.

We have emphasized that what is on the inside comes through to the outside. Is it also true that our words influence our own minds? Explain.

WORDS THAT DESTROY, PART 1 (Prov. 10:19).

Destructive words come in a number of forms: lies, criticism, gossip, flattery, impulsiveness, scorn, argumentativeness, and anger. All such negative speech comes from minds that are out of harmony with Christ.

Identify the types of lying mentioned in the following passages. What will ultimately become of liars? Refer to a modern version if possible.

Prov. 14:5, 25 _____

Prov. 18:8 _____

Prov. 19:5, 9 _____

Prov. 20:14 _____

Prov. 26:18, 19 _____

“ ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.’ False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. . . . Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.

What does the book of Proverbs have to say about strife and gossip?
Prov. 11:13; 16:27, 28; 17:9; 26:20, 21.

How does this counsel relate to the publication of literature specifically designed to expose the faults, failings, and mistakes of those who are endeavoring to bear responsibilities in the church? In light of biblical counsel, can you support or distribute such publications? Explain your answer? How can you apply the biblical counsel regarding negative criticism in the home, the local church, and the place in which you work?

Describe the correct way of confronting problems as found in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:1, 17-21. Discuss the difference between constructive and negative criticism.

WORDS THAT DESTROY, PART 2 (Prov. 26:28).

Why is flattery so harmful? Prov. 26:28; 27:6; 28:23; 29:5.

Flattery is insincere or excessive praise. A genuine expression of appreciation is not flattery. In the attempt to avoid flattery, we sometimes hurt people by giving them little or no praise. The ministry of encouragement can revitalize the waning forces of a weary soul.

Why is hasty speech so damaging? Prov. 29:20.

What are the advantages of restraint and caution in the way we express ourselves? Prov. 15:1, 28; 18:13.

“Be sure brain is engaged before putting mouth into gear.” This is practical advice that can be applied, especially when the brain itself is in contact with Headquarters!

“The servants of Christ . . . need to have close communion with God, lest, under provocation, self rise up, and they pour forth a torrent of words that are unbefitting, that are not as dew or the still showers that refresh the withering plants. This is what Satan wants them to do; for these are his methods. . . . But God’s servants are to be representatives of Him. . . . And the spirit that is kept gentle under provocation will speak more effectively in favor of the truth than will any argument, however forcible.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

What do the following passages teach regarding scorn and anger?

Prov. 15:18 _____

Prov. 16:32 _____

Prov. 22:10 _____

How delightfully practical the Bible is! It identifies the types of speech that cause sorrow, hostility, and misery: lying, criticism, gossip, flattery, and hasty, scornful, angry words. Assuming that at least sometimes you are guilty of one or more of these types of speech, what steps do you take to overcome? What counsel from your personal experience would you share with someone struggling with the habit of speaking unwisely?

WORDS THAT INSPIRE (Prov. 10:11).

One way to describe something is to tell what it is not. This is not the only way the writers of the proverbs give instruction regarding proper speech. They tell us what good speech is and the effect it has.

How does the book of Proverbs characterize the speech of a righteous person?

Prov. 10:11 _____

Prov. 10:13, 31 _____

Prov. 10:21 _____

Prov. 10:32 _____

The manner in which Jesus spoke is the best example of the effectiveness of righteous words. Even the hardened hearts of the temple guards melted, for they testified, "No one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46, NIV). The reaction of the two disciples who walked with Him to Emmaus was the reaction of people throughout His life and ministry: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

Jesus' words were wise, uplifting, encouraging, knowledgeable, and cautious. Even when He issued a rebuke, He did so in a spirit of love, with the intention of saving the offending person. He understood the force of simple eloquence and the power of silence. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.)

What is one of the most effective ways to lift another's burdens?

Prov. 12:25; 15:23, 30; 16:24; 17:22.

Positive, encouraging words inspire both the listener and the speaker. Anger, discontent, selfishness, and impurity are ruinous in effect, while there is marvelous life-giving power in cheerfulness, courage, faith, hope, and love. Before speaking, we should always ponder what effect our words will have on the listener.

Based on the experiences you have had with encouraging and discouraging words, how would you complete the following?

"The mouth of the righteous is like a _____."

GOD'S WORDS (Prov. 30:5).

"Man's words, if of any value, echo the words of God."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 423.

How does Proverbs 30:5, 6 describe the words of God?

What are the results of relying on the Lord for words that will echo His character?

Prov. 16:1 _____

Prov. 25:11 _____

How do other biblical authors view the results of relying on God's words?

Ps. 119:9 _____

Ps. 119:105 _____

Matt. 4:4 _____

Luke 11:28 _____

John 5:24 _____

Rom. 10:17 _____

2 Tim. 3:16 _____

Psalm 119:9. "Victory in temptation comes to those who effectively employ the 'sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6:17). 'It is written' was the way the Master met Satan's subtle allurements (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). . . . The mind must constantly feed upon the Word, else the defenses of soul will break down, and Satan will gain the advantage. A neglect to study and to meditate upon the Word for even one day results in serious loss."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 897.

When you are physically hungry, you eat fruit, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, etc. How do you satisfy your spiritual hunger? Or do you just ignore it, hoping the hunger pangs will go away?

FURTHER STUDY: Are you satisfied with your speech? Do you feel that your words and how you say them represent God to those around you? To what extent do you need spiritual speech therapy? What are the areas of speech in which you would like to improve? Claim the following promises in your quest to answer these questions: 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:2-5; Revelation 12:11.

Read "Words of Caution" in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 239-244.

"The world is indeed full of hurry, and of pride, selfishness, avarice, and violence; and it may seem to us that it is a waste of time and breath to be ever in season and out of season, and on all occasions to hold ourselves in readiness to speak words that are gentle, pure, elevating, chaste, and holy, in the face of the whirlwind of confusion, bustle, and strife. And yet words fitly spoken, coming from sanctified hearts and lips, and sustained by a godly, consistent Christian deportment, will be as apples of gold in pictures of silver."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 247.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This week we studied how Proverbs illustrates the power of words. Based on the culture in which you live and the experiences you have had, how would you illustrate this power?
2. Are we being judgmental when we evaluate a person's character or motives by her or his words? Explain your answer.
3. Based on this week's study, is "roasting" a person or joking around about someone an appropriate Christian activity? Explain.
4. Explain the difference between negative criticism and positive criticism. Should a Christian ever deliver negative criticism? Explain. How should we offer positive criticism?
5. In what instances might silence be better than any type of words?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by writing a brief statement that reviews each of the following sections of this week's lesson: The Power of the Tongue (Prov. 15:4); Words That Destroy (Prov. 10:19; 26:28); Words That Inspire (Prov. 10:11); God's Words (Prov. 30:5).



Daddy, Jesus Loves You

Charlotte Ishkanian

Six-year-old Isis [EE-sees] opened the door of her home and walked toward her bedroom. As she passed her parents' bedroom, she saw her father sitting on the bed. Isis tiptoed in and gave him a big hug. She flashed a smile and said, "Daddy, I love you! And Jesus loves you, too!" Then she turned and ran from the room, leaving her father alone.

Isis's parents were not Adventists, but they sent their daughter to the Adventist school. There she was learning about God's love.

Isis's father worked hard to provide his family with the best things in life. But the more they had, the more he wanted, and soon he had trouble paying his bills. He borrowed money to pay his bills, but when he could not repay the loan one month the lender threatened to take his house.

Worried, he borrowed money from another man to pay the lender. But soon he could not pay the second loan. He felt trapped and faced losing everything he had worked for.

Father saw only one way out of his problem. His life insurance policy would provide enough to pay his bills and leave his family to live on for several years. But the only way they could collect that money was if he died. Desperate, Isis's father decided to end his life. He bought a gun and hid it. Then he sat down on the bed to think.

But when Isis hugged him, he realized that no matter what happened, he could not do anything to hurt them! He went to find Isis. "Honey," he said, "what did you just say about Jesus?"

"Every day my teacher tells us that Jesus loves us," she answered. "Come to school with me tomorrow; my teacher will tell you."

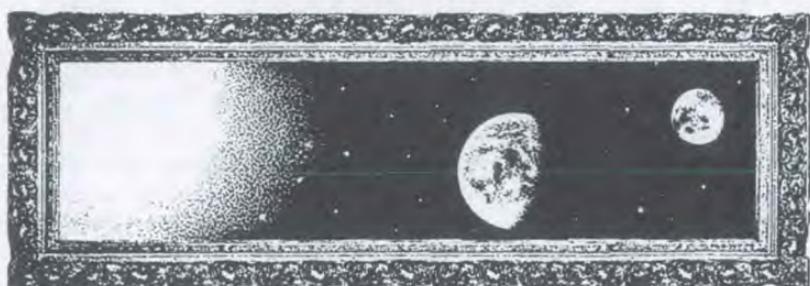
Daddy did not wait until the next day. He went to find his daughter's teacher that afternoon. The teacher was not at school, but the principal and the pastor were. As they talked with him, he realized that without God in his life, no amount of money could bring him happiness. The pastor offered to study the Bible with him and show him how to find God. That week the whole family began attending the Adventist church.

Isis's father lost his job, and he had to sell their house. But he says that God used his little girl to help him see what is really important in life. Today the entire family are happy Seventh-day Adventist Christians.



Isis and her father (left). The family lives in Salvador, Brazil. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

“What Hath God Wrought!”



