



**Seventh-day
Adventist Church**
WEST RIFT VALLEY FIELD



Camp Meeting Material

AUGUST 13TH - 26TH, 2023



GROWING IN HIM

Key Text: Colossians 2:6-7

Song: NZK 41

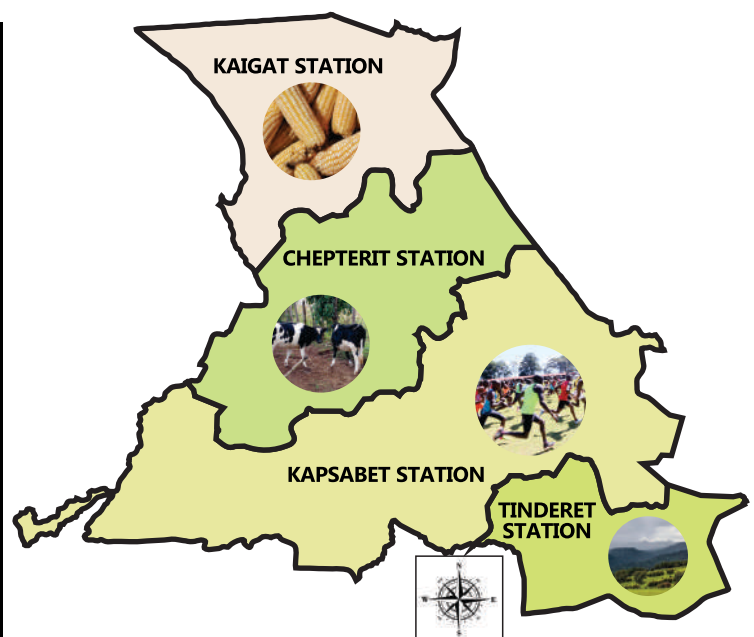
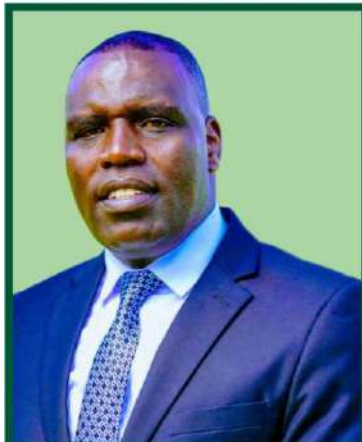


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
TIME TABLE	3
SERMON.....	4
BIBLE STUDY.....	22
SABBATH SCHOOL	28
SPIRIT OF PROPHECY	35
STEWARDSHIP	42
FAMILY MINISTRIES	63
SINGLE PARENTS LESSON.....	68
YOUTH DEPARTMENT	74
EVANGELISM	90

INTRODUCTION



Pr. Eliazar Kogey
President, WRVF.

President's Welcoming Message

"As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct..." (1 Peter 1:15)

For several years, the Camp Meeting celebrations has been an avenue of calling people to a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This August, we welcome you to join us as we explore the integration of what we believe in our hearts with how we live out our faith in daily life. Through inspirational preaching and in-depth Bible studies, joyful singing, and warm-hearted fellowship events, you will find your faith deepened and your soul refreshed.

In our programs you will find there is something for everyone, young and old, men and women, new believers or seasoned saints. We hope you will join us this year again and experience the blessings of, **"GROWING IN HIM"** for yourself.

Wishing you the blessings of Holiness, Health, and Happiness,

Message from the Camp Co-ordinator

Greetings in the Holy name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is through His care and protection that He saw it fit to allow us this 2023 Camp Meeting.

Let's all praise His name and be thankful for the love that He showed us for the past year. As we come to be revived, let's also bring our Thanks Giving Offerings according to the blessings of the year. **(Exodus 16:14-17)**

Let all family members plan to attend the camp meeting to receive blessings from the Lord.

Some will say: "It is expensive to travel, and it would be better for us to save the money and give it for the advancement of the work where it is so much needed." Do not reason in this way; God calls upon you to take your place among the rank and file of His people. Strengthen the meeting all you possibly can by being present with your families. Put forth extra exertion to attend the gathering of God's people. 6T 39.1

Brethren and sisters, it would be far better for you to let your business suffer than to neglect the opportunity of hearing the message God has for you. Make no excuse that will keep you from gaining every spiritual advantage possible. You need every ray of light. You need to become qualified to give a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. You cannot afford to lose one such privilege. 6T 39.2

May God bless you all in your faithfulness.



Pr. Sammy Cheluget
Camp Coordinator WRVF

TIME TABLE



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH WEST RIFT VALLEY FIELD 2023 CAMPMEETING TIME TABLE

CAMP NAME TIME KEEPER HOST PASTOR

TIME	SUBJECT	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6:50-7:50 am			Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
7:50-8:20 am	Morning worship		LE/Children Teacher	LE	LE	LE	LE
8:20-9:05 am	Sabbath School						
9:05-9:50 am	Bible Study						
9:50-10:50 am	Literature Evangelism						
10:50-11:00 am	BREAK		BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
11:00 am-12:15pm	Sermon						
12:15-1:40 pm	LUNCH		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
1:40-2:00 pm	Song Service						
2:00-2:45 pm	Evangelism						
2:45 – 3:25 pm	Spirit of Prophecy						
3:25- 4:15 pm	Stewardship						
4:15-5:00 pm	Classes	OPENING THE CAMP					
	Senior parents						
	Young parents						
	Single parents/Widows						
	Youth - 13-31 yrs						
	Children-0-12 yrs						
7:30-9:30 pm	Local Arrangements where applicable						
SABBATH MORNING		SABBATH UPTO MID-DAY		SABBATH AFTERNOON			
8:40-9:00 am	- Song service	10:15-10:45 am	- Announcements	1:30-2:30 pm – Songs/Choirs presentations			
9:00 -9:20 am	- Sabbath school	10:44 am-12:30 pm	Divine service	2:30 -3:30-A call to Reach the World- <i>I Will Go Growing in Him</i>			
9:20-10:00 am	-Lesson Discussion	12:40 -1:30	-Lunch Break	3:30-3:45 –Camp Offerings Reports			
				3:45-4:15 –Music/Remarks			
				4:15-5:00 –Farewell by Speakers			

Theme: Reach the World – I will go growing in Him - Key Text: Colossians 2:6-7

Theme Song: NZK 41

SERMON

Introduction Day One

The NT gospel was preached in places and communities all of us can trace and find in our lifetimes. Although Some terms and names used sound strange and unheard-of, they can still be traced. When reading the book of Colossians, the terms Anatolia/Asia minor and the current country of Turkey are one and the same in culture, religion and region. All these nouns refer to a region in an ancient kingdom which came into power after the fall of the great Hittite empire. Colossae was one of the small village towns called Phrygia and a city in the west central part of Anatolia/ Asia minor/turkey. Both Colossae and Laodicea were small cities in Phrygia with a distance difference of 100 miles/165km that made it easy for Paul to navigate the region with the gospel. The god of Phrygia that spread her influence up to Colossae and Laodicea was to be called *Cybele*, the great mother of the gods and the goddess of the mountains. Both Greeks and the Romans worshiped this goddess. The significant features found in this region of Colossae were horse riding and wine entertainment hence informing Paul's emphasis in his message in part.

The book of Colossians is one of the prison epistles of Paul to a largely gentile church in Colossae in the province of Asia of Roman Empire. Paul himself was not the founder but it is believed that during his three years' ministry in Ephesus this church was founded 100 miles away. He mentions Epaphras as a minister there but not founder. This not with-standing, the church was founded 1:7, 4:12-13.

It was largely a gentile church, Greeks majority and Jews as minority, Acts 19:10. Paul mentions the sins of the gentiles 1:4, 3:5-7 gives a list of such. Paul received a report from Epaphras concerning good things about the church 1:4-8 and bad news of heresy. The heresy was a false teaching about the personality of Christ- his nature, humanity and his divinity propagated by philosophers – called gnostic.

In chapter 2:1- Paul begins by expressing his pastoral concern for the church. His struggles for them both in prayer and writing. He wishes them to stand strong in the faith against the wave of heresy. His prayer is to see;

- Courageous believers who can cope up with every situation.
- Believers united in love.
- Believers equipped with every kind of wisdom- hidden in Christ and open to all who believe

Gnostics were teaching wisdom hidden in books and only available for selected few.

Believers resist seductive persuasions of philosophers- we believe Gospel

Paul raises a concern for the commitment his newly formed/organized congregation exemplifies. Paul recognizes the fact that the Colossians have received Christ Jesus the Lord as the first step of faith. This step does not complete the spiritual journey by itself. There are much more steps to be taken in due course. According to Paul, the next step is walking in Him. Walking in Him includes total consciousness of Christ's presence in every place a Christian is, in everything a Christian does considering the social activities of Colossae including horse riding and drunkenness of wine. The next step in a Christian experience is being rooted in Christ, built in Christ and finally all these lead to one being established in the faith as taught by the Holy Spirit. Paul argues that the results of all the five fundamental steps of faith i.e.:-

- Receiving Christ
- Walking in Christ
- Rooted in Christ
- Built in Christ and
- established in

Constitute a whole Christian experience that he wishes Colossians to bare. This message is not exempt from us living today. We need the same five steps of faith and more as we wait for the second appearance of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

DAY TWO

Receiving Christ, the Lord.

Col. 2:6a- so then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord...NIV

In this verse Paul opens another debate altogether. He has labored to defend the supremacy of Christ from 1:15-23 and made his point clear that Jesus Christ is God the creator and sustainer of the natural world as well as the redeemer of mankind and the universe. False teachers are bringing wrong concept of Christ in a demeaning manner to make him less than God and different from Him.

When these people received the Gospel and learnt from Epaphras, they believed and hoped- 1:3-6 They were by faith united to God. This belief was not as a result of some logical reasoning/ philosophy but the Gospel of God. They were bearing fruits of the Spirit of grace that was at work in their lives 1:6. The holy spirit and the scriptures reveal nothing less than God the creator and redeemer.

To receive-paralambano- a verb meaning to accept a person's presence with friendliness. It was commonly used as to acknowledge a friend, relative or any person. Paul lifts this word above its conventional usage to refer to the miracle of conversion- the opening of the heart for Christ to make it abide.

The word Lord in the OT means God- Jehovah/Adonai. Hebrews resonated with this as the name of their GOD. That which was friendly and pronounceable, it speaks to the caring revelation of Him and involvement in man's history. This was a transcendent being who was also immanent. Their prophets like Isaiah would later on speak of Him coming to live among his people- Emmanuel.

New Testament writers understood Christ as God the incarnate and quickly gave him the title of honor as lord and God. When Paul pens this verse he intends to shut the door of aspersion by Gnostics who claim that matter is evil and therefore Jesus the human cannot be God. They also say that the creator of matter must be some emanation/intermediary who is not only far from God but also hostile to God.