Sabbath Afternoon

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF REVELATION AND OF ALL TRUE SCIENCE. A study of either sheds light on the other and ultimately advances our knowledge of the Creator Himself.

“In their original perfection all created things were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart; for they communed with God in His created works. As soon as the holy pair transgressed the law of the Most High, the brightness from the face of God departed from the face of nature. The earth is now marred and defiled by sin. Yet even in its blighted state much that is beautiful remains. God’s object lessons are not obliterated; rightly understood, nature speaks of her Creator.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 18.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Lessons From Life Science, Part 1 (Prov. 6:6-11).
- II. Lessons From Life Science, Part 2 (Prov. 30:25, 27-31).
- III. Lessons From Life Science, Part 3 (Matt. 6:25-34).
- IV. Lessons From Physical Science (Prov. 3:19, 20; Ps. 19:1-6).
- V. God’s Creative Masterpiece (Ps. 8:3-6; Prov. 8:22-31).

MEMORY TEXT: “Speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?” (Job, 12:8, 9, NIV).

LESSONS FROM LIFE SCIENCE, PART 1 (Prov. 6:6-11).

By connecting truth with familiar objects, we recall afresh, with every sight of those objects, the teaching of Scripture and the impressions of the Holy Spirit. This, incidentally, is one practical method of keeping our hearts "in tune" with heaven.

Of whom does Job advise us to inquire for information concerning God? Job 12:7-9.

We can learn so much from animals. Learning about them gives us a clearer picture of God's care for His creatures. How can a bear hibernate five months without losing its ability to use its muscles in the spring? How can young songbirds migrate hundreds of miles to wintering areas they have never seen, after the parent birds have gone ahead? How can lizards regenerate a tail after having dropped the original? Or how can a starfish not only grow a new arm to replace one lost from the original body but generate a new body on a severed arm if that arm includes a nerve from the main trunk?

Research in nature can also benefit humankind. Scientists studying the social behavior of wolves learn how they settle their differences short of bloodshed, thereby hoping to learn how to diffuse human anger and avoid national and world crises.

What parables of Jesus does Job 12:79 bring to mind? What do these parables teach? The following chart will get you started. What would you add to this chart?

| Object From Nature | Text | Parable Meaning |
|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Net/Fish | Matt. 13:47-50 | The good and bad will exist in the church until Christ returns. See <i>Christ's Object Lessons</i> , pp.122, 123. |
| Earth | Mark 4:1-20 | The gospel will be heard by many types of people. (See <i>Christ's Object Lessons</i> , pp. 36-61.) |
| | | |

LESSONS FROM LIFE SCIENCE, PART 2 (Prov. 30:25, 27-31).

List the characteristics of the coney. Prov. 30:24, 26.

What can we learn from the coney? "There is general agreement now that the animal intended must have been the hyrax."—*The Bible Almanac* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980). The hyrax is a furry creature about the size of the hare. Its remarkable features include its feet and toes, four toes on its front feet and three on its hind feet. Skin folds connect the toes, and pads kept moist by glands equip the feet. The feet thus form natural suction cups, which enable the coney to climb the steepest and most slippery rocks.

Colonies of coneys live in mountainous areas. They still reside in the rocky Dead Sea area of Palestine. They post guards who, when danger approaches, sound an alarm by issuing sharp whistles. Then all scurry for cover in the crannies of the rocks. (Based on *Encyclopedia of Bible Creatures* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965], pp. 63, 64. See Ps. 104:18.) Just as the rocks protect the coneys, so Christ, the solid Rock, protects Christians against ultimate harm. "He who is imbued with the spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. . . . Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission."—*Thoughts From The Mount of Blessing*, p. 71.

What other animals impressed the writer of Proverbs 30? What did he particularly like about each one? Vs. 25, 27-31.

| Animal | What Solomon Liked About It |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

What other lessons does Solomon draw from the ant's habits? Prov. 6:6-11.

Think of an animal that lives in your part of the world. What lessons can you learn from it?

LESSONS FROM LIFE SCIENCE, PART 3 (Matt. 6:25-34).

Yesterday's lesson ended with a discussion of the lessons we can learn from the ant. Today's lesson carries on with this topic.

"The habitations which the ants build for themselves show skill and perseverance. Only one little grain at a time can they handle, but by diligence and perseverance they accomplish wonders. Solomon presents to the world the industry of the ant as a reproach to those who waste their hours in sinful idleness, in practices which corrupt soul and body. The ant prepares for future seasons. This is a lesson which many gifted with reasoning powers disregard. They fail entirely to prepare for the future immortal life which God has in His providence secured for the fallen race."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 1157, 1158.

What seemingly opposite lesson does Jesus present in His Sermon on the Mount? Matt. 6:25, 26. Taken together, what do Proverbs 6: 6-11 and Matthew 6:25, 26 tell us about God's expectations in the matter of meeting our needs?

"Relax! Eat, drink, and be merry, for God will provide!" Not so! The desired response is trust, not irresponsibility or extravagance. The Father in heaven provides for the birds, but He does not drop food into their mouths or build their nests for them. They must gather food, build nests, and raise their young. The possibility of destruction by enemy forces is very real on every side. Yet, how full of joy their songs are! These creatures of hill, wood, and field are part of God's great household, and it is from His hand that the desire of each is satisfied. (See Ps. 145:16.)

In Matthew 6:28-34, Jesus continues to illustrate from nature His teaching regarding trust. Why else would God have "clothed the grass" in such a magnificent array of flowers, from brilliant jewel tones and delicate pastels to glistening, almost iridescent white—and all fashioned in exquisite, intricate detail—unless He did it for sheer enjoyment? For God is the Master Artist, a lover of beauty. Within His children, He has planted a like appreciation and has even given us a power akin to His own—individuality, creativity, inventiveness, apportioned in varying degrees. Because He is able to clothe nature and human personality with such beauty, why should we doubt His willingness to supply our daily needs?

Are you so involved in the affairs of your busy life that you do not take time to enjoy nature? What other lessons from nature have you found helpful?

LESSONS FROM PHYSICAL SCIENCE (Prov. 3:19, 20; Ps. 19:1-6).**How are God's wisdom and power manifested? Prov. 3:19, 20.**

Verse 19 speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth. Verse 20 indicates how God maintains His marvelous creation. He acted in the beginning. He continues to act day by day, moment by moment. Every day and night, God is at work in the natural world. He keeps the earth spinning on its axis, rotating in its orbit around the sun, not only keeping time but governing time, days, seasons, and years.

Despite its great weight, water is drawn up from the seas into the clouds and drips again as dew or rain to dress the earth in green vegetation. The grand cycle is constantly repeated. In His control over the processes of nature, God employs engineering marvels far beyond the ingenuity and power of any one person.

According to Psalm 19:1-6, what do the heavens declare about God?

The vastness, beauty, and clockwork order of the starry heavens reveal something of the character of God. His power is infinite. He is the author of matchless beauty, and He insists upon order and design. It takes at least as much faith to believe that galaxies of stars evolved on their own as it does to believe the Bible account that God created them.

Study Psalm 19:1-4 by focusing on the italicized words or phrases as they appear below. What do they tell us about *how* nature teaches us about God? (For example, the heavens do not just whisper about God, they *declare*, thus implying that they "shout it from the roof-tops.") Also, how do these words make you feel about God's creation?

The heavens *declare* the glory of God;

The skies *proclaim* the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; *night after night*
they *display* knowledge. . . .

Their voice goes out *into all the earth*, their words to the
ends of the world.

Unbelievers can see a bit of God's character in the universe and in the lives of Christians. By what attitudes, words, and actions do you make Christ known to others?

GOD'S CREATIVE MASTERPIECE (Ps. 8:3-6; Prov. 8:22-31).

While observing the brilliance of the night sky, what important question did David ask the Lord? Ps. 8:3-6.

As the following story suggests, we seem to be infinitesimal specks on a tiny world in one small solar system of infinite space. A Jewish rabbi once offered a possible explanation for the wearing of the yarmulka, the little cap worn at Passover. He said, "The yarmulka is like the palm of the hand of God resting in blessing on the man in the home saying, 'Little man, you're not such big stuff!'"—Ronald B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1984), p. 70.

Yet, we must not forget that in Psalm 139:14 David rejoices that he is "wonderfully made" (NIV). Indeed, the creation of humankind is the most wonderful of all God's creative work, and the design and function of every system of the human body are wonders of supernatural wisdom and power. The human body is composed of 75-100 trillion cells. Several billion wear out and are replaced every day. The heart pumps about three gallons of blood per minute, millions of gallons in an average lifetime. The wonder of human physiology leads us to exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" (Num. 23:23).

What clue does Proverbs 8:22-31 give regarding the Creator's purpose and motivation?

Wisdom is the subject of this chapter (v. 12). We discovered in an earlier lesson that the wisdom of Proverbs is the wisdom of God. In the central passage of this chapter, the author tells of God's wisdom in creating the world. In the New Testament, we learn that Christ is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), and five texts declare that He created the world (John 1:1-3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3). Proverbs 3:19 teaches that "the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth." Commenting on Proverbs 8:22, Ellen White writes: "The Son of God declares concerning Himself: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning.'"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34. Hence, wisdom is Christ the Creator.

Read the Creation story in Genesis 1:1-27. Then take time to envision Adam and Eve hearing about how God created humans and the world. Feel as they must have felt when God told them how He had formed Adam out of the earth and Eve from one of his ribs. Marvel as they did when God explained how He decorated the earth with all the plants and animals and the sky with its various lights. Worship God for all His splendor and glory.

FURTHER STUDY: What do the following verses teach us about our relationship to God's creation: Genesis 1:26; 2:15; and Revelation 11:18?

"God's command that humanity exercise dominion over and subdue the earth does not constitute license to exploit the environment. . . . He created the earth, and maintains it so that it does not degenerate to chaos. And those God placed on earth to rule 'in his own image' are to imitate God as rulers and creators.

"Humanity, then, are to maintain the creation. They are, so to speak, co-creators—stewards of the earth. God cannot sanction our harmful exploitation of it. This would indicate alienation from His creation. . . . Approving humanity's destruction of the creation would imply divine mindlessness to humanity's self-destruction. . . .

"Emphasis on human health is fundamentally illogical without an equal concern for the well-being of the environment. Air and water pollution is as much a threat to human health as are those poisons we have the liberty not to take into our bodies."—A. Josef Greig, "Adventists and the Environment," *Adventist Review* (April 19, 1990), pp. 16, 18.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Think of some small ways you can enjoy nature despite your hectic schedule. What can you do if you live in a large city where there is little of nature to enjoy?
2. Nature is often fierce and devastating, as is the case when tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. strike. Insurance companies claim such occurrences as "acts of God." Is this really the case? Explain.
3. Without forgetting our main purpose of spreading the gospel, what can we as Seventh-day Adventists do to show our respect for God's creation?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering this question: How does the natural world, the physical universe, and the physical structure of humankind direct us to Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God?

As you continue to contemplate God's reflection in nature, remember that He seeks to restore us to the perfect image of Himself so that we can have unending joy in the sin-free universe.



Making Friends for Christ

J. H. Zachary

Tanya is the 26-year-old wife of a Russian pastor living in Archangelsk, a major city in northern Siberia. While Tanya enjoys her Christian friends, she eagerly seeks out friendships with non-Adventist women. And in the past few years she has won 10 of her friends to Christ.

Recently she received a telephone call from a friend who lives in the city where Tanya and her husband served before moving to Archangelsk. Her friend called to thank her for sharing the joy of knowing Jesus and to tell her that she had just been baptized.

As Tanya shared this good news with others, she added, "I praise the Lord that 10 of my friends are now friends with Jesus also." When asked how she finds her new friends and wins so many to Christ, Tanya answered, "They are my neighbors. I just enjoy visiting them and sharing my life with them. I do not preach, but as we become acquainted they ask me what it is that makes me so happy."

Tanya gave an example of her friendship ministry. Recently she was preparing a meal for some visiting church leaders and asked Natali, her neighbor, to help her. As the two women worked together preparing the meal, Natali began asking Tanya questions. "Who are these people from Moscow and Washington D.C. who have come to our city? Why are they here?" Tanya used this opportunity to tell Natali about her church and its mission. The foods she chose to prepare for the guests and the absence of liquor led to a discussion of biblical health principles.

As the women's friendship grew and Natali saw more of Tanya's way of life, she was impressed by the peace and joy this family enjoyed.

Sometime later Tanya learned that Natali had convinced her husband to stop smoking and drinking. Without realizing it, Natali and her family already are beginning to experience the positive results of the Adventist lifestyle.

Tanya says, "The Lord is working. It won't be long before an opportunity will come to discuss our beliefs." This time Tanya may win more than one friend for Christ; she may win her friend's husband, too.

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Like Father, Like Son



Sabbath Afternoon

ANGER CAN MAKE US THOROUGHLY IRRATIONAL. On one occasion, an important businessman entered the dining car of the train in which he was traveling and ordered plum pudding. The waiter explained that they had no plum pudding. The businessman became angry. He roared at the waiter: "Don't you realize that you're talking to one of the most frequent customers of this railroad?"

The steward got off at the next stop and managed to get him some plum pudding. The passenger looked at it disdainfully and snorted, "Take it away! I'd rather be mad at the railroad."

God's anger is quite different. Never is He irrational. Never does He react in an unloving manner, and never are His attitudes toward us governed by selfishness. God's wrath against sin is another aspect of His love. If He did not hate sin and deal with the sinner, we would have reason to question the genuineness of His love.

Whereas anger, revenge, and strife destroy physical health and spiritual vitality, a positive, contented, optimistic attitude of mind contributes to health and spirituality. Is there any place for anger? What does the Bible mean when it speaks of God's anger? The lesson this week will answer these questions.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Happy, Healthy, Holy (Prov. 17:22).
- II. Anger, Strife, and Revenge, Part 1 (Prov. 16:32).
- III. Anger, Strife, and Revenge, Part 2 (Prov. 20:22; 24:29).
- IV. The Wrath of the Almighty, Part 1 (Prov. 11:23).
- V. God's Moral Response to Sin (John 3:16-21).

MEMORY TEXT: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22, NIV).

HAPPY, HEALTHY, HOLY (Prov. 17:22).

Happiness has been a major quest of humankind from time immemorial. Unfortunately, most people have ruled out fellowship with God as the source of genuine happiness. The book of Proverbs brings us back to that Source.

Happiness results in what well-organized benefit? Prov. 17:22; 18:14; 12:25; 15:15.

The Hebrew word translated "merry" in the King James version means "joyful," "glad." The type of merriment intended is not boisterous hilarity but a sense of peace and freedom from guilt and fear. It is also contentment with the circumstances of life. Such contentment is determined more by the state of a person's heart than by the value of his or her possessions. It is as Jesus taught: "'Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes'" (Luke 12:23, NIV).

"The pessimist worries so much about the past, which he cannot alter, and the future, which he cannot know, that he does not use wisely the present, which alone is his. This attitude of gloom colors his vision and reacts upon others. The glad, contented heart finds a feast in a little thankfully received, forgets the troubles that are behind, and looks forward with joy and confidence to a future under the loving care of a heavenly Father."— *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1000.

Four hundred years ago, Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, cited authorities who said, "Humor purges the blood, making the body lively and fit for any manner of employment." The philosopher Immanuel Kant believed a hearty laugh to be "a good way to jog internally without going outdoors."

On the other hand, research of grieving persons has revealed a decrease in the number of white blood cells, the "soldiers" that combat germs. Grief weakens the body's defenses that fight disease. Significantly, it is bone marrow that manufactures blood cells.

Who is it that finds true happiness? Matt. 5:3-12.

How could you be filled with contentment, peace, and joy under the following circumstances? (1) You have been laid off work and cannot find another job. (2) Your boss, who is not sympathetic with your religious faith, enjoys making fun of you in front of others. (3) Your daughter, who is about to be married, has been involved in a car accident. (4) You have just discovered your son or daughter has AIDS.

ANGER, STRIFE, AND REVENGE, PART 1 (Prov. 16:32).

What causes of strife do the following verses point out?

Prov. 13:10 _____

Prov. 17:19 _____

Prov. 22:10 _____

Prov. 26:20 _____

Prov. 30:33 _____

The Lord does not hate in the human sense, in a spirit of selfish vindictiveness, but because sin is completely alien to His nature, He is totally antagonistic to it. This is why the Bible teaches that God hates lies and discord. (See Prov. 6:16, 19.) There is no disharmony in heaven, and the Lord seeks to bring human beings into peaceful fellowship with Himself and with one another. “When the ways of people please the Lord, he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them” (Prov. 16:7, NRSV). Jesus taught the danger of anger (Matt. 5:21-24) and instructed us to love our enemies (v. 44).

What descriptive words does Solomon apply to the individual who quickly becomes angry? Prov. 14:17, 29; 19:19.

When we lose our temper, we are actually not in control of our reason. We are reacting rather than acting. Having temporarily lost our mind and thrown out the life principles we had so carefully chosen, we say and do things we later regret. We become fools.

Bad temper can become a habit. Today’s English Version translates Proverbs 19:19: “If someone has a hot temper, let him take the consequences. If you get him out of trouble once, you will have to do it again.” Bad temper is a return to immature ways of reacting. Certain stimuli suggest a negative mode of behavior that has become customary. The only escape from this vicious circle is to allow God to take control of the mind and heart. For “God will be to us everything we will let Him be.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 131.

Habit is an important factor in life. Why do we need habits as the basis for living?

ANGER, STRIFE, AND REVENGE, PART 2 (Prov. 20:22; 24:29).

When two people are consistently hurting one another, how can they break the cycle of action and reaction? Prov. 20:22; 24:29.

As long as both parties operate on the basis of the principle that “one bad turn deserves another,” they will continue the fight. This is the stuff of which family feuds are made, with human life being destroyed figuratively, as well as literally. If only someone would be big enough to forgive! It matters not so much who started the quarrel as who ends it peaceably.

Those who are slow to anger and control their tempers have achieved a great victory. They are “better than the mighty” or one “who captures a city” (Prov. 16:32, NRSV). But controlling negative emotions, forgiving a person who has wronged us, and overcoming bitterness are a first choice. Forgiveness is not *feeling* forgiving; neither is it saying that a wrong is right. Forgiveness is giving to God one’s right to revenge. Then “wait for the Lord, and He will deliver you” (Prov. 20:22, NIV).

“It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger and resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310. (See Eph. 4:26.)

What principle does Romans 14:13 give us upon which we can base our relationship with others?

Are there stumbling blocks in your path? Even they do not constitute a legitimate excuse for bad temper, for God knows how to deal with them.