Paul counters such reasoning by highlighting that Christ is the full embodiment of whole deity 2:9. What God is Christ is as the express image of God and the true image of humanity. When Paul calls Jesus the first born from the dead he uses this as a title of honor Exo.4:22- Israel is called first born. It is a title of Messiah. The Gnostics exalted Angels in ranks- Paul tells them that Christ created the Angels as well. He is the beginning and the end of creation to mean that all creation belongs to him and is accountable to Him. Our relationship with the created universe should be for the glory of His name or rightly put- for worship.

Whom did they receive? friends any Christian experience/ subjective gospel depends directly on the knowledge of God. Wrong concept gives wrong life and the reverse. This is why in 1:9 Paul has this prayer - **for this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. They must underscore that Christ is LORD; NIV**

- The creator of everything.
- The redeemer of everything.
- The exalted Messiah
- Head of the body- Church.

There is no less of this that the Gospel offers. Christians are not philosophers and our walk with God is guided by the light of his word- the Bible. both in the pre-incarnation and post-incarnation. This was Paul's message in Philippians 2:9-

The supremacy of Christ is not questionable **Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father NIV.** John the revelator was shown the glory of the exalted Christ seated on the throne in chapters 4 and 5.

The term lord means master, ruler or authority. Used in reference to Christ can best be appreciated when we understand the love of God. Earthly masters lord over us sometimes by force and rule us against our internal personal wish. Christ convicts our hearts and win us by love and then yoke us in his service out of will. His love compels us and in response we voluntarily offer ourselves to his lordship- 2Cor. 5:14, Rom. 6:18-22.

When we receive Christ as lord he seals us by the divine zeal- the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. This sealing not only makes you authentic but much more it gives God domain to reign in your life. The dominion of God quickens your dominion and the whole life will exemplify God. He becomes lord of;

- Your personal life
- Your family
- Your activities
- Your finances
- Your all in all.

Saints let me remind ourselves that to receive Christ in a saving relationship must just have him crowned lord of all for anything less makes him not lord at all. It could be possible that there are brothers and sisters in the church who might have not received or allowed the Lordship of Christ in their hearts. The human heart is deceitful and flesh is weakened by sin. No man will produce holiness required by mere religion- it is impossible. It must be given by one God when we surrender to his goodness and open our hearts for him to lord over us as our savior.

In this life under the sun, everyone must begin somewhere- a professor at the university began at baby class, a billionaire merchant will give an interesting story of humble start e. t. c. Christians begin by acknowledging Christ as lord as the first step in the long journey of faith.

Who is Christ to you? Is he truly Lord?

May you this day in this year's celebration welcome Jesus Christ as your personal savior and LORD-Amen.

DAY 3

Walking in Christ in the beauty of his holiness

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue to live in him**, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6-7)

In this context, Paul is not focusing so much on **the means** of how you received Christ (by grace through faith), but rather on the **person** - Christ whom you received.

Receiving Christ is believing in him. Not just **head knowledge** - thinking about who Christ is in your head, but receiving him into your **heart** by faith; seeing him the invisible one through the lens of faith not in part only, but in whole; his **person** as God and man; him in all his **offices**, as prophet, priest, and King; particularly as a Savior and Redeemer.

From chapter 1, Paul continues to define the offices of Christ – He exalts Jesus Christ as all-sufficient and supreme over all. In Christ, we have “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). He is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15), which as Paul immediately explains, means that He created all things that exist. He also is the head of His body, the church.

God's intention is that Jesus Christ will come to have first place in everything, because He shares the fullness of God (Col. 1:16-19). Even though we were alienated from God and hostile to Him, as our mediator - Christ reconciled us to God through His death (Col. 1:21-22).

By receiving Christ to rule our lives and inspiring hope to dwell with him forevermore in heaven, we receive the benefits of what rightfully belongs to him. The things he forfeited – his son-ship and an heir to his father's throne become ours through his atoning sacrifice at the cross.

Jesus de-robed himself of all his offices, wore the garb of humanity so that as a man like us, he came down and dwelt among men. To defeat sin so that from him, through him and in him we continually receive all blessings of grace and mercy to be justified and made righteous, hence receive adoption as God's children and an assured inheritance among all of them that are sanctified daily in Christ Jesus;

Therefore I beseech you sons and daughters of God to continue walking in Christ the same way you began when you accepted and received him by faith as your personal savior and was baptized. Continue persisting in the truth as revealed in the Bible about Jesus Christ the creator, deliverer, Lord overall and the soon coming King. That truth as it is revealed in the bible is the GOSPEL – God's good news of salvation wrought through Christ alone. The gospel is not a human philosophy, based on the speculations of religious wise men. Rather, it was transmitted to us from Jesus Christ through His chosen apostles, recorded in the New Testament. It is the testimony about a unique person, Jesus Christ the Lord. When we believe the gospel, we don't just believe a body of doctrines, although that is true. We receive Christ Jesus the Lord personally. We recognize who He is and we welcome Him into our lives as our Savior from sin and as our rightful Lord.

Walking in Christ is a process of growing deeper in the knowledge of who Jesus is and how we can live in a way that is pleasing to Him (Col. 1:10). But as imperfect as our initial understanding may be, we must receive Jesus Christ as Lord. Saving faith is more than just intellectual assent, where you add Him into your life as a nice accessory to have on hand when you need a little help. No, you must receive Christ Jesus the Lord, in all aspects of your life. He owns you because He bought you with His blood (1 Cor. 6:19-20). He is the one you must go on with as a Christian.

But how?

Colossians 2:6: “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” “Walk” is in the present tense, indicating an ongoing process. It’s a frequent word for describing the Christian life (*Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15*). Walking isn’t as impressive or quick as running, galloping, or flying. But if you keep walking in a deliberate direction, eventually you’ll get there. It implies a daily, steady, step-by-step effort and progress toward a goal. We are to walk “in Him,” that is, in all that Jesus is for us as we are in Him.

In verse 7, Paul uses four participles to elaborate on what this walk in Christ looks like: “...having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.” The first participle is in the perfect tense, indicating a past action with continuing results: you were and still are *rooted* in Him. The other three participles are present tense, indicating an ongoing process: you are being *built up* in Him; you are being *established* in the faith; and you are *overflowing* with gratitude. The first three participles are in the passive voice, emphasizing that God is working these things in us. The final participle is active, pointing to our responsibility to be thankful. Or, it may look at thankfulness as the result of the first three actions.

Note that Paul uses a variety of metaphors: *walking on a path*; *being rooted like a tree*; *being built up like a building under construction*; and *overflowing like a flooding river*. There isn’t a logical connection. Rather, Paul is showing us from different angles what it means to go on walking in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way we received Him. Let’s look briefly at each of them:

A. To walk in Christ Jesus the Lord means being rooted in Him.

This pictures a tree, firmly rooted so that it gets the water and nutrients from the soil to grow and be healthy. It can withstand the storms that blow against it and endure times of drought because of its roots. The roots are hidden from view, but they are absolutely essential. Without those deep roots, the tree will fall over in a storm or die during a drought.

When we genuinely trust in Christ, God roots us in Him, but we need to continually sink down more roots into Him. This is the hidden part of your walk in Christ that others don’t see. It refers to your heart before God and your time alone with Him. Some go to church and act like Christians outwardly, but in the hidden person of their heart, they have never truly trusted in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They never spend time alone with Him, seeking Him in His Word and in prayer. Then when a storm comes up they are defeated and crashed. They weren’t rooted in Christ. Are you sinking down roots in Him?

B. To walk in Christ Jesus the Lord means being built up in Him.

This pictures a building under construction. The present participle indicates steady progress toward completion. If you’ve watched a building under construction, sometimes the progress is

evident: the frame goes up or the roof goes on. At other times, you wonder, “What did they do there this week?” They were inside working on things you couldn’t see, like the wiring or plumbing. But they are essential for the finished building to function properly.

When you walk in the Lord, sometimes there are obvious changes that others can easily see. More often, the Lord is steadily at work on areas that aren’t as dramatic, but are just as necessary. We learn to trust and obey Him on little, daily matters. We judge our grumbling spirit. We put to death the lusts of the flesh. We speak kindly to others, even when they are mean towards us. We’re gradually being built up in Him.

C. To walk in Christ Jesus the Lord means being established in the faith.

“In the faith” could be translated “in your faith,” but in light of the context of false teachers and the next phrase, “just as you were instructed,” I think Paul means being established in the Christian faith, that is, in sound doctrine. The word “establish” was sometimes used as a legal term meaning, “to confirm, guarantee, or make irrevocable.” Here, Paul may be looking at the growing assurance that we gain as we grow to understand the irrevocable truths of God’s Word. You learn the guaranteed promises that God has given to us in Christ. Your growing knowledge of sound doctrine protects you against the many winds of false teaching that blow others off course. To go on with Christ, you must make a deliberate effort to be established in the faith.

D. To walk in Christ Jesus the Lord means overflowing with gratitude.

The picture here is a river overflowing its banks. There is just too much water to stay in the normal flow, so it floods out over the surrounding land. Our gratitude to God for all that He’s done for us in Christ should flood out onto those around us.

The Israelites in the wilderness, instead of thanking God for delivering them from bondage of sin and providing them with all the blessings of His salvation, they complained about the little things. But as we think about our salvation and all that God has done for us, we should be overflowing with gratitude to Him for His abundant grace.

In Colossians, Paul repeatedly emphasizes thankfulness. As we saw (*Col. 1:12*), we should be “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saint in Light.” (See, also, *Col. 1:3; 3:15, 16; 4:2*.) The application is that grumblers will be more susceptible to the lure of false teaching. Practically a husband who is always thankful and delight in his wife will be less susceptible to the temptations of another woman. *With the Lord, a grateful heart that is satisfied daily with His abundant blessings won’t be attracted by false teaching.*

Conclusion

Are you walking in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way you received Him? Walk not only in imitation of him as he walked here on earth, or in the exercise of grace in love, patience, humility, and meekness, and in the discharge of duty; but walk by faith in him, believing in him, always looking to him, leaning on him, and deriving grace and strength from him:

Walk in and after the Spirit of Christ, under his influence, by his direction, and through his

assistance: Walk in the truth of Christ, abiding by it, and increasing in the knowledge of it: Walk in him, he is the only way of access to God, and acceptance with him; the way of salvation, the only true way to eternal life and happiness.

Don't lose your first love for the wonderful, exalted Savior who loves you and gave Himself for you! If your love for Him has cooled and you're just in routine Christianity, take the time to sit again at His feet. Think about how it was when you first received Him. Meditate on His beauty and grace. Ask Him to make this a year of unprecedented growth in Him! And, if you've never received Christ Jesus the Lord, why not do that right now?

Day Three

Topic: rooted and built-up in Him. 2:7

The believers in Colosse like other believers all over the world were exposed to challenges. Paul has the gnostic wave of falsehood in mind. This can be noted from verse one, the struggle for the churches in this province that they might be united in love, enriched by divine knowledge of Christ and withstand the deceptions of the false teachers.