“If we are creatures of circumstance, we shall surely fail of perfecting Christian characters. You must master circumstances, and not allow circumstances to master you. You can find energy at the cross of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 47.

In your own experience, what good methods have you employed in counteracting the causes of strife and discord?

How would you recommend that someone else use these methods?

THE WRATH OF THE ALMIGHTY, PART 1 (Prov. 11:23).

"If I'm not supposed to get mad, why can God?" This kind of question draws more than one kind of response. A typical but shallow and inaccurate answer would be: "Well, God is ruler and master of everything, so He has the right to do whatever He wants. You don't question Him."

At the other extreme is "What do you mean? God can get mad? Why, that is contrary to His nature! He would never hurt anything!"

Both answers present problems. The first pictures our loving Father-God as a wise, powerful, but severe and arbitrary dictator who has neither time for nor interest in our questions and who cares for nothing from His subjects but immediate and absolute compliance. The opposite view sees the all-powerful Creator as an indulgent parent who cannot bear to bring an evildoer to justice but who lets things run their natural course rather than interpose. Such incomplete pictures of God fail to portray the truth about Him.

What can people expect when they do not experience righteousness? Prov. 11:5, 23.

The consistent teaching of Scripture is that only the righteous will enjoy eternal life with Christ. (See Matt. 25:46; Heb. 12:14.) The sinner who refuses to accept Christ's power to stop sinning and the gift of His righteousness has no hope beyond the grave. (See Rev. 20:9, 15.)

When Moses insisted on a revelation of God's glory, what did he see, and what did he hear? Exod. 34:5-7.

What he saw _____

What he heard _____

What two aspects of God's love do we notice in Exodus 34:7?

1. _____

2. _____

Think about your life and how at times you may have disappointed God. Aren't you glad He is slow to anger?

How can you praise Him for His abundant mercy and grace?

GOD'S MORAL RESPONSE TO SIN (John 3:16-21).

At the end of yesterday's lesson, we studied the picture of God that appears in Exodus 34:5-7. From this description, we can know that the Old Testament does not portray God as a harsh God whom we must indulge. Think of other places in the Old Testament that portray God according to the picture in Exodus 34:5-7.

How does this depiction of God's character harmonize with the severity of His judgments described in the following passages?

Gen. 6:5-7, 11-13 _____

Gen. 18:32; 19:24, 25 _____

Exod. 11:4-7 _____

Did God cause this destruction? Explain your answer.

"God is Himself the source of all mercy. . . . He does not ask if we are worthy of His love, but He pours upon us the riches of His love to make us worthy. He is not vindictive. He seeks not to punish, but to redeem. Even the severity which He manifests through His providences is manifested for the salvation of the wayward. . . . It is true that God 'will by no means clear the guilty' (Exodus 34:7), but He would take away the guilt."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

In both His teachings and His life, Jesus demonstrated what God is like (John 14:9). The God of the Sermon on the Mount and the God who destroyed the world by the Flood are one and the same. (See 2 Pet. 3:5, 6; Heb. 13:8.) While God expresses Himself most fully in the life of Christ, the tragic existence of sin requires His intervention.

Extreme situations sometimes require major "surgery," as in the cases of both the antediluvian world and the city of Sodom. Civilization in general had become so vile as to be a moral menace to humanity. Because God is perfect in character, perfect in wisdom, in love, in righteousness, and in justice, He can not do other than deal in perfect fairness with evil and with sinners who persist in it (Heb. 10:30). Calvary fully demonstrated this fairness. Read John 3:16-21.

Realizing that the eternal Judge is my friend, who is on my side, what keeps me from enjoying a closer relationship with Him?

FURTHER STUDY: What do the following stories teach us about anger, strife, and contentment: Genesis 37? Deuteronomy 11?

To learn more about what constitutes true happiness, read "The Sermon on the Mount," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 298-314.

"The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. All the common waters of life Christ can turn into the wine of heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 28.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we help people accept holiness as the basis of genuine happiness?
2. A contented person is not a bad-tempered person. What basis does contentment have in a spiritual life?
3. What relationship exists between music and human temperament and behavior? (Consider Exod. 15; 32:18, 19; 2 Chron. 20:21-24; Dan. 3:4, 5; Judg. 5:3.) How can music help us to be happy or cope with a problem?
4. Why should we allow God to take from us all of our bitterness and anger?
5. Does being content mean that we should not strive to better our condition or improve ourselves in any way? Explain your answer.

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the following questions: Is there any place for anger? Explain your answer. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of God's anger?

Happiness and contentment are treasures of superlative value. The peace that Christ imparts is far superior to any so-called happiness the world has to offer. Nothing need disturb that peace, for it is not dependent on outward circumstances. Even though others may try to make life miserable for us, though anger and strife rage around us, we can be kept in the peace of heaven, for nothing can disturb us when Jesus dwells within. Then, as children of God, we shall be like our Father.



By Her Fruits

Charlotte Ishkanian

Celestine is a teenager from the country of Chad in the heart of Africa. Her family worshiped traditional gods—trees, stones, and plants. They had no knowledge of Jesus Christ until Celestine's elder brother visited an Adventist church with a friend. Celestine asked her brother if she could go with him to the church, and he agreed. She enjoyed the youth group and the activities they planned. They held Bible study meetings, played sports together, and shared their faith with others.

Celestine's parents noticed a difference in their children's behavior and asked what had changed them. When Celestine told them that it was God's Word that made a difference, her parents decided to visit the church to see what could cause such a big difference. A year later her parents were baptized.

When Celestine entered secondary school she faced the problem of Sabbath classes. She decided that she would not attend classes on Sabbath, and although most of her teachers excused these absences, the decision caused some problems. Then as the end of her tenth grade year approached, she prepared to take the special exams students must pass in order to receive their diploma.

When the exam schedule was posted, she saw that exams were scheduled on Thursday through Saturday. Celestine decided that she would not take the exams on Sabbath, even though it meant that she might have to repeat the entire school year. She would take the exams on Thursday and Friday, but on Sabbath she would be in church.

Some of her friends laughed and called her a fool when she told them she would not take the exams on Sabbath.

Then, during the exams the headmaster announced that all sections of the exams would be completed by Friday afternoon, and there were no exams on Saturday. Celestine praised God for answering her prayers. But then she faced another problem. Some of her friends began to say that she must be a witch to have the power to cancel the Saturday exams! Celestine told them that the only power she had was the power of prayer.

Celestine wants to do what is pleasing to God, and rejoiced when God allowed her to complete her exams to His glory.



Celestine Laodandji (left). Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

Produced by the Office of Mission

Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference

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A Friend for All Seasons



Sabbath Afternoon

THERE IS MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF FRIEND. When the editors of a magazine offered a prize for the best definition of a friend, they received thousands of responses. One person wrote: "A friend is one who multiplies joys and divides grief." Another suggested: "A friend is one who understands our silence." Yet another said: "A friend is a volume of sympathy bound in cloth." The definition that won the prize read: "A friend—the one who comes in when the whole world goes out."

A true friend is a treasure whose worth is beyond compare. A false friend, or one whose life is directed by a different value system, could constitute a major danger. God has given us insight and warning to guide us in the choice of our friends.

We need to develop our social awareness, so we might reach out in friendship to people where they are and minister to their needs. Reaching out to others is a privilege and a responsibility, as well as a spiritual gift. This week as you study, you will learn that the theology of friendship includes (1) companionship among loved ones who share similar values and convictions, (2) hospitality that brings others to Christ, and (3) kindness to strangers.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. A True Friend (Prov. 27:9, 10).
- II. Friend or Fool? (Prov. 13:20).
- III. Wounds or Kisses? (Prov. 27:6).
- IV. The Saving Value of Hospitality (Prov. 25:21, 22).
- V. Kindness To Strangers (Prov. 31:20).

MEMORY TEXT: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm" (Proverbs 13:20, NRSV).

A TRUE FRIEND (Prov. 27:9, 10).

What reason did God give for providing a companion for Adam?
Gen. 2:18.

Deep in every heart lies a longing, even a craving, for companionship. Adam in Eden felt such a need before God created Eve. Lacking a friend with whom he could share his life, Adam could not have gained the greatest possible satisfaction from the beauties of a perfect world or the delights of employment, exploration, and expanding powers. As a social being, he needed the understanding, sympathy, and companionship of one who shared his nature. He needed someone with whom he could share human love.

Only once during Creation week did God say His plan was not good (Gen. 2:18). If it were not good for Adam to be alone, then surely God meant for marriage partners to be the best of friends. Marriage is especially meaningful when this is the case. No other feature of the marriage relationship can replace friendship. As friends, husband and wife can communicate about mutual interests and joys, challenges and sorrows. Spiritually and psychologically, the experience of having a partner who is a closer friend than any other human being greatly enriches our lives.

Those who are not married, for whatever reason, may enjoy the enriching experience of having close personal friends. Everyone needs someone with whom she or he can share confidences, joys, and sorrows. Though unmarried, the apostle Paul found deep satisfaction in the relationship of mutual dependence that he enjoyed with his fellow laborers. (See Phil. 4:3.) Because God created us to be social beings, we achieve our full potential in association with others.

By what comparison does Solomon indicate the value of a friend?
What advice does he give? Prov. 27:9, 10.

Ointment and perfume were often quite expensive. Usually composed of olive oil, sweet spices, gum resins, or other aromatics, and often preserved in alabaster jars, these ointments were a sought-after luxury in Palestine. Some friends may be more like a cheap fragrance—easy to acquire, easy to give up, and not particularly valuable. But just as the pleasing aroma of a high-quality perfume “makes the heart glad” (NRSV) and lasts a long time, so does a true Christian friend inspire hope and faith. Such a friend is rare and worth more than silver and gold.

How would you define a true friend? By what comparison would you indicate the value of such a person?

FRIEND OR FOOL? (Prov. 13:20).

What principle should we keep in mind when choosing our friends?
Prov. 13:20.

Not only are we judged by the company we keep, but we tend to take on as our own the characteristics of our friends. The people and the things we love shape and fashion us. By beholding we become changed. (See 2 Cor. 3:18.)

"The youth fail to realize how sensibly both their character and their reputation are affected by their choice of associates. One seeks the company of those whose tastes and habits and practices are congenial. He who prefers the society of the ignorant and vicious to that of the wise and good shows that his own character is defective. His tastes and habits may at first be altogether dissimilar to the tastes and habits of those whose company he seeks; but as he mingles with this class, his thoughts and feelings change. . . . As a stream always partakes of the property of the soil through which it runs, so the principles and habits of youth invariably become tinctured with the character of the company in which they mingle."—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 411, 412.

Since our friends inevitably influence us, let us choose them wisely.

Why does Proverbs 24:1, 2 caution us about the type of people with whom we associate?

Fostering an inclination or cherishing a desire usually results in giving in to it. While we cannot of ourselves change our hearts or control our inclinations and impulses, we do have the power of choice and can give our wills to God. "We can *choose* to serve God . . . then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176.

Close friendship with those who are not serving Christ involves certain hazards. Unconsciously, we are likely to absorb their habits. Associating too closely with those whose moral and ethical standards are not in harmony with the gospel can tarnish our purity and reputation.

Since association with unbelieving friends is filled with spiritual danger, how can a Christian maintain spiritual integrity while seeking to win others to Christ? How does our motive have a determining effect on this process?

WOUNDS OR KISSES? (Prov. 27:6).

What can we learn about true friends from Proverbs 27:6 and 27:17?

“Deceitful” kisses (KJV) bring to mind Judas the betrayer. In direct contrast is the Friend of friends who “was wounded for our transgressions,” “was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).

“People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27:17, TEV). In order to make our learning well rounded, we need three kinds of friends.

1. The friend we most readily recognize is a peer, someone with whom we share ideals, concepts, and plans; someone who inspires us to be our best and achieve the most for the right reasons.

2. We also need a model, someone who personifies the goals we have set for ourselves, who has traveled the path before us, and to whom we can look for wise counsel. In some cultures, the segregation of generations and the breakup of extended families have brought unnecessary trauma and loneliness for the senior members of society, while at the same time robbing those who could benefit from their long experience.

3. Then there is the friend who admires us, regarding us as a pattern. We need to cherish the opportunity to be a friend to such a person, though the relationship may not be to our personal advantage. Only in eternity will we know the extent of our influence on such a person.

Bigotry, exclusiveness, and favoritism cannot reside in the heart of the true Christian. We need to remember “the Christlikeness of exhibiting a kindly interest, a social disposition, toward those who are in the greatest need, even though these may not be . . . [our] own chosen companions.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 406.

Why is the counsel in Proverbs 17:9 so important?**Why is criticism and gossip so damaging to friendship?**

“No Christian parent should permit gossip to be repeated in the family circle or remarks to be made disparaging the member of the church.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 242.

What further roles should conversation have among Christian friends? How can these roles play a part in your conversation with friends?

THE SAVING VALUE OF HOSPITALITY (Prov. 25:21, 22).

While the Christian's best and most intimate friends should be those who share his or her principles and convictions, it is also true that sanctified socializing can be a means of blessing others and bringing them into a proper relationship with God.

An enemy can sometimes become a friend through social contact of the right kind. How does the Bible writer suggest we go about this? Prov. 25:21, 22.

How did Jesus express the same sentiment we find in Proverbs 25:21, 22 and in Matthew 5:43-45?

We can win souls through friendship. We can attract to Christ and His love those who do not understand the distinctive message of Adventism, as we include them in our social occasions. When we remain separate from them, unwilling or unable to relate to them in relaxed social settings, they will not find our message attractive. Kindness is hard to resist. Most people readily give in to it!

Jesus associated with sinful people. In fact, the religious leaders of the day strongly criticized Him for it. (See Luke 5:30-32; 7:33, 34.) Jesus pointed out that He was associating with sinners because they needed His ministry. Never did He condone or excuse sin, and never did He enter into the evil pleasures and activities of the people for whom He was working. He staunchly resisted, however, the pompous exclusiveness of the Pharisees. Jesus demonstrated how we can win social outcasts for His kingdom and how we can most effectively reflect His love and witness for His truth.

"The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word, and by all who have received the gospel of His grace. We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are. They will seldom seek us of their own accord."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

What social programs does your church conduct that are attractive to nonmembers? How often do you have hospitality dinners for Sabbath visitors? If you have been doing these kinds of things, what results have you seen?

To what types of unstructured social occasions in your home do you invite nonbelievers?

KINDNESS TO STRANGERS (Prov. 31:20).

What is one class of strangers whose lot in life the Bible urges us to relieve? Prov. 21:13; 31:20. How would you suggest that individuals and the church should follow this counsel?

Have you considered the needs of the homeless in your community? Some conferences have begun a special ministry to these people. If your church is located in or near a large city, what can you personally do for those who are without homes or jobs?

What directive is common to the following scriptures? Rom. 12:10-113; 1 Pet. 4:9, 10.

"These admonitions have been strangely neglected. . . . Among our own people the opportunity of showing hospitality is not regarded as it should be, as a privilege and a blessing. There is altogether too little sociability, too little of a disposition to make room for two or three more at the family board, without embarrassment or parade. . . . By the unexpected guest a welcome is appreciated far more than is the most elaborate preparation."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 343.

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:2, NIV). What a privilege! Angels are with us always, whether or not we can see them. They enjoy being in homes where people express love and kindness with their words, actions, and looks, and they are pleased at the sight of a well-regulated, orderly family that is willing to share good things with others. (See *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 115; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 259; vol. 6, p. 342.)

Check the statements below that you want to incorporate into your own experience:

I will pray that God will make me capable of being a true Christian friend to others.

With the help of God, I will choose close friends who will help rather than hinder my spiritual life.

With God's help, I will seek to develop my social abilities, so I can reach more souls for His kingdom.

I will gladly share with others what God has entrusted to me.

Now choose one or two of the items you have checked and list steps you can take to incorporate them into your life.

FURTHER STUDY: For biblical examples of true friendship, read Ruth 1:6-18; 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 2 Kings 2:1-3; Matthew 27:55, 56; Luke 1:39-45.

Read "Hospitality," "Our Social Needs," and "Safe and Unsafe Association," in *The Adventist Home*, pp. 445-465.

"If choice is made of companions who fear the Lord, the influence will lead to truth, to duty, and to holiness. A truly Christian life is a power for good. But, on the other hand, those who associate with men and women of questionable morals, of bad principles and practices, will soon be walking in the same path. . . . To walk in the counsel of the ungodly is the first step toward standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of the scornful."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 587.

"The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 360.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List and discuss ways spouses can develop and maintain a close friendship with each other.
2. How can people who are not married apply the guidelines for husbands and wives to their close personal friendship?
3. The segregation of generations is a problem for some cultures. We talk about it, but what can we do to correct the problem or, better still, prevent it?
4. Name and discuss the only thing that will erase bigotry, favoritism, and exclusiveness from the heart.
5. Most modern enemies will not be hungry or thirsty. So how else can we "heap coals of fire" upon their heads?
6. Besides those who do not have jobs or homes, what other types of "strangers" might there be in your community? How can you help them?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by making a brief outline for the following areas in the theology of friendship: (1) companionship among loved ones who share similar values and convictions, (2) hospitality that brings others to Christ, and (3) kindness to strangers. Be sure to include Bible texts in your outlines.



God's Police Squad

J. H. Zachary

General Ramiro Rojas is the commander of one of the most unusual police forces in the world. He leads the 130,000 officers of the national police force in Peru.

Several years ago an event took place that changed the course of Rojas's life and eventually touched the lives of millions in Peru. One of Rojas's close friends and police officers was a faithful Seventh-day Adventist. When the Adventist officer died in an accident, his widow told Rojas, "If my husband were alive today, he would want you to take his place as the only Adventist police officer in this city."

"I will do it," Rojas promised. And he did.

Rojas's new beliefs brought changes to his command. His troops became known for their honesty, refusal to take bribes, and high morale. The commander of the police at the time was dealing with serious ethical problems in the police force. He noticed the differences in Rojas' unit and asked his secret for raising the standard among those under his command.

Rojas answered, "Love for Jesus is changing my officers. They are learning to honor God." Rojas's squad became a model for the entire police force. Eventually, Ramiro Rojas became the commander of the entire Peruvian police force. His influence and leadership touches every police officer and virtually every citizen of the country.

When we visited Rojas in his office, he invited us to kneel for prayer. I was impressed as he poured out his heart to God.

A few minutes later his staff entered, and the general led them in a rousing gospel song, a Bible reading, and a short talk. After several staff members prayed, the group sang another lively song. After they returned to their duties General Rojas said, "We begin each day with God."