Paul's struggle 'agon' meaning agony paints his pastoral concern and love to a church he has not seen physically. While in prison, Paul could only pray on their behalf- it is important to intercede in prayer for people. The ultimate concern is that the believers here be firm in Christ. William Barclay says that life must be in Christ, lived conscious of His presence, rooted and built-up.

In this verse Paul employs both botanical and architectural languages. Rooted, 'pzsomai-eppizomenai' - is a verb participle meaning- firmly, deeply grounded with a focus on the source – **Christ**. Here Paul uses the analogy of an OAK tree. This tree is a survivor of extreme climate and weather. It is known for deep roots that can trace water below the surface in dry areas. It is able to withstand crazy winds and snow because of the deep roots.

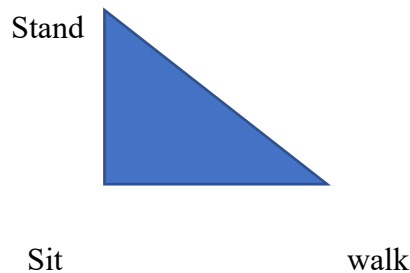
In the OT oak tree has several theological significance to the people of God. Paul was well aware of this.

- Joshua 24:26- holiness of the Lord
- Judges 6:11,19- holiness and the sacrifice
- 1 Kings 13:14- God's presence
- Psalms 29:9- God's glory
- Isaiah 1:29- Israel related it to sacredness
- Isaiah 61:3- Righteousness- planting of God.

When Paul employs the in-Christ motif as he is fond of, he locates a believer positioning him/her right in Christ because there the whole deity of God dwells 2:9.

To be built-up is analogy of construction from level to level or one face to the next face. These two words mean the same and are used here to draw a complete whole in reference to the life of a Christian in Christ. The psalmist in 1:1-3 brings the fruiting life of a believer by likening it to a tree near the spring of water- **Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of inners or sit in the seat of mockers 2 But his delight is the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree by the streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers'. NIV.**

The three underlined words in verse one summarize the whole human life- you sit or stand or walk- Life-Triangle.



Your interactions or social network, your activities will give you identity and define your personality. A tree anchors on its roots, draws nutrients and water by the roots. In the counsel of the wicked and the way of sinners and the seat of mockers one draws death, hopelessness and sin. But when Christ becomes the fountain one draws life in abundance. You need to;

- Delight in the law- God's word.
- Meditate upon it daily- share it.
- Live a life of service- fruiting.

Jesus gave a parable of the sower in Mark 4:14-20. There are four grounds on which the seeds landed; on the path, on the rocky places, on among the thorns- all these did not grow to produce fruits because on the environment but the seeds that found a good soil were well rooted and they grew to bring much fruit.

Being Built-up-epoikodomeo: this means to increase the potential of someone or something with focus on the process involved. To strengthen, to build up, to lift up or to edify. This being a passive perfect verb participle, Paul looks at church as a place where people build and edify each other through sound doctrine.

Am reminded of the parable of the two builders in Matthew 7:24-25, the wise and the foolish. Every building is as strong and good as the foundation. Christianity has only one foundation whose builder is God – **Jesus Christ**. 1 cor.3:10-15. Here Paul states that everyone must build and every building must be put to test before reward. Saints remember that the wind blew, the rain came down, the steams rose against the houses- one on the Rock and one on the Sand. Each of these houses was put to test for proof like it must be experience of every humanity. Foundation was the only rescue. You are not anything outside Christ.

Like an Oak tree we must thrush roots deep in the knowledge of Christ through personal Bible study, living prayer-life and healthy Christian fellowships. This is a personal responsibility- no one needs to neglect it because it cannot be pseudo or proxy. Our faith and our religious functioning must be anchored on Christ and His righteousness alone.

Paul presupposes that believers have to be intentional, having received Christ the Lord-lordship in verse six means accepting Jesus before all and after all as God of love. It's the opening of the heart and life of sin for God to work a transformation and inhibit it. Walking in Him is partnership with

him on the path of righteousness and the portal of life. This is partnership, covenantal consciousness which mirrors the two – YOU and GOD. You appreciate the holiness and love of Christ and your wretchedness to allow the Holy Spirit to lift you. As you walk with Christ the Enoch's experience becomes yours and intimacy cements – you know Him better each day.

It imperative saints to note that we live in the times of the end. Prophecy is fulfilled in our eyes. Talk of the rot in the social life talk of crime talk of bitterness, wars, greed, corruption and worst to say is the lukewarm condition in the Laodicea church. All these and a lot more are happening now. The Colossian church was threatened by the heresies of the Gnostics who had a false view and teaching about Christ and Paul considers their safety only on the premise of being grounded and built up in Christ Jesus.

The tree you see stands because of the roots, some have shallow roots which make them vulnerable to be blown by wind or to wither and dry off when heat of the sun is high. Other trees have strong root system, deep in to the soil- they live longer and grow bigger. Builders will also put a stronger foundation depending on the kind of a house intended. Tall and huge buildings must have strong bases. This is exactly what our lives must be in Christ.

Christ is misrepresented and the Bible is under attack- people are deluded and brainwashed by religions of the day. Denomination are mushrooming every day. Friends the kingdom of God is suffering violence in the hands of the religious-violent =prophets, apostles, pastors name them. The innocent followers are God's children for whom He died. Our own members are not safe in this kind of environment unless and until they are grounded and built up in Christ the surest foundation. Let this be our prayer ***-I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God- Ephesians 3:15-20.***

Times have these among many;

1. Jude 1:4- godless men changing grace to shame.
2. 1 John 4:1-false prophets on the rise.
3. 2 Peter 2:1- false teachers propagating destructive heresies.
4. 1 Timothy 4:1-demonic doctrines- deceiving spirits and hypocritical lairs.
5. Matthew 24:5- false christs.

Appeal: no one needs to continue in vague security, no one needs to neglect this solemn duty of rooting deep in Christ and building up in Him as we soldier on in the journey of faith. Our knowledge of him, our confidence in him and our resilience must be above board. Jesus has made all the provisions for growing you- the Holy Spirit is ready to lift your understanding of Christ through special revelation of him in the scriptures and personal devotion. Will you today forward make your personal Christian life a priority to grow and stand like an oak tree or a building on the rock-of Ages? Commit now and today to get this blessing-Amen.

DAY 5

Strengthened in Faith

Key text: **Colossians 2: 6, 7.**

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

When sin came into the world, sin came with the power to separate man from his creator and sustainer, also taking man out of his relationship with God. This is why their eyes were opened and found that they were naked, the word nakedness shows imperfection which sin triggered in the mind of man but the Bible says they were naked and were not ashamed, this caused them to start running away, and start making clothes of fig leaves to cover themselves, in the same mind when they heard the voice of God walking in the Garden, they hide from Him in the Garden. The power of sin works in man separating him from God. Caused guiltiness not wanting to be close or near to God. They were now outside the realm and family of God.

Now the above scriptures state how God who is rich in Mercy and love turned the enmity, and separation into a positive relationship in uniting mankind with Himself. God worked hard and tirelessly to convince man that He is not man's enemy, he does not hate man but He loves man with everlasting love Jesus came seeking, and dying for man. Love that changed the record and condition of man. Love restored man back to God only when man accepts Jesus as his only savior from his sinful condition.

Rom 5: 8, 10. But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. {Past tense}

Now this is what the book of Colossians 2: 6-7. The above explains, we received Christ by faith and have been reconciled with God by receiving Him. We now we reconnected and had been placed in Christ because we are His through His death on Calvary and creation but it is not automatic, nor is it once for all no, the relation must be capped and sustained by the benefactor. Must continue to live in Him, we should not discontinue the connection, the relation, or our stay in Christ must be continuers, Continuity is what is going to make us realize the benefit of blessings, growth, and change from what we were then to what Jesus will make as to be and maturity of Christianity.

John 15: 1, 2, 4.

We're the branches that are nourished by the stem supplied with water and all life from the stem, when the stem is alive we are alive because it supplies life to us. When the tree grows everything in it grows, because the tree is alive it must grow, there is no way for it to be alive and healthy without growth. Jesus puts a strong emphasis. Because it grows it must bear fruits. Praise be to God for the application of Jesus, he says, He is the stem that has grown to the point of giving out branches, it is the ability of the tree that made the branches grow from the beginning it is the work of a tree that gives its own branches, the branches belong to the tree, through the power of the tree, to bear the fruit of the tree, according to the type of the tree it belongs. The branch is all-round dependent on the stem, it has no power of its own. And the fruits are the sign that the branch abides in the tree, which also proves the good relationship and connectivity between the two which brings them to the oneness of purpose and goal resemblance in both activities what we call fruits.

[Vs. 5]

Jesus says if the relationship is maintained, and we stay in Him, the word stay, may mean we dwell in Him with all that we have, nothing of ours is left outside Him. Our mind, body, strength, wealth, education, plans, projections, and our all call them placed in Jesus we will bear Much Fruits to the glory of God. Hallelujah Amen.

Without this connection and continue remaining in the tree through and through, we fall away like branches die and dry up, fruits miss because we're not connected we have no supply of life from the tree we're dead either, we cannot be connected and not produce new leaves and fruits He emphasizes with a statement without Him [JESUS] We can do nothing. We're doing nothing even in evangelism, doing nothing in furthering the work of our heavenly father, even returning tithes and offerings because there's a problem in connection and retaining it. Either we had connected and then disconnected and thinking we are connected.

Growth becomes automatic when we're connected nothing can stop it why because we are connected to the creator of life, the almighty God, God of nature, when he speaks it comes to be, and nature obeys Him.

2 Peter 1: 5-9.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the book of Peter, it is called fruitful growth now we continue to grow because we're alive and connected to the tree by that we must produce fruits and the addition of fruits is the subtraction to God's cause is the addition of more fruits. Also when we subtract our former character of flesh God adds spiritual fruits. It is said we can't have only one fruit as we grow we add, the Bible says we will not be luck but we shall be full of the spiritual life qualities called fruits of the Spirit. And shall not be infective but effective in action in the service of God.

Ephesian 1; 18

What Paul desired for the church in Ephesus is something that every believer may share. That experience is not the prerogative of the privileged few, but a reality into which all may enter. The incredible power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and now works in those who believe has also caused Christ to be raised above principality and power, bringing everything under subjection to Him. The stage is really set for the possibility of our individual victories over the forces that threaten to enslave us. [*Growing in Christ; by Kwabena Donkor pg. 45*]

Riches of salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord requires special enlistment that can make believer see the power that is in Christ which is when we grow as branches connected to Him, being a privilege to believers making them so powerful than anything else because they are in Christ the lion of the tribe of Judah

Galatians 2: 20; I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

In conclusion

Romans 8: 31-32

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

How many believe that God shall give us all things in Christ Jesus, make us grow and bear more fruits for His Glory, and want to recommit their life afresh for true spiritual growth? Stand up and come forward for prayer?

DAY SIX

Title: Upholding True Doctrine

Key Text: Colossians 2:6-7

To “grow in Christ” means to deepen our relationship with Him.

Jesus saves us the instant we acknowledge our belief in Him and accept His sacrifice for our redemption. With this new peace in our hearts, we can focus to uphold His true doctrine on getting to know Him better. As well as the plans He has for us.

But true growth is often gradual- spiritual growth included. God knows what we need and doesn't force us or rush us. The important thing is that we're now in the process of upholding true doctrine and growing in Christ and developing a Christ-like character.

We're admitting that we can't achieve righteousness on our own, and that we need Jesus's sacrifice and God's grace. We're surrendering the pressure we put on ourselves to do the best or be the best, and letting the Holy Spirit be the one to direct the enrichment of our lives. This act of letting go is actually what sets us free! (1 Peter 2:16, Galatians 5:1).

Our beliefs become more and more evident as we deepen them. As we pray, learn, test, try, observe and reflect, our relationship with God grows and our faith develops. It gradually permeates our intentions, our priorities and our actions.

Characteristics of upholding True doctrine

1. They receive the truths of the gospel as it was passed down to them.

A faithful follower of Christ doesn't add to or take away from the Word of God. You are not the Message, and you play no part in the Message. You are simply the messenger.

The Apostle Paul goes so far as to say “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!” (Galatians 1:8)

Paul is literally saying that even if he himself strays from the pure message about Christ and His teaching, stop listening to Him! Clearly, he desired to pass on the Message of Christ in all its purity, because that is where the power is.

“There is Holy Spirit power when we preach the gospel as it was passed down to us through the Scriptures.”

Paul tells us as to establish those foundational teachings about Christ, and continue from there to grow to maturity: “Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.” (Hebrews 6:3)

2. They stop pointing out everyone else's sins, and start confessing their own

A former professor used to say, “I know I am experiencing a fresh touch of God when I stop confessing everyone else's sins and start confessing my own sins.”

Jesus spoke like this. He taught us: “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. **You will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.** Why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.”

(Matthew 7:1-5)

A mature Christian comes to this place where they finally see their own glaring sins and continually focus on repenting in their own lives, while helping their fellows graciously on how to deal with the sin problem as they look upon the cross of Calvary.

3. They watch their words, and know when NOT to speak.

Immature Christian can't help but speak their opinions on everything and everyone around them. James, known as being one of the deeply mature, early Christians says: “Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.” (James 3:2)

This passage is extremely sobering - first, because James calls it as it is - we all make way more mistakes than we care to admit.

Secondly, spiritual maturity comes through being more careful about the words we say.

Ephesians 4:29 and 4:2-3 take us further: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” and “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

If you long to mature in your faith in Christ, live in these verses. Pass everything else that you do in your Christian life through them. Walking in humility, gentleness, patience for others. Keep a careful guard over your mouth and your online posts.

4. They grow less dependent on themselves, and increasingly dependent on Christ.

They believe Jesus when he said: *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:1-15)*

Even while mature Christians are growing in faith and holiness, they do not grow more dependent on themselves, because they know their growth comes through abiding in Christ - dependency on Christ alone - and obedience to His command to love God and love others. Mature Christians don't take credit for themselves, they humbly follow Jesus.

5. They make every effort to build on their faith.

As I said at the beginning of this presentation, we need to guard ourselves against a fatalistic attitude in our faith. The Bible says we can grow and take steps closer to Christ.

The good news is “Come close to God, and God will come close to you.” (James 4:8) **As we take steps closer to God, we experience His goodness, grace and glory in our lives in new ways.**

The Apostle Peter tells us: “Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-11)

1 Corinthians 6:9–11;

- Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

In 1 Timothy 1:8–11, Paul the Apostle states:

- We know that the law is good when used correctly. For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice

homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

Growth: Overflowing with Thankfulness

Key Text: Colossians 2:7

Introduction

As a disciple of Jesus, you will never stand still. You either go forward or gradually slip backward. You are either growing or dying. God wants His people to constantly be moving forward and growing. He wants you to become a mature and deep believer. As we practice the discipline of giving, we are helped to become more like Jesus. Throughout His Word, God tells us over and over again to push forward in our spiritual growth.

- Hebrews 6:1 says, “Let us go on... and become mature in our understanding” (NLT). You haven’t grown enough yet, keep growing. Keep going. Keep learning. Keep growing.
- Philippians 1:9, “I pray that your love will **overflow more and more**, and that you will keep on **growing** in knowledge and understanding” (NLT). God wants you to overflow and to keep on growing.
- 1 Peter 2:2 says, “Like newborn babies, **you must crave** pure spiritual milk so that you will **grow into a full experience of salvation**” (NLT). If you want to experience more and more of the salvation God has given you, then you must grow spiritually.

What is fascinating to me about spiritual growth and maturity is that one of the major marks of spiritual maturity is thankfulness. That attitude of gratitude is evidence that you are growing spiritually. Let us analyze Colossians 2:1-7, together.

From this we see two things: first, we see the need for your spiritual growth and second, we see the nature of your spiritual growth and we will connect this to the attitude of thanksgiving.

The Need for Growth

Why do you need to grow spiritually? Because, Satan is deceptive. He wants to lead you away from God, away from His wisdom, away from His truth, away from His will. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy everything good in your life and everything that has God’s mark on it. He wants to keep you down and feeling defeated.

One of the ways Satan attempts to destroy you is through *deception*. Paul says in verse 4, “**I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments**” (NLT). The phrase “**well-crafted arguments**” comes from the law schools of that time. Satan is a lawyer who lies and knows he lies (John 8:44). The devil will use whatever means possible to convince you that you are no good, God does not like you, there is no hope, you are a complete failure, and that life cannot go on. He will lie to you about you, about God, about God’s Word, about your marriage, about your kids, about your future, about your past, about heaven, about hell and a host of other important things in your life.

These lies that Satan will tell you are “**well-crafted arguments.**” They sound good. They sound like the truth. They are a little bit of truth and little bit of lies. They make sense. They are easily

believable. Once you start believing them you will become ungrateful, unthankful, and cynical. When you start believing the devil's "**well-crafted arguments**" you will appreciate less, stop counting your blessing, and begin to see yourself as a victim.

However, God's plan for you is for you to become this person who is overflowing with thankfulness, who appreciates both the big things and the little things. God wants you to become that person who is thankful for the sun and the rain, the sunrises and the sunsets, the good times and the bad times. God wants you to be thankful in all circumstances. One of your weapons against the devil's schemes against you is the attitude of gratitude.

But how do you get there? How do you go from being a person who complains, whines, and grips about your spouse, your kids, your health, your job, your church, your finances, or your country to being thankful and grateful? How do you grow to become grateful? This takes us to the nature of your spiritual growth.

The Nature of Growth

To help us understand our spiritual growth and the power of gratitude, Paul used several vivid pictures to illustrate spiritual growth and progress.

1. In verse 5 Paul says, **For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.** The phrase "**living as you should**" and the word "**strong**" are military words in the Greek.

The phrase "**living as you should**" carries the idea of doing something in *order* or in an *orderly manner*. It also has the idea of *discipline*. The idea of "order" describes an army in ranks, with each soldier in his proper place ready for battle. The soldier is where he should be doing what he should be doing. Paul is saying, *"I rejoice that your life is in order and you are ready for battle against the enemy. Your mind is in order and disciplined and your emotions are in order to fight the good fight. You are prepared and ready. You are living as you should. The enemy will not take you by surprise."*

He also says that their "**faith in Christ is strong.**" The word "**strong**" refers to being *stable* or *firm*. Paul is using a military term that pictures soldiers in battle formation, presenting a solid front to the enemy. You have dug in and planted your feet. As a believer your shield of faith is up and you are ready for whatever the enemy throws at you. Your **faith in Christ is strong.**

When you recognize you are in a spiritual battle and you are positioning yourself to fight and win you are giving indications that you are making spiritual progress. You are growing.

2. God's Word says in verse 6, **And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.** When Paul says "**you must continue to follow him**" he is using the image of someone traveling by walking. It's the image of a pilgrim on a journey. What Paul is saying is, **you accepted Christ Jesus as Lord** by faith, so **continue to follow him** by faith. You trusted Jesus for salvation, now trust Jesus to guide you, give your insight, wisdom, and discernment as you walk through this life. Follow Him and do life His way. As you walk through life treat your spouse the way He wants you to, love your children the

way He wants you to, and bless your enemies the way He wants you to, and manage your life the way He would want you to manage it. Follow Him. Trust Him. Depend on Him. Obey Him as you go through life. Walk in Him. Obey Him. Follow Him

3. Paul says in verse 7, **Let your roots grow down into him....** This pictures a tree that is *firmly rooted* in the ground. This is an *agricultural* term. As a Christian, you are to be firmly rooted in Jesus. By the way, do you know what causes roots of a tree to grow down deep? A drought. When there is a drought the tree's roots will go deeper looking for water. The same is true for you. During those seasons of your life where it is tuff and you feel like you are in a personal drought, that's when your roots have an opportunity to **grow down into him**. Let the droughts in life drive you to the Lord of life. Deepening roots indicating a growing life.
4. Paul says in verse 7, **and let your lives be built on him**. This is an *architectural* term. It's in the present tense. It literally means *being built up*. When you trust Jesus to save you, you are placed on the right foundation. From then on, God begins to work on you and build you up into the man or woman of God He wants you to be.
5. Paul says in verse 7, **Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught....** That is *educational language*. You are not born with truth. From the moment you are born the devil uses the world to try to teach you lies about you, others, and God. These lies sound like truth, but they are deceiving. When you place your faith in Christ you grow strong as you learn God's truth and that truth must be taught to you. This is why it is important to read and study God's Word on a regular basis and to faithfully attend a church that teaches God's Word. An indication of spiritual growth is your increase in truth that strengthens your faith in Christ.
6. Finally, Paul says in verse 7, **and you will overflow with thankfulness**. You will abound with gratitude. You will be more and more thankful. What Paul is saying is that one evidence of spiritual growth is thankfulness, gratitude, and appreciation for the people and things God provides in your life.

The image Paul is using is a river that is overflowing. Because of what God is pouring into your life and investing into your life you overflowing with thankfulness. Because of the blessings He has given to you, you are grateful. When you discover how much of a sinner you really are and how gracious God really is, you get thankful. When you realize how rebellious and stubborn toward God you have been, and how merciful He is you are grateful.

As you grow as a believer you begin to **overflow** with thanksgiving.

- You not only are thankful for the big things in life, but also the little things.
- You begin to thank God for the sunrises and the sunsets.
- You start thanking God for the people who bring you joy and the people who challenge and irritate you. You start **overflowing** with thanksgiving!
- You learn how to thank God in all circumstances. When you have plenty and when you have very little. When you feel good and when you feel bad. When things are going the way you want and when things seem to be going wrong. You start **overflowing** with thanksgiving!