Rojas introduced us to Samuel Cueva, a recent graduate of Andrews University whose job is to share the ethical principles of the Bible with the police force of Peru. Rojas has formed small groups in every police unit to minister to the officers' spiritual needs. More than 500 officers have accepted Christ as their Saviour and been baptized. No pressure is placed on these officers to make a decision for Christ. They simply accept the spirit of prayer and Bible study put into place by Rojas and his team. The Holy Spirit does the rest.

General Rojas said, "God has changed the spirit of my officers!"

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Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference
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Drink From Your Own Spring



Sabbath Afternoon

FRIDAY IS NEARLY SPENT. The glow in the heavens sinks toward the distant hills. A breeze flutters the leaves of a tree and makes the flowers dance. A stream sings over stones and birds swoop and call. Animals of all sizes cavort through the tall grasses. The new world is complete. But where are the rulers?

God is down at the lakeshore . . . *sculpting*. He's forming from the mud . . . a . . . man! Now He's leaning over the face; now, rocking back on His heels, He reaches out His hand to the man, and they stand together. Magnificent!

Next, according to an old tale, God says to the angels looking on, "You think that's good? You think I could do even better?" and He made a woman! No, he had her in mind all along, a perfect complement to man. Together, in a unique and total union, they symbolized God's love for His people. And God celebrated the first marriage.

This lesson will take passages in Proverbs that deal with marriage, together with other supporting scriptures, to develop a picture of one of God's best gifts. We will also see why perversion of His masterpiece wreaks havoc and how contention sours peace.

But virtue is available to all who seek it! So study on, even if you are unmarried. You will find it interesting to see how many of the principles discussed apply to close personal friendships and to relationships in general.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Marriage—A Divine Masterpiece, Part 1 (Prov. 18:22).
- II. Marriage—A Divine Masterpiece, Part 2 (Eph. 5:21-31).
- III. Strange Perversion (Prov. 5:18-20).
- IV. A Quarrelsome Spouse (Prov. 21:19).
- V. A Virtuous Spouse (Prov. 31:10-31).

MEMORY TEXT: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30, NIV).

MARRIAGE—A DIVINE MASTERPIECE, PART 1 (Prov. 18:22).

According to Proverbs 19:14, where can a person find an intelligent, sensible, and understanding spouse?

“What God hath joined together.” The last part of the verse may be translated “But from the Lord is a woman who acts prudently.” The Hebrew verb means “to act wisely, understandingly, with insight and comprehension.” A spouse who acts in such a manner is truly a gift from God. The Lord is the ultimate matchmaker. No one knows better the secret needs of each individual, and no one has the same ability to bring together the right two persons. Because He is the divine Father of love, no one can care as much as He or provide better for the happiness of the couple He has united.

Why is a good spouse from the Lord? Could it be because the person is first given to Him? But how does God guide two individuals together? Providence is only one factor, as is strong emotion. Individual convictions must be compared, preferences sorted out and matched up, and counsel sought from parents and spiritual mentors. Decisions should be made from evidence, not impulse or demonstration, and aided by all the values accumulated up to that time. In all, the couple seek God’s will. The true love is born in heaven!

What activity did God provide for Adam before He created Eve?
Gen. 2:18-23.

Why did God do this?

“For this reason [see Gen. 2:23] a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (v. 24, NIV). With these words, God pronounced the union between Adam and Eve.

The physical union of a husband and wife is a representation of the total bonding of their lives. They are united not only physically but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The love they share between them is like no other. Two have become one.

This four-fold bond is basic to a successful marriage. It is a unity made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in both individuals and illustrated through the ability to have a part in continuing God’s creation—a union of cells that actually forms a new person. “‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen. 1:28, NIV) was part of the Lord’s plan for humanity.

Because our spouses, families, and friends are gifts from God, how should we treat them?

MARRIAGE—A DIVINE MASTERPIECE, PART 2 (Eph. 5:21-31).

The relationship between Christ and His church illustrates the richness of the spiritual oneness that is to exist between husband and wife. (See Eph. 5:21-31.) Just as spiritual life is possible only by union with Christ, so marital union is complete only as Christ creates it. Any counterfeit union involves being unequally yoked together (2 Cor. 6:14). The consequences are disorder and disaster. Only the house built on righteousness will stand. (See Prov. 12:7.)

After the Fall, what change took place in the husband-wife relationship? Gen. 3:16.

What counsel does Paul give to husbands? Eph. 5:25-33.

Paul shows here that marriage does not consist of one-sided submission. Because the husband is to give himself up for his wife just as Christ gave Himself up for the church (v. 25), this submission is mutual. How did Christ give Himself up for the church? He died for it! Indeed then, Ephesians 5:25-33 calls for the husband to make an even greater act of devotion toward his wife than the previous verses call for the wife to make toward her husband!

One of the purposes of the gospel is to restore the marriage relation to the state of harmony and equality that existed in Eden. Husbands who function as domestic dictators are not following the biblical ideal. Are they willing to attend lovingly to their wives as Christ attends to the church? The concept held by some that a wife should submit obediently to her spouse's demands is bound to create marital unhappiness. A wife should be an equal partner in the decision-making process. The husband should tenderly consider her feelings and her will, and he should do all in his power to contribute to her sense of personal worth.

If you are married, can you say the following is true in your relationship with your spouse? "Let each give love rather than exact it. . . . The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims. . . .

"Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

How might the above principles apply to other relationships?

STRANGE PERVERSION (Prov. 5:18-20).**How does Solomon counsel us against immorality?****Prov. 2:1, 16-19** _____**Prov. 5:1-13** _____**Prov. 6:23-33** _____**Prov. 7:4-27** _____

It has always been common to regard biblical teaching on moral questions as old-fashioned and incompatible with the demands of society. In His mercy, however, God has given us His moral law as a protecting hedge to keep us from physical suffering, emotional instability, and spiritual emptiness.

When the sexual union is indulged outside of marriage, as in premarital or extramarital affairs (or in perversions), the relationship weakens spiritual and emotional health and, thus, is contrary to God's will. It may also be destructive to physical health. Individuals are betrayed and traumatized, never to be quite the same in this life.

God will forgive anyone who sincerely repents. Yet the scars will remain. This is a warning to those who might think that, because God will forgive, they can live as they please without suffering dreadful results. (See Prov. 9:13-18.) In discussing these dangers, Solomon counsels: "Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. . . . May you rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Prov. 5:15, 18, NIV).

How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:27-30 magnify the seventh commandment? (Exod. 20:14).

"Christ points out that character is determined, not so much by the outward act, as by the inward attitude that motivates the act. The outward act merely reflects and activates the inward attitude. He who would commit a wrong act if he thought he could escape detection, and who is restrained only by that fear, is, in the sight of God, guilty." —*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 336, 337.

What attitude do you adopt toward a person in your church who has fallen into moral impurity? How would you go about helping such a person rise above past mistakes and accept Christ's saving grace?

A QUARRELSOME SPOUSE (Prov. 21:19).

How do the following verses illustrate the problem of a nagging spouse?

Prov. 27:15 _____

Prov. 21:9 _____

Prov. 21:19 _____

"Leaking roofs were common in the East, and the constant dripping tried the nerves of the inhabitants much as does a nagging woman. . . .

"In ancient Palestine for most of the year a man might live in comparative comfort on the flat roof of his house. . . . Solomon countends that it is better to be exposed to the wind and rain than to the quarrelsome and vexing tongue of a contentious woman."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. , 1012, 1018.

What counsel for all Christians is particularly appropriate for a quarrelsome spouse? Eph. 4:29.

Attitude reform can begin in more than one place. The ill-natured person can determine to consecrate her or his heart and lips to God and speak only words that will minister grace to the hearers. God will give us the power for this noble task.

The marriage partner can also help. Sincere words of positive appreciation spoken from a heart of love go a long way toward soothing the troubled nerves of a distracted spouse. Just knowing somebody cares—especially the one you love the most—lifts a great burden from the heart. Just as nagging is as irritating as a dripping roof or a leaky faucet, so are kind words as refreshing "as dew and gentle showers to the soul. The Scripture says of Christ that grace was poured into His lips, that He might 'know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' And the Lord bids us, 'Let your speech be alway with grace,' 'that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' "—*The Adventist Home*, p. 435.

Think of a time when someone's kind words and thoughtful deeds helped to ease tensions in your home. How can you do the same for others without appearing to meddle in their business?

A VIRTUOUS SPOUSE (Prov. 31:10-31).

“Who can find a virtuous woman” (Prov. 31:10, NIV)? The question implies a rarity, not a total lack. The real question is: Who can be a virtuous person? Every person can, for God is in the business of making women and men virtuous, of helping them build noble characters equal to the burdens and demands of daily life.

What is the value of a virtuous person? Prov. 31:10.

Pure rubies belong to the royalty of the mineral world because they are hard, flawlessly transparent, dazzling in color, and rare.

How does the virtuous person reveal the following traits in her or his character?

Diligence (Prov. 31:13, 17, 18, 27) _____

Efficiency (Prov. 31:14, 16, 24) _____

Compassion (Prov. 31:20, 26) _____

Beauty (Prov. 31:22, 25) _____

How would you “translate” some of these, such as “she selects wool and flax” (31:13), into today’s daily life?

All of the above are traits any person can have. Their rewards are great, for those who know such people call them blessed. Spouses of such people praise them (Prov. 31:28, 29). Their example challenges others, and their works bring honor to loved ones and to themselves. Best of all, their life glorifies the God they love (Prov. 31:30).