- You begin to thank God for what you have rather than complaining about what you don't have. You may be getting old, but you thank God for all the years He has blessed you with. You start **overflowing** with thanksgiving!
- Even when you look at all the hurt and pain that others may have caused in your life; instead of becoming bitter and angry, you thank God for what you learned and are able to pass it on to others who are going through a similar pain. You start **overflowing** with thanksgiving!
- You find yourself saying things like, *"God, I may not have the job I wanted but I have a job that provides and pays the bills. Thank you for it. I may not be able to communicate well like some, but I thank you for the ability to tell others about you. I may not be the prettiest, the strongest, the most popular, or the sharpest tack in the toolbox but I thank you that you have made me and given me a life to live for you."*
You start **overflowing** with thankfulness.
- You find yourself telling people how thankful you are for them. You say things like, *"I thank God for you every day!"* or *"I am so thankful that God brought you into my life."* You start saying things like, *"I have I told how much I appreciate you lately?"* You are start **overflowing** with thanksgiving!

That's what spiritual growth does. It causes you to be thankful to God and to others. The devil is going to attack you and try to make you be ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative of what God has done, is doing, and will do in your life. The devil wants you to be dissatisfied and discontent with every good thing in your life.

- But like a soldier you are going to be ready for that battle.
- Like a traveler who is walking with Jesus you are going to grow and develop and mature in your trust in Him.
- Like a tree your roots will go down deep into Him.
- Like a student you will learn God's truth, renewing your mind and be able to see things more clearly and accurately from a divine perspective.
- Like a building you will be built up in Jesus able to withstand any winds or storms the devil may try to bring your way.
- As a result of your spiritual growth you will be like a river that overflows with thankfulness.

Conclusion:

God is telling you today to be thankful, be grateful, and appreciate what you have. When people come to the banks of your life they should smell, hear, and taste thankfulness overflowing from your life.

When you are deep into Jesus your soul can now have peace in the midst of the storm, can shed light in the middle of darkness, and discover hope when all seems lost. As a tree, there are going to be times in your life that the winds will blow, but because of your deep roots you will stand. There are going to be seasons when your leaves fall and you will look dead but because your roots are deep in Jesus you are more alive than you appear.

BIBLE STUDY

MONDAY

INTRODUCTION TO BELIEF 11: GROWING IN CHRIST

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GROW IN CHRIST?

To "grow in Christ" means to deepen our relationship with Him.

Jesus saves us the instant we acknowledge our belief in Him and accept His sacrifice for our redemption. With this new peace in our hearts, we can focus on getting to know Him better. As well as the plans He has for us.

Think about the concept of friendship, at its basic level. At what point do you consider someone a friend? When do you look at someone and think, "I know this person pretty well"?

Does it take a couple weeks, or maybe a few months? Or is it something you spend years working at, constantly developing a stronger relationship with this person?

We can't know everything about someone after just one conversation with them, nor can we expect to know exactly what they're thinking after knowing them for just a few weeks.

The same principles apply to our spiritual friendship with Christ.

Is it enough to go to church once a week and hope that's "enough" to keep our connection strong? It can surely help. But what matters most is our active pursuit of a deeper relationship with God by learning more about Him and spending time in prayer.

It's worth noting that when we accept Jesus Christ, our lives might not look different right away.

The same co-worker might annoy you. You might still be jealous of a sibling who seems to have it all together. You might still have a hard time resisting the same old vices.

It can be discouraging at times if we still feel the effects of our "old lives," even after Christ has saved us. But true growth is often gradual—spiritual growth included. God knows what we need

and doesn't force us or rush us. The important thing is that we're now in the *process* of growing in Christ and developing a Christ-like character.

We're admitting that we can't achieve righteousness on our own, and that we need Jesus's sacrifice and God's grace. We're surrendering the pressure we put on ourselves to do the best or be the best, and letting the Holy Spirit be the one to direct the enrichment of our lives. This act of letting go is actually what sets us free! (1 Peter 2:16, Galatians 5:1).

Our beliefs become more and more evident as we deepen them. As we pray, learn, test, try, observe and reflect, our relationship with God grows and our faith develops. It gradually permeates our intentions, our priorities and our actions.

TUESDAY

JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE FOR A CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

While He was on Earth, Jesus Christ lived a pure and blameless life of love. He did this with the same human limitations we have, all through a constant connection with God, His Heavenly Father. Since humanity's fallen nature makes us incapable of living perfect lives through our own power (Romans 3:10, 23), we need God's help. We look to Jesus (1 Peter 2:21) to help us live selflessly and make good choices.

Like the branches of a grape vine that can only bear fruit when they are given strength and nutrients through the vine, we can only grow in Christ if we maintain a connection to Him. His power and grace are the only things that can truly make us righteous.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15: 5-8, ESV).

As part of remaining in Christ and embracing the grace He offers, we are called to follow Christ's example, to live our lives the way Jesus did while He was on Earth. During His ministry, Jesus told the people:

*"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**" (Matthew 20:25-28, NKJV, emphasis added).*

Jesus asks us to serve and to offer ourselves for others, just as He did. Such selflessness may sometimes feel difficult or unnatural, but with God's help, our feelings and choices become more in tune with what Christ asked of us. That's what it means to have a Christ-like character.

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes

when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God” (The Desire of Ages, p. 173).

In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ’s example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.

When Jesus was on earth, He didn’t spend His time chasing after the things “of the world,” such as striving for wealth, popularity or success. He spent His time on others, feeding them when they were hungry, healing them when they were sick, and comforting them when they were hurting. That’s how Jesus offered Himself for others and that’s the example we ought to follow.

WEDNESDAY

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The Bible is our guide to deepening our relationship with God. We can find all kinds of advice and examples we can apply to our own lives.

And it’s not hard to get started! Let’s focus on four essential building blocks of a growing spiritual life:

- Prayer (Colossians 4:2)
- Reading the Bible (Psalm 119:105-107).
- Applying what we learn (James 1:22-25, Philippians 4:8-9).
- Meeting with other believers (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Setting aside regular time for prayer and Bible study helps us get in the habit of incorporating our spiritual growth into our daily lives.

The book of Colossians encourages us to make a conscious, intentional choice to invite Christ into our minds each day:

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:6-7, ESV).

The more we focus on all the good things God has done for us, the easier it is for us to trust Him with our problems and decisions, knowing that He will not let us down.

Just like getting to know someone better through conversation, prayer is often the best way for us to grow closer to God.

If we become accustomed to constant communication with Him, we can tell Him about our troubles and thank Him for all He’s done for us. The Bible tells us to *“rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, ESV).*

But our relationship with God isn't just a growing list of Bible verses. Our actions do matter. Our faith is meant to show!

But what does that mean? Do we need to stand on the corner reading the Bible out loud? Should we call all our friends and tell them to repent of their sins?

Here's where we can look back to the idea of Jesus as our example. He put His faith in action through service and ministry.

An excellent way to demonstrate faith in action is to seek out ways to serve others in your community. This helps us uphold a *"religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father... to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world"* (James 1:26, ESV).

We can also strengthen our relationship with Christ through fellowship with other believers. By meeting together and sharing God's love with others who follow Him, we not only strengthen our relationship with God, but can help others strengthen theirs as well.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV).

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them" (Matthew 18:20, ESV). God knows it can be difficult sometimes to keep our faith strong in a confused and chaotic world. This is why He reminds us to meet together and encourage each other. That's where we're strongest. By choosing daily to commune with Jesus, by putting our faith into action, and by sharing in fellowship with other believers, we can keep our connection to God strong, continually growing in His love.

THURSDAY

THE EVIDENCE OF GROWTH

What does a strong relationship with God look like? If our connection to God is strong, how will we know?

God impacts our lives through the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead, or Trinity. When Jesus went back to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to look after us, to be our guide and teacher (John 14:15-18).

One aspect of a Spirit-filled life is the freedom we can feel from the cares of the world. Without having to run the rat-race, to "keep up with the Jones's" or to worry about how we'll make our way in this life (Matthew 6:25-34), we can be truly free.

2 Timothy 1:7 describes this freedom and the spiritual development that comes with it:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (NKJV). When we ask God into our lives and make good use of the strength He offers us every day, there will also be changes in our character. We'll learn to take on the virtues God instills in us. These

virtues are sometimes called the “Fruits of the Spirit,” which often are the observable evidence of the Holy Spirit working within us.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23, ESV).

Just like Jesus’ illustration about the vine and the branches, God’s presence shows itself in our lives. If a branch is attached to the vine and is getting nutrients, it will bear fruit. If we’re drawing our power from God and listening to the Holy Spirit, we’ll bear fruit too, the fruit of a Christ-like character. The peace, joy, and goodness God gives us can improve our daily lives in countless ways.

Additionally, having the Fruits of the Spirit doesn’t only improve our own lives. It’s designed to bless others and show them God’s power. Jesus told the disciples before He returned to Heaven, *“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21 ESV).*

Just like Jesus came to be an example of God’s character, we as Christians are also called to show His goodness and love. When other people meet us and see the Fruits of the Spirit, they’ll see God’s character and better understand what He’s like, and how He has the power to change people’s hearts.

Our actions preach the gospel just as much as our words. He can show His goodness through us!

The evidence of a growing relationship with God is the fruit. My father once said to me, “You don’t have to tie the fruit on. It is simply harvested off.” In other words, what a person says, does, and is, isn’t something that has to be forced or coerced. Going about doing good is not something driven by an external force or a desire to earn recognition or salvation. Rather, it is an intrinsic force that is driven by the Spirit of God, which has been planted in the heart and allowed and encouraged to grow, to mature, and to bear fruit. And what is the harvest? What is the fruit? Paul described it well in Galatians 5:22, 23 where he says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

FRIDAY

GROWING IN CHRIST NEVER HAS TO END!

Spiritual growth, led by the Holy Spirit, knows no limits. Strengthening our relationship with Jesus Christ is a continual process meant to engage every part of our lives.

God is endlessly knowledgeable! He wants our *“hearts to be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2, 3, NKJV).*

One of His promises is that these mysteries of God are revealed to us *“by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God ... Now we have not received the spirit of the world,*

but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12, CSB).

Since we are now believers and followers in Christ, this is why we are told not to be “*conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Romans 12:2, NKJV).

Anything the world offers us has limits. But through our relationship with Jesus, who is our connection to God the Father (John 14:6), we will never stagnate. God is infinite! There will always be more to learn, to see, to do, which makes up the continual “renewing” of our minds.

We have the incredible privilege of living a life touched by the Creator of the universe and sharing His love with others. And the closer we become with Him, the more of a blessing we have the chance to be.

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” -Christ's Object Lessons, chap 3 #BHP20

SABBATH SCHOOL

MONDAY

SABBATH SCHOOL AND EVANGELISM

Pen of Inspiration says, "The Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentality, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ"—Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 10. The Sabbath school is the most effectual instrumentality in bringing souls to Christ. Of course, a poorly run or inadequately planned Sabbath school could not measure up to this high ideal.

The Sabbath school work is important, and all who are interested in the truth should endeavor to make it prosperous. . . . The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God's great instrumentalities to bring souls to the knowledge of the truth. . . . The Sabbath school should be one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ..

The Sabbath school is an important branch of the missionary work, not only because it gives to young and old a knowledge of God's word, but because it awakens in them a love for its sacred truths, and a desire to study them for themselves; above all, it teaches them to regulate their lives by its holy teaching.

Building a Soul-Winning Sabbath School

1. Implement the four Sabbath School objectives:
 - . Promote Bible study and effective class teaching.
 - . Foster Christian fellowship.
 - . Encourage community outreach activities.
 - . Cultivate support for world missions.

THE SOUL-WINNING SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER

A CALL to teach a class in Sabbath school opens up a choice place for work in the Master's vineyard. With renewed consecration of heart, the Christian should accept the call, and regard the members of his class as a portion of the flock entrusted to his special care. With the instincts of the true shepherd he should minister to each member.

He should carry them upon his heart, never faltering in his efforts to feed them with bread from heaven, and to lead them to drink from the fountain of life. Such ministry is acceptable to the Lord, and there is none greater.

We may not be wise or great; we may be even unlearned, and of small esteem in the eyes of men, yet wherever and whatever we are, God has appointed us our work. We cannot place our responsibility upon another, and so excuse ourselves. It is God who gives "to every man his work," and it is God who will "reward every man according to his work" "None of us liveth to himself." Rom. 14:7.

As the blossom cannot tell what becomes of its perfume, so we are unconscious of the extent of the power which we exert over others by our unstudied words and actions. Whether we wish it so or not, the silent influence of our life goes on unceasingly.

Many are withholding active help from the Sabbath school, when the opportunity is constantly offered to them to enter upon distinctly spiritual activities. Greater than any other factor in the Sabbath school is the teacher. The ideals of the teacher measure the height of success which a school attains. The heart-throbs of the teacher set the pace for the success of the school in soul-winning endeavor.

The supreme problem in the Sabbath school work today is not administrative, though that is important, but it is to secure an efficient company of men and women to serve as teachers of the Word of God to the groups that make up classes. The Sabbath school offers an exceptionally great opportunity for consecrated Christians to give a service of love in winning souls for the Master. This form of service is second to none in results.

THE WORK Since the most important feature of -the Sabbath school is its teaching, this should receive first emphasis. By teaching we do not mean merely the imparting of truth. We cannot limit the teaching process to a statement of facts. By "teaching" we mean to include all that a mature Christian can do in aiding the spiritual development of -the immature. The teacher "teacher by inspiring, stimulating, and guiding those who are less experienced

TUESDAY

SABBATH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Program Formats

The Sabbath School Council, under the leadership of the general superintendent, decides on the format of the program. The following program formats are suggestions, a starting point from which each school may develop its own program. The majority of adult Sabbath Schools tend to follow a traditional format similar to the worship service. This is not the best for Sabbath School. A school, suggests active participation and learning activities by the students. Whatever format is used, the four basic purposes of Sabbath School should be included: Study of the Word, Fellowship, Community Outreach, World Mission Emphasis. Ellen White gives some clear counsel on Sabbath School programs (emphasis supplied): Innovation and Creativity Superintendents and the workers in our Sabbath schools have a very important, broad field to cultivate. They need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit of God, that their minds may be impressed to use the very best methods, and follow the best plans to make their work wholly successful. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 11 Different minds and qualities will bring in fresh ideas, fresh lines of thought; and this is essential. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 165.

Mechanical. vs. Interactive

The object of the Sabbath school should not be lost sight of in mechanical arrangements, thus occupying time which should be given to other important matters. We should ever be guarded against forms and ceremonies which will eclipse the real object for which we are laboring. There is

a danger of carrying system to such an extreme that the Sabbath school will become weariness, when, on the contrary, it should be a rest, a refreshment, and a blessing. There is altogether too much dependence placed upon form and machinery, while the life-giving power of God is not manifested for the conversion of souls, for whom Christ died. This order of things must be changed if our Sabbath schools meet the purpose for which they exist. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, pp. 151, 156, 157. Sabbath School Handbook, page 94 let not those who have a mechanical way of doing things, take complete charge of the school, and mold it into formal ways, into precise habits, and yet all its life stifled in a multiplicity of regulations. It is essential to have order, but we need a great deal more spiritual knowledge along with rules and regulations. We need a life-giving power, a zealous enthusiasm, a true animation, that our schools may become filled with an atmosphere of true piety and purity; that there may be real religious advancement. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 162.

.Talk vs. Interaction and Activity

They make long, dry speeches in the Sabbath school and the teachers. Meeting, thus wearying the minds of both the teachers and students. They do not realize that by their long, tedious talks they are killing interest in, and love for, the school.. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 166.

Key Elements of Sabbath School Programs Participation and interaction. The more participation and interaction that is built into the Sabbath School program, the more learning and personal application takes place. Creativity and innovation. The more interesting and appealing a program is, the more people will learn. Sabbath School programs that consist mostly of one person doing all the talking from the front of the meeting place, in spite of how good the content might be, have very little lasting effect on the students. Outreach and Evangelism Research and experience show that Sabbath Schools are not really successful unless they include elements of outreach and soul winning. The Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 10. It has been proved in the missionary field that, whatever may be the preaching talent, if the laboring part is neglected, if the people are not taught how to work, how to conduct meetings, how to act their part in missionary labor, how to reach people successfully, and the work will be nearly a failure. There is much to be done in the Sabbath School work, also, in bringing the people to realize their obligations and to act their part. God calls them to work for Him, and the ministers should guide their efforts. Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 184. Traditional Program (Exact times may vary) If a traditional format is used, the lesson study time of at least 45 minutes needs to be protected so that it is not preempted by the program.

9:15 Song Service

9:30 Opening Remarks,

Welcome, Prayer 9:35 Keeping on Course

(Choose one)

. Progress Report

. Evangelism

. Investment

. Improvement

. Occasional Special

Feature

9:40 Musical Selection

9:45 World Mission Report

9:55 Class Time

. Class Activities - 10 minutes

. Lesson Study - 45 minutes

10:40 Closing Remarks. Preview of next week.

WEDNESDAY

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PASTOR and SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT for GREATER SOUL WINNING

THE Sabbath school should be organized with the supreme aim of seeking to save the lost and hold the saved. Many are the ways in which the alert pastor may co-operate with the Sabbath school superintendent and his department as a whole, to work towards this end. First, it is necessary for the pastor to be acquainted with all the parts and personnel of his Sabbath school organization. The best way to do this is to make frequent visits to the departments, from Cradle Roll on up. On mornings I make these little tours, I love to slip in quietly while the children are singing, and take some smaller chair towards the back where I can observe all that is being done. After ten minutes or so here, I go to the next department, until possibly I have arrived back to the Senior Division in time for the class study to begin. Then I like to visit the individual senior classes. If I see improvements that I think could be made, I jot down these ideas. When all the jottings are together from my visits to all the classes and divisions, I ask the Sabbath school superintendent to call together all Sabbath school officers and teachers. In this meeting the suggestions for improvement can be made in a general way. Among some of the suggestions might be the following:

- (1) Regarding class organization, Sabbath school classes sometimes may be too large. Eight to twelve in a class is large enough. When larger than this, the individual member loses his identity.
- (2) Classes are often unbalanced as to similarity of ages and types. More than any other one thing in holding a class and building for lasting unity and interest is giving attention -to this matter.
- (3) Discussion regarding teachers' general improvement might follow. Some teachers may not be speaking loudly or distinctly enough. Others may have the tendency to do all the talking, rather than provoke, group discussion by asking questions freely. Some may need to do better when it comes to recognizing contributions, made by members of the class or visitors. Especially when contributions arise that lead off onto a tangent, should teachers be encouraged to be tactful in summarizing the thought, and in leading back to, the main path of the lesson. It may be pointed out that "side-lines" are -often more helpful to some disturbed members.

THURSDAY

Why Do Missing Members Miss?

Most studies estimate that approximately 40 percent of church members on the books are inactive. Why are they inactive? There are four basic reasons why people stop attending church: conflict, unmet expectations, lack of affinity, or inability to relate.

Conflict

More than half of all inactive members leave because of unresolved conflicts with the pastor, with other members, theological issues, or church standards and policies. Conflict creates discomfort and the tendency of most people is to simply retreat. Unmet Expectations Sometimes members become discouraged because they feel the church ignored them or didn't help them during a time of stress in their lives. Sometimes people become upset when they get burned out with church work and are unappreciated. People expect to find friends in the church and if they are not able to penetrate existing groups, they will leave.

Lack of Affinity

A single mother may feel out of place with married couples; a young person may feel alienated by a congregation of senior citizens. Professionals may find it hard to communicate with working class people. Inability to relate some people are misfits wherever they go. They have difficulty relating to people in general and in building meaningful relationship Ideas.

For Reintegrating Non attending Members

- . Make sure the class record is taken every week. This record is the key resource for identifying missing members.
- . Memorize the names of your class members, their spouses and their children. Be acquainted with their work, hobbies, and leisure-time activities.
- . Give missing members a reason to come to your class. Make sure the lesson is well-planned and interesting.
- . Sensitize yourself to others needs. Try to discover the reason that a member chooses to stay away. Look for hidden hurts that you can help heal.
- . Invite missing members to a church activity such as a dinner, a picnic, or a party. Often people stay away because they lack fellowship and a sense of belonging to the group.
- . If you have class members who are trained to do so, involve them in reaching the missing members. Assign names to be visited or contacted during the week.
- . Every special Sabbath School program or church activity is an opportunity to call the missing member to let them know what is happening. Offer to pick them up if transportation is a problem.
- . Provide a copy of the new quarterly to each missing member. Better yet, take It to them.
- . Deliver a bulletin to each missing member every week. Keep the absentee in touch with what is happening in church.
- . Encourage regular members to place missing members on their personal prayer list. Prayers can reach behind closed doors, and they can melt cold exteriors.
- . Remember missing members with a greeting card on their birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, and other special occasions.
- . Never give up! People will often put up barriers to avoid being hurt. Persistence will break down those barriers.

FRIDAY

Tips on Visiting Missing Members

- . Pray for the absentee daily. Pray especially before you visit that angels of God may attend you and that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom.
- . Know as much as possible about the absentee: name, family members, occupation, age, and interests.
- . In some cases, it may be wise to phone ahead for an appointment. Identify yourself with the church and a specific Sabbath School class if that is appropriate.
- . Approach the home with a cheerful, optimistic attitude. Determine to be warm, tactful, and gentle. Sabbath School Handbook, page 30
- . Have a friendly visit about things they are interested in such as family, hobbies, and occupation. You might ask when they first joined the Adventist church and what led them to Christ.
- . Bring greetings from the Sabbath School and your class.
- . Mention some interesting thoughts from that week's Sabbath School lesson, Sabbath School program, or sermon topic.
- . Be enthusiastic about good things that are happening.
- . If confronted by a person's problem or a negative experience they had with the church, do not argue, condemn, or defend the church. Don't take sides. Let them unburden themselves and express your sincere feelings of regret. Say something such as, .I'm sorry to hear what happened. I can understand why you feel badly. On behalf of the Adventist church I want to apologize and ask your forgiveness.
- . Offer something appropriate to the missing members such as Bible Study Guide, a good book, Signs, Adventist Review, a video, or sermon tape.
- . Give an invitation to come back to church. If you are unknown to the person, it may be wise to wait until the third or fourth visit to make such an invitation.
- . Assure them that you and the members of your Sabbath School class will be praying for them.
- . Stay no longer than about 20 minutes. Close with prayer, mentioning the names of family members and specific needs that they have expressed.
- . You may want to invite the person or family to your house for a meal or fellowship group.
- . Assure them you will come again; then keep your promise.