How should a Christian husband or wife act toward a harsh, unkind, unbelieving spouse?

FURTHER STUDY: What men and women in the Bible displayed the characteristics of virtuous men and women? How do their stories inspire you to have faith in the Lord's ability to transform your life?

Read the following sections from *The Adventist Home*: "Mutual Obligations," pp. 114-120; "Marital Duties and Privileges," pp. 121-128; "The Kind of Husband Not to Be," pp. 224-228.

"She [the virtuous wife] opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness" (Prov. 31:26, NKJV).

"The Lord will help every one of us where we need help the most in the grand work of overcoming and conquering self. Let the law of kindness be upon your lips and the oil of grace in your heart. This will produce wonderful results. . . . By beholding the character of Christ you will become changed into His likeness. The grace of Christ alone can change your heart and then you will reflect the image of the Lord Jesus. God calls upon us to be like Him. . . . We are to bear the divine image."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1164.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Remembering Solomon's union with heathen women in direct opposition to God's will, what special importance should we give to his counsel regarding women and wives?
2. Christians have clear moral instruction set forth in Scripture depicting the husband-wife relation as the only sexual standard of conduct. How should we respond to the "modern standards" that confront us, especially when they occur in our families?
3. Identify some of the major principles this week's lesson touched upon. Which of them can we appropriately apply to relationships in general?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by challenging your soul with the following questions: *What am I contributing to my relationships that will be a blessing to myself and others? *How am I a hindrance to my spouse, relatives, and friends? How can I change? *Am I a quarrelsome person?* If I were to change the manner in which I react to things that displease me, would I bring greater happiness to my spouse and those around me?



God Did Not Let Him Travel

Pedro dos Santos Marinho

Pastor Pedro dos Santos Marinho of Brazil was on his way to spend Sabbath with believers in an isolated region of his district. He had planned his trip so he would not have to travel on Sabbath, but when he arrived in Boninal, where he would transfer to another bus, he learned that his bus had left early.

There was no other bus to his destination that day, so Pastor Marinho had to remain in Boninal overnight. He checked into the little hotel near the bus depot, then he found a telephone and called the church elder to let him know that he would arrive on Saturday.

Tired and disappointed, Pastor Marinho returned to his room to study the Sabbath School lesson. As he read, it seemed that he heard a voice saying, "You have not spoken about Me to anyone today, not even the hotel owner." *This is true*, the pastor thought. *I have been so wrapped up in what happened that I allowed a good opportunity to pass by to share Jesus in this town that apparently has no Adventists.*

Pastor Marinho prayed that God would lead him to those whom He wanted him to meet. Then he ate a quick lunch and set out to distribute pamphlets.

At the fourth house a woman answered the door. When she learned that this man was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, she said, "You have a sister here!"

"Really?" the surprised pastor asked. "Where does she live?" The woman arranged for someone to take Pastor Marinho to the home of an Adventist woman. When the pastor introduced himself, the woman who answered the door shouted, "Aparecida, come here and meet your brother!"

Aparecida appeared at the door and told the surprised pastor, "I have been praying for two years that God would send a pastor here. Today He has sent you!"

Pastor Marinho visited with the woman for quite some time and promised that he would return the following day. As he walked back to his room he realized why God had allowed him to miss his bus. God had a work for the pastor to do in that town.

On Sabbath morning he returned to visit until it was time to catch his bus. He promised to return again.

Pastor Marinho kept his promise. In time he held evangelistic meetings in Boninal, and today more than 30 believers have joined the church by baptism, including Aparecida's parents and one of her sisters.

Pedro dos Santos Marinho pastors in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference
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To Make a Disciple



Sabbath Afternoon

DISCIPLINE IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH PUNISHMENT. A disciple is a convinced follower of a school of thought or an individual teacher. One who is disciplined is also a disciple (the two words share the same root) and comes to reflect characteristics of the mentor.

Christians are disciples of Christ. Are children disciples of their parents? If parents were to see their job as making disciples, how would their methods of discipline change? If parents understood discipline to be the whole, broad spectrum of instruction and experience, and if their correction were redemptive rather than punitive, what could be the results to those disciplined.

To be trained like animals is not God's plan. "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. . . . It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought."—*Education*, p. 17.

What is the goal of discipline? Do we ever grow out of being a disciple? Why do we need correction at all? And what is it that God wants from us? Discussion of these questions should provide valuable insight for all of us, for we are all disciples.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Parenting (Prov. 22:6).
- II. Discipling (Prov. 3:11, 12; 13:24).
- III. Despise Not Correction (Prov. 12:15).
- IV. What God Hates (Prov. 6:16-19).
- V. Heart Work (Prov. 3:1).

MEMORY TEXT: "My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments" (Proverbs 3:1, NRSV).

PARENTING (Prov. 22:6).

"To parents is committed the great work of educating and training their children for the future, immortal life. . . . No work ever undertaken by man requires greater skill than the proper training and education of youth and children."—*Child Guidance*, pp. 38, 39.

What is the meaning of the action word *train* in Proverbs 22:6?

Other versions read: "Teach a child how he should live, and he will remember it all his life" (TEV).

"Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older he will remain upon it" (TLB).

"Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it." According to Cynthia Tobias of Learning Styles Unlimited, the original Hebrew of the verb translated "train" is used uniquely in Proverbs 22:6. It referred to the clearing out of the mouth of a newly born baby, and meant, "Create an environment for life."

Thus, we could understand the verse to mean, "Create an environment for life for a child, in keeping with his gifts or bent, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

What relationships between children and parents do the following passages speak of?

Prov. 10:1 _____

Prov. 27:11 _____

Prov. 28:7 _____

Prov. 29:15 _____

Prov. 30:11-14 _____

The last phrase of Proverbs 22:6 states a general principle to which there are exceptions. God gives freedom of choice. We all decide our own destiny. Thus, negligence or faulty parenting is not necessarily to blame for wayward offspring. God Himself lost one-third of His angel family through no fault of His own.

Aside from parental guidance, name some of the influences that instruct your child. How do these influences work, and why are they so influential?

DISCIPLINING (Prov. 3:11, 12; 13:24).

How does Proverbs 3:11, 12 and 13:24 suggest we should discipline children?

God loves us; He has only our best good at heart. Therefore, and to that end, He disciplines us. We should follow His example in the way we discipline our children.

"To direct a child's development without hindering it by undue control should be the study of both parent and teacher. Too much management is as bad as too little. The effort to 'break the will' of a child is a terrible mistake. Minds are constituted differently; while force may secure the outward submission, the result with many children is a more determined rebellion of the heart. Even should the parent or teacher succeed in gaining the control he seeks, the outcome may be no less harmful to the child. . . . The will should be guided and molded, but not ignored or crushed. Save the strength of the will; in the battle of life, it will be needed."—*Education*, pp. 288, 289.

When all else has failed, physical punishment may be necessary. But violent physical abuse is contrary to the spirit of Christ and is counterproductive in itself. Punishment administered in anger only creates bitterness, resentment, and future problems for all concerned. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath," "don't overcorrect your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment" (Eph. 6:4, TEV, Philips).

"Do not provoke." "This negative advice is essential if the obedience required of the children is to rest on a moral basis. The parallel passage in Colossians gives the reason for this admonition: 'Lest they be discouraged' (Col. 3:21)."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1041.

"There is great strength and blessing in praying together in our families, with and for our children. When my children have done wrong, and I have talked with them kindly and then prayed with them, I have never found it necessary after that to punish them. Their hearts would melt in tenderness before the Holy Spirit that came in answer to prayer."—*Child Guidance*, p. 525.

If you are a parent, can you say that the training you are giving your children is helping to make them faithful disciples of Christ? Examine your heart and your conduct to determine how you need to improve your child training.

How do the basic principles by which we should train our children relate to manager-employee and teacher-student relationships? How do the same principles affect the manner in which a church should discipline unfaithful members?

DESPISE NOT CORRECTION (Prov. 12:15).

Independence is an instinctive aspect of human nature. We feel that we can handle situations alone quite successfully. In our haste to do things our own way, we ignore Christ. God exercises much patience with His self-deceived, self-reliant children.

What does God know about our choices that we tend to forget?
Prov. 16:25 (compare Jer. 10:23).

Jesus said, “‘Without Me you can do nothing,’ ” (John 15:5, NKJV). But by relying on Him, we can do everything we need to do. (See Phil. 4:13.) A disciplined disciple studies His Word to understand His will, chooses to follow that will, and relies on His power to resist temptation. Discipline also has practical, everyday connections, for God wants our temporal lives to be successful, even as the spiritual lives prosper. (See 3 John 2.) This level of discipline will not look the same for everyone due to the different needs and temperaments of each individual. But whatever your struggle, take it to God and keep growing. As victory comes, it will be sweet.

But “fools think their own way is right” (Prov. 12:15) and “there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov. 15:25, NIV; see also 13:18; 29:21). The last chapters of the book of Judges provide a tragic illustration of these verses: “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (17:6, NRSV). There is no record of anyone following the counsel of Jehovah. Confusion and violence reigned.

But God is never caught off-guard; He is still the Ruler and Over-ruler. “Above the distractions of earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417.

What kind of instruction does Proverbs 16:22 urge us to avoid?