1. Make sure you have enough Ushers to give individual attention to guests. . Know where they should sit.

. Know where church facilities are Sabbath School rooms, rest rooms, etc.

. Ask questions. Is there anything special guests would like to know? Anything they would like to see?

2. Develop a welcome pack. Include everything you can think of about your church that a guest Might want to know.

3. Take people, don't just send them. The idea is to designate a special section in the church where carefully trained people sit who know how to receive guests. When guests arrive, seat them in this section. Only the receptionists and the people who sit at the welcome desk are those who make available a welcome packet and other materials about the church.

4. At the welcome desk you could have:

. Some well-trained people informally gathered around the welcome desk. They offer help, answer questions, and take people to wherever they go next.

.A list of weekday activities such as Bible study groups, Pathfinder Club, Adventist Community Services Center, family life workshops, and evangelistic seminars.

.Phone numbers of key church personnel.

5. Learn the names of regular members so they don't feel neglected. New Ushers especially need to know who the members are.

This material was produced using the Sabbath School Manual

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Last-day events and lifestyle as explained through the scriptures and spirit of prophecy.

DAY ONE

As we can see the days going on months and years, we who are living today can possibly say time of the end is come. The young generation may not have something to refer to or compare with, but the senior citizens alive today with experience of old when they see and compare 1. Culture. 2. Family relation 3. Respect 4. Character etc. Is not what was or what you can speak about, Spirit of Prophecy says:

The rapid fulfillment of the predictions of the Holy Scripture regarding the signs and events which were to mark the closing scenes of Earth's history is sure evidence that we are now living in the last days. Therefore a company of Christians, people who keep the commandments of God and who have the testimony of Jesus Christ—the Spirit of prophecy—should today be in existence. Where may they be found? {Christian Experience and Teaching of EG White. [CET] pg. 243, 7.}

Give the Trumpet a Certain Sound—

There are many who do not understand the prophecies relating to these days, and they must be enlightened. It is the duty of both watchmen and laymen to give the trumpet a certain sound. Be in earnest, “cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”—Letter 1, 1875. Ev 194.

The crowd in Clear-cut Prophetic Truths—

The perils of the last days are upon us, and in our work, we are to warn the people of the danger they are in. Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed, be left untouched. If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches, and many more would believe the... [Ev 195, 1.]

SIGNS IN THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WORLD

This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition, and are longing for clearer light. ... The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." [2 Timothy 3:4, 5.] -The Great Controversy, 390:1.

Signs in the Social World

1. To what days did Jesus liken the time of "the coming of the Son of man"? Matthew 24: 37-39. The sins that called for vengeance upon the antediluvian world, exist today. The fear of God is banished from the hearts of men, and His law is treated with indifference and contempt. The intense

worldliness of that generation is equaled by that of the generation now living. . . . God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God's order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He 459 gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion.-

Patriarchs and Prophets, 101:2.

2. What particular social conditions did Paul point out as characteristic of "the last days"? 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

- a. "Lovers of their own selves."
- b. "Covetous."
- c. "Boasters."
- d. "Proud."
- e. "Disobedient to parents."
- f. "Without natural affection."
- g. "Trucebreakers."
- h. "Fierce."
- i. "Traitors."
- j. "Heady."
- k. "High-minded."

Z. "Despisers of those that are good."

m. "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

3. May we look for conditions to get better or worse? 2 Timothy 3:13.

4. What caution did Jesus give, lest "that day come upon you unawares"? Luke 21:34, 35.

a. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with":

(1) "Surfeiting" (excessive eating or drinking) .

(2) "Drunkenness."

IT WILL ALSO TAKE. GREAT FAITH AND ZEALOUS WORKS TO BRING THESE WALLS DOWN By living faith will the barriers of doubt and unbelief be broken down in this age?

(3) "Cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." b. "As a snare shall it come on all."

5. Does drunkenness always refer to the use of wine or like beverages? Isaiah 29: 9. Many who are numbered with the believers are not really with them in faith and principle. . . . In order to gain riches they accumulate burdens and cares until their minds are almost wholly engrossed with them. They are eager for gains and always anxious for fear of losses. The more money and lands they possess the more eager are they for more. "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." [Isaiah 29:9.] They are surfeited with the cares of this life, which affect them as the strong drink does the drunkard. They are so blinded by selfishness that they work night and day to secure perishable treasures.... Are not the senses of such persons perverted? Are they not drunken with the intoxicating cup of worldliness? - Testimonies, vol. 5, 258:2.

SIGNS IN THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WORLD.

Signs in the Religious World 6. Who did Peter say "shall come in the last days"? What question would they ask? 2 Peter 3:3, 4. Do we not hear these very words repeated, not merely by the openly ungodly, but by many who occupy the pulpits of our land? "There is no cause for alarm," they cry.

"Before Christ shall come, all the world is to be converted, and righteousness is to reign for a thousand years. Peace, peace! all things continue as they were from the beginning. Let none be disturbed by the exciting message of these alarmists."-Patriarchs and Prophets, 103:0.

7. What question did Jesus ask about faith "when the Son of man cometh"? Luke 18:8. 8. What is the answer to Jesus' question? Revelation 14: 12. 9. What religious condition in the last days does Paul point out? 2 Timothy 3:1-5. "Men shall be . . . a. "Blasphemers." b. "Unthankful." c. "Unholy." d. "Despisers of those that are good." e. "Having a form of godliness." f. "Denying the power [of godliness]." And yet, in this time of fearful peril, some who profess to be Christians have no family worship. They do not honor God in the home; they do not teach their children to love and fear Him. Many have separated themselves so far from Him that they feel under condemnation in approaching Him. They cannot "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8). They have not a living connection with God. Theirs is a form of godliness without the power.-Testimonies, vol. 7, 42:2. 10.

What did Jesus say to indicate that false Christ and false prophets will produce deceptions exceedingly deceiving? Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22, 23. As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.-The Great Controversy, 624:2.

Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent. The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. . . . This coming, there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known-witnessed by the whole world.-The Great Controversy, 625:2. 11.

What did Jesus declare is to be done before the promise, "Then shall the end come" is fulfilled? Matthew 24:14. 12. What issue of a religious character will all the world face just before Jesus comes? Revelation 13:12, 15-17; 14:9-12. Fearful is the issue to which the world is to be brought. The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" (Revelation 13:16), shall conform to the customs of the church by the observance of the false Sabbath. All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death.-The Great Controversy, 604:2.

DAY TWO

SIGNS IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC WORLD:

Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. James 5: 8.

There are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis. If men would give more heed to the teaching of God's word, they would find a solution to the problems that perplex them. The Scriptures describe the condition of the world just before Christ's second coming. Of the men who by robbery and extortion are amassing great riches, it is written: "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." James 5:3, 4.-Testimonies, vol. 9, 13:3, 4.

The Strife of Nations 1. What did Jeremiah say the Lord has with the nations? Jeremiah 25:31. For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress; the Son of God and His heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the power of the evil one, to warn, enlighten, and save the children of men. Now all have made their decision; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God. The time has come for God to vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. Now the controversy is not alone with Satan, but with men.-The Great Controversy, 656: 1. 2. What did the Lord say would "go forth from nation to nation"? Jeremiah 25: 32, first part. 3. What would be the result of this evil? Jeremiah 25: 32, last part. 4. How does Joel refer to this same time of strife between the nations? Joel 3:9-12. 5. When did John say the nations would be angry? Revelation 11:18. We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, and they should be judged.... But while already nation is rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there is not now a general engagement. As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads.-Testimonies, vol. 6, 14:1.

Strife over Money 6.

How many are entitled to a share of the natural wealth of the world? Ecclesiastes 5: 9.

7. Which commandment safeguards the rights of the individual? Exodus 20:15; Leviticus 19:11. 8.

The eighth commandment is violated by many in the world today:

- a. Exploitation. Job 24:2-4.
- b. Dishonest measure. Proverbs 20:10; Amos 8:4, 5.
- c. Withholding due reward. Jeremiah 22:13.
- d. Extortion. Ezekiel 22: 12.

DAY THREE.

Treasure and wealth, greedy last generation.

9. for what time did James say men would heap treasure together? James 5:3, 7.

10. What would this wealth cause the rich men to do in "the last days"? James 5:1-3.

11. How has this ill-gotten gain been accumulated? James 5:4. The word of God speaks of "the hire of the laborers, which is of you kept back by fraud." [James 5:4.] This is generally understood to apply to wealthy men who employ servants and do not pay them for their labor, but it has a broader meaning than this. It applies with great force to those who have been enlightened by the Spirit of God and yet in any degree work upon the same principle that these men do in hiring servants, grinding them down to the lowest price.-Testimonies, vol. 5, 375:2.

12. How will the laborers try to defend themselves? James 5: 4. "The hire of the laborers. • • crieth." Look at any port of the world today and you will see the fulfillment of this prophecy. In America and in other parts of the Western world, the laborers are highly organized in labor unions, and thus protect their interests; but in many other countries of the world, seething unrest and strife exist between the rich and the poor. Throughout the world capital and labor exist in strained relationships.

13. Note how the rich live and how the "just" have been treated. James 5:5, 6.

14. What is God's counsel to those who are unjustly treated? James 5:7, 8.

15. What special light has been given us that, if followed, will put us on vantage ground? ...Men are seeking to bring those engaged in the different trades under bondage to certain unions. This is not God's planning, but the planning of a power that we should in no wise acknowledge. God's word is fulfilling; the wicked are binding themselves up in bundles ready to be burned. We are now to

use all our entrusted capabilities in giving the last warning message to the world. In this work, we are to preserve our individuality. We are not to unite with secret societies or with trade unions. We are to stand free in God, looking constantly to Christ for instruction. All our movements are to be made with a realization of the importance of the work to be accomplished for God.-Testimonies, vol. 7, 84:2, 3. (Italics ours.)

16. How does Isaiah describe the same time to which James refers? Isaiah 2:2, 7-9.

17. Read carefully what Paul has to say about riches and how they are to be used. 1 Timothy 6:6-11, 17-19. 18. What attribute is especially needed by Christians today? James 5:8.

1. There is coming rapidly and surely an almost universal guilt upon the inhabitants of the cities because of the steady increase of determined wickedness. We are living in the midst of an "epidemic of crime" at which thoughtful, God-fearing men everywhere stand aghast. The corruption that prevails is beyond the power of the human pen to describe. Every day brings fresh revelations of political strife, bribery, and fraud; every day brings its heart-sickening record of violence and lawlessness, of indifference to human suffering; of brutal, fiendish destruction of human life. Every day testifies to the increase of insanity, murder, and suicide.-Testimonies, vol. 9, 89:1.