Isaiah 8:20 invites us to test all counsel by the teachings of the Bible, and John 14:26 encourages us to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in every situation. If we are listening, God has ways to get through to us. The Bible is the ultimate test (see Isa. 8:20), and the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). There still may be “gray areas” when we do not know exactly what to do; but where we have a “Thus saith the Lord,” “openmindedness” to a contradicting philosophy is no virtue.

Ask yourself, What kind of instruction am I allowing to shape my life? Is it helping me along the right road?

WHAT GOD HATES (Prov. 6:16-19).

List some of the things that are especially hateful to God.

| Text | The Things God Hates |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Prov. 6:16-19 | |
| Prov. 15:26 | |
| Prov. 20:10, 19, 20, 22 | |

“A proud look” (Prov. 6:17). “Self-exaltation prevents a man from confessing his sin and humbling his soul before God. As long as it persists, salvation is impossible. The proud man is barred from the gates of life just as surely as if God hated him (see Job 21:22; Ps. 18:27 . . .).” —*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 967.

Children sing in Sabbath School, “Jesus loves me when I’m good, when I do the things I should; Jesus loves me when I’m bad, tho’ it makes Him very sad.” Is this true? Indeed it is! God loves the sinner but not the sin. The great problem in salvation is how to save the sinner without saving (and thus perpetuating) the sin. God, however, found a way of escape for us. Jesus died to give us another chance at life. Through the provisions of the Cross we can be made free from “the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

There are those who become so bound to sin that it is inseparable from them. When the sin is destroyed, they must be destroyed with it.

What attitude does the Lord have toward religious practices that are not motivated by our love for Him? Prov. 15:8; 21:27; 28:9.

The sacrifices and prayers of pretenders are worthless to God. They are a farce. Gifts and righteous works do not earn favor in heaven for the unrepentant. God is not bought. And what does He want, besides our hearts?

But when sinners acknowledge their need and accept Christ’s merits, they are no longer considered sinners. Their prayers are welcome, for God has promised, “Anyone who comes to Me I will never drive away” (John 6:37, NKJV).

Why do you engage in certain religious practices? Does tradition dictate that you do so? Or, is it because you truly love the Lord?

HEART WORK (Prov. 3:1).

What problem persisted among God's chosen people in both Old Testament times and during the period when Jesus walked among them? Isa. 29:13, 14; Matt. 15:7-9. To what extent does this problem still exist today? Rev. 3:14-20.

We are Laodicea. Our problem stems from the spiritual condition of our hearts. We are lukewarm. If we were cold, the Lord says we would be better off. We would be more likely to wake up, recognize our pathetic condition, and seek His help. If our heart were truly filled with His Spirit, we would be "hot." Too often we attempt to change by attempting to conform to mere rules and regulations without genuine heart surrender to God.

Where does God begin the work of transformation? "My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments" (Prov. 3:1, NRSV). (See also Prov. 23:26; Rom. 12:2.) Having our names on church membership books is not enough. "Profession is as nothing in the scale. It is character that decides destiny."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 74.

The majority of God's people still worship in churches around us, waiting to be called out by the moving invitation of the Holy Spirit. (See Rev. 18:1-4; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 390, 464; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 41.) If we seek Him with all our heart, the Lord will pour upon us the Holy Spirit so that we will have the spiritual power to reach honest souls who need to hear the final invitation of mercy.

What remedy for our condition does the Great Physician offer? Ezek. 36:26, 27 (compare Rom. 7:14, 24, 25).

"Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin'?" (Prov. 20:9, NIV). No one can make such a claim. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "Be not discouraged because your heart seems hard. Every obstacle, every internal foe, only increases your need of Christ. He came to take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Look to Him for special grace to overcome your peculiar faults."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 112.

The Lord's plea to us is: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23, NIV). Today, hear Him making that plea to you personally. Pray to Him now that He will help you to guard your heart, the wellspring of eternal life with Him.

FURTHER STUDY: Review an incident in David's life that illustrates the principles of discipline we studied in this week's lesson: 2 Samuel 11-12:1-25; Psalm 51. Name the specific principles involved. How can you illustrate these principles in your life?

Read "Discipline," pp. 287-297 in *Education*.

"Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them. He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified.

"The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop."

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 471.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the best type of discipline? Explain why.
2. How does the nature of the human will relate to the training of children and contribute to their development of moral power?
3. We talk about heart work and following the truth as though people understand what we mean. What is our individual responsibility in regard to the proclamation of the truth?
4. Consider Jesus' life on this earth. How did He discipline people? Give specific examples.

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the following personal questions: *Do I represent God accurately to the children with whom I have contact? Do I combine love, justice, mercy, and truth in all my dealings with them?

*How do I learn to depend on Christ to direct my steps? How can I come to the point of accepting His leading in my life?

*Do I learn from the experience of others, or do I insist on trying everything myself?

*How will my life change when I cease living it my own independent way and allow God to recreate me as a true disciple in the image of His Son?



They Refused to Give Up

John Osei Acheampong

It is exciting and faith strengthening to see how powerful God is and the miraculous manner in which He guards His truths and His people when it will bring glory to His name.

The church in Terchire, Ghana, is young. And Ghanaians, as with many other cultures in Africa, are strongly influenced by dreams and miracles.

Stephen Badu is the youthful first elder of the church. Recently he became seriously ill. He was sent to several doctors and even hospitals for treatment, but the doctors could not diagnose his illness. He could neither eat nor drink, and he rapidly grew weaker. Eventually doctors declared that the illness was "spiritual" and sent Badu home to die. Soon he fell into a coma.

To see their beloved elder lying near death at such a young age was a blow to the members' faith. The church elders called all the church board members to take part in three days of fasting and intercessory prayer on Badu's behalf. Immediately nearly all of the church members joined in the fasting and prayer vigil.

The church planned to end the fast with an evening prayer watch for the entire church. But before the fast ended word came that Stephen Badu had died. Friends urged the church members to cease their fasting and praying. But the determined believers refused to give up. They claimed God's promise that "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37, NIV).

As the three days of fasting and prayer ended, Stephen Badu, who had been pronounced dead, regained consciousness. Witnesses reported that he sat up and asked for something to eat. Doctors who had declared his case hopeless cannot explain his sudden revival except that it is a miracle.

Today Badu is alive and well, as fit as a soldier, and working for Christ. Word of the miraculous way in which he was healed brought many visitors to the church. They wanted to see for themselves the power of God that these Adventist believers called down from heaven. So far four people have been baptized who first came inquiring about Badu's healing.

John Osei Acheampong is a member of the Terchire Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana.

Bible Study Guide for First Quarter, 2001

The first quarter Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, entitled “*Great Prayers and Pray-ers of the Bible*,” focuses on the power of prayer in the lives of biblical characters.

Lesson 1: The Model Pray-er and the Model Prayer.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Jesus’ Prayer Life (Luke 3:21, 22).

Monday: “I Have Prayed for You, Peter” (Luke 22:31, 32).

Tuesday: “Teach Us To Pray” (Luke 11:1-4).

Wednesday: “Give Us This Day” (Matt. 6:11-13).

Thursday: Jesus’ Principles of Prayer (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-14).

MEMORY TEXT: Luke 11:9, 10.

SABBATH GEM: Prayer is the communication line between Headquarters and ground forces in battle. When Jesus entered enemy territory to be with us, He showed us how to use this communication system.

Lesson 2: Prayers of Despair: Job

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Crisis! (Job 1, 2).

Monday: Job’s Bitter Complaints to God (Job 7:7-21; 10).

Tuesday: Job’s Cry for Justice (Job 9:32-35).

Wednesday: Glimmers of Hope (Job 13:15, 16; 14:7-17. See also 19:25-27; 23:10).

Thursday: Breakthrough! (Job 38:1; Heb. 11:6).

MEMORY TEXT: Job 23:10.

SABBATH GEM: Due to the nature of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, an incredible amount of suffering exists. The best way to maintain one’s sanity in times of darkness is to continue praying, even though it seems, at times, as though God does not hear.

Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*From the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous reprinted here in their original form by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Adaptation of the original Twelve Steps appears in Lesson Four under Friday's section of this Bible Study Guide and is also printed by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION



| Unions | Churches | Companies | Membership | Population |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Adriatic Union Conference | 98 | 9 | 4,192 | 10,038,000 |
| Baltic Union Conference | 73 | 11 | 6,692 | 7,571,000 |
| British Union Conference | 210 | 27 | 19,873 | 63,316,000 |
| Danish Union of Churches | 49 | - | 2,819 | 5,427,000 |
| Finland Union Conference | 69 | 8 | 5,684 | 5,170,000 |
| Hungarian Union Conference | 108 | - | 4,438 | 10,076,000 |
| Middle East Union Mission | 68 | 6 | 10,048 | 189,756,000 |
| Netherlands Union Conference | 48 | - | 4,252 | 15,799,000 |
| Norwegian Union Conference | 72 | 4 | 5,044 | 4,462,000 |
| Pakistan Union Section | 73 | 55 | 6,434 | 146,488,000 |
| Polish Union Conference | 123 | 18 | 5,563 | 38,674,000 |
| South-East European Union Conference | 200 | 17 | 8,031 | 16,504,000 |
| Swedish Union Conference | 46 | 2 | 2,923 | 8,856,000 |
| Attached Fields | 21 | - | 1,207 | 16,951,000 |
| Totals as of 6/30/99 | 1,258 | 157 | 87,200 | 539,088,000 |

Mission Project:
Construct a church-evangelistic center in Tirana, Albania.