2. Even the church, which should be the pillar and ground of the truth, is found encouraging a selfish love of pleasure. When money is raised for religious purposes, to what means do many churches resort? To bazaars, suppers, fancy fairs, even lotteries, and like devices. Often the place set apart for God's worship is desecrated by feasting and drinking, buying, selling, and merry-making. Respect for the house of God and reverence for His worship are lessened in the minds of the youth. The barriers of self-restraint are weakened. Selfishness, appetite, and the love of display are appealed to, and they strengthen as they are indulged.- Testimonies, vol. 9, 91:3. 3.

By every species of oppression and extortion, men are piling up colossal fortunes, while the cries of starving humanity are coming up before God. There are multitudes struggling with poverty, compelled to labor hard for small wages, unable to secure the barest necessities of life. Toil and deprivation, with no hope of better things, make their burden heavy. When pain and sickness are added, the burden is almost unbearable. Careworn and oppressed, they know not where to turn for relief.-Testimonies, vol. 9, 90:4.

But the scriptures, while foretelling this dreadful apostasy, also plainly teach that just before the second coming of Christ, many will be rescued from the darkness of error and superstition. Once more the earth is to be lightened by the glory of God. The pure truths of the Bible are to shine forth. And in this time of heavenly illumination marking the approaching end of the age, the gifts of the Spirit are again to be manifest in the true church. "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy." Acts 2:17, 18; Joel 2:28, 29. CET 243.

Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God's church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. To the end of time, the presence of the Spirit is to abide with the true church.-The Acts of the Apostles, 54:2.

My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit, God stands back of every promise He has made.

With your Bibles in your hands, say: “I have done as Thou hast said, I present Thy promise, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’” Christ declares: “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Matthew 7:7; Mark 11:24; John 14:13. [CCH 98. 2]

LUKE 11: 13.

May our God revive His church during these end times by filling His people with the Holy Spirit so as to be the light in the darkness that covers the world in times when the history of the world is closing?

I saw that God could rain means from heaven to carry on his work, but he never would do this. It is contrary to his plan. He has entrusted men on earth with sufficient means to carry forward his work, and if all do their duty there will be no lack. But some will not heed the call for their means. They are willing to see the work of God go forward. They are anxious to see the cause prosper, provided they can keep their riches, and make no sacrifice, only bestow a trifle now and then, which should cause them shame for its being so little, and so grudgingly bestowed. Said the angel, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” Individuals who have means are convinced of the truthfulness of our position. They embrace it. They are tested. Opportunities are presented for them to help the cause of God with the unrighteous mammon (this world's richest), and make friends that when they should fail here, they may be received into everlasting habitations. But some love this world so well that they will not even for the immortal inheritance sacrifice their treasure here. They harden their hearts, and will not do their part as God has prospered them. They are fully tested. The world lives in their hearts, and the truth dies out. They lose the crowns laid up in heaven for them, and God raises up others who come up and fill their places... Spirit of Prophecy Vol 4, pg. 437.

LESSON ONE

GRACE CHANGES EVERYTHING

Introduction

Marriage and family is the one area where we give up and think we have to live with problems and dysfunction could be with your spouse, or kids, grown kids, parents, or in-laws. We know we can't change anyone else, so we think that means we're stuck with things the way they are until 'they' change. Not true. God transforms marriages through His grace and practical advice of wise mentors.

The grace of God empowers and energizes us to produce happy, healthy marriages. “Like every other one of God’s good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty.” A.H p. 100. “The grace of Christ, and this alone, can make this institution what God designed it should be – an agent for the blessing and up lifting of humanity. And thus the families of earth, in their unity and peace and love, may represent the family of heaven.” A.H. p. 100.3

Seventh-day Adventist church believes families are important. The family is the primary unit of society, the place where social behaviour and spiritual values are constructed, interpreted and transmitted from one generation to next generation.

The emotional ties that bind our marriage together create incredibly important bonds of attachment that influence us, often for the rest of our lives.

Many people believe it is difficult to develop a happy, secure family environment in this present world. Many have given up on marriage happiness.

“The condition of society presents a sad comment upon Heaven’s ideal of this sacred relation. Yet even for those who have found bitterness and disappointment where they had hoped for companionship and joy, the gospel of Christ offers a solace.” E.G. White. A.H p.100.

Christ presents in our marriage will sanctify many problems. By the grace of god our marriage is saved. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do.

In the beginning when God created and celebrated the first marriage (Genesis Chapter 1,2) He intended that our ability to give and receive love would inspire us and enable us to build high quality interpersonal relationships with one another. Human beings all want to love and intimacy. By giving and receiving love we grow in our understanding of one another and experience greater closeness and trust.

STEWARDSHIP

DAY 1

GOD FIRST

Key Text: Mathew 6:33

God created and made everything on earth according to how he wanted done. When God concluded everything including the first family on planet earth, he made a statement to the only existing man on the face of the earth, i.e Adam that he should take over and control the earth (Genesis 1:29, 30)

God blessed man with everything required for his stay on earth. Note, it was the intention of God that man should live happily forever.

No man can claim ownership of what God has put around him. God blessed man with what we call Christian stewardship. As God tries to take appeal to man to find the right path back to him. (Jeremiah 6:16). He gives man some dimensions of life that is every one of us take them seriously, we will put God always to be the first in our daily life.

4 Dimensions of Christian Stewardship

1. Body temple (Gen 2:7, 1 Corinthians 6:19,20)
2. Talents (Mathew 25:14,15)
3. Time (Psalms 90:10)
4. Treasure (Haggai 2:8, Proverbs 3:9)

All the four dimensions of Christian stewardship brings blessings to man. Man will always enjoy them as it increases and as he continues to live.

There is a temptation that comes to every man when the blessings of God are increasing. Man will think that all he possesses are as a result of his human effort and may be his good education, health, planning.

Everyone should be careful to know that all we have including our own self belongs to God and so God should always be the first in our day to day living.

God wants every human being to obey what he said from creation and during the days of the prophets and the times of the apostles as well.

We should all remind ourselves of the following;

Jeremiah 9:23-24- When you are tempted to have self-glory

Deuteronomy 8:11-18- When you become rich and increased with goods

1st Timothy 6:6-10 – Always remember that we brought nothing to this world

Mathew 19:16-23 – Remember the life of the rich young rulers who had great possessions.

Because of the great temptations that the great enemy confuses men on earth, you will find that some fall and are found having the following characteristics against the will of God the giver:-

1. More of self than God
2. Living a don't care life
3. Pride
4. Reducing Christian friends and shifting to the worldly
5. Unfaithful tithe returns
6. Wasting of family resources
7. Absenteeism in church services
8. Hate frequent appeals for money in church
9. Don't accept his mistakes easily
10. Business minded and can break the Sabbath
11. Controversial in the church
12. Leaving the faith

Everyone of us should learn always not to forget our origin and the source of everything we possess.

Whatever we have is all for the glory of God.

We are just channels of blessing.

Mathew 6:33, Let's not mix priorities. We need to seek God first. As soon as he gives us what pertains earthly living and comfort, Let's remember to maintain our relationship with him.

Let's trust him and all shall be well.

Created to Work

At Creation, God Created man, and having given him (Adam) the Garden of Eden instructed him that he should till and weed it (Genesis 2:8-15) So if you check keenly, you will get to know that before the fall, God wanted man to take up the task – to rule and subdue the world, all these were for the blessing of man.

Many people fail to comprehend that, work is a blessing to man and not a curse as they may think. The pronouncement by God that the Earth is cursed (Genesis 3:17-19) was later on when Adam and Eve had willfully decided to disobey God. While in the business of taking care of the Garden.

All mankind have no excuse but to work for his own good and for the good of God's work. Upon working, man attracts a lot of resources/possessions to himself thus living well on this, challenging world and also is a blessing to the advancement of God's work.

God created the heavens and Earthly in six days (He was busy working) and part of the created being was Adam.

The Same God who created man who later became disobedient also told him no one will enjoy anything on Earth without sweats. Nothing is for free. No one should relax waiting for someone's sweats

Just as a reminder, God gave his Ten Commandments to mankind that, they may be revived to understand God's daily character. When you, read in Exodus 20:8-11, you will get a command that God is trying to remind man what He told them at creation that "Six days you shall labour

and do all your work”

The fourth, Commandment carries two Commandments in one:-

- A. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”
- B. “Six days you shall labour and do all your work”.

Many Christians stresses the keeping of the Sabbath and resting from six days’ work yet they do no work. When God says that man should work for six days, it is not a request or on may be approach, it is a command that all human beings must work to eat.

Again the Bible is so clear that no man should eat if he doesn’t work. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this; If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat...”

God do not entertain idleness. He demands that everyone must get engaged.

See the following scriptures also:-

Proverbs 14:23 – “In all labour, there is profit. But idle chatter leads only to poverty”.

Proverbs 20:4 – “The lazy man will not plough because of winter, He will beg during harvest and have nothing”.

Proverbs 20:13- “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be Satisfied with bread?”

Proverbs 21:6 – “Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death”

Proverbs 22:7 – “The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender”

Proverbs 21:25 – “The desire of a lazy man kills him for his hands refuse to labor”

1 Peter 5:8 - “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has... denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”.

An appeal to women too:-

In some cultures, women are considered baby seaters, but let me appeal to every Adventist believers that when the Bible command that we work, it’s not a command to only men but to mankind. Parents too are to train their children to work and earn for themselves. So women too are to be serious and plan on how to earn a living and to contribute to the family kitty. No woman should be a burden to the husband. Each member should answer the following questions come evening, come morning:-

1. Am I a Contributor?
2. Am I a Consumer?
3. Am I a Producer?

Such questions should make us think and act in a more profitable way than just depending on others for our daily living.

So for women, let’s not think that our space and place is just to decorate the family, let’s be productive and we should plan to enjoy our sweats.

Let us pick one Bible

example Proverbs 31:1-31

The whole chapter is portraying the acts of a virtuous wife/mother. What is contained in these

verses are words of King Lemuel's mother.

Proverbs 31 no doubt gets more airtime on mother's days than any other passages of scripture. The majority of the Proverbs describes a virtuous woman who leads her home with integrity, discipline, and giftedness. This wife and mother is a leader not because she tries to be one, but because of who she is.

Take a close look at:

A. Her Assets

1. She is trustworthy (v.11)
2. She is a positive influence (v.12)
3. She is a hard worker (VV 13, 14, 19, 24-27)
4. She is a Planner (vv 21,22)
5. She is protective (V.27)

B. Her Achievements

1. She meets the needs of her home (v.15)
2. She invest for household (v.18)
3. She keeps herself in shape (V.17)
4. She helps her husband become successful (v.23)

C. Her Attitudes

1. Delightful (vs 13)
2. Healthy (18)
3. Compassionate, (v.20)
4. Unselfish (v.20)
5. Public (v 25)

D. Her Applause

1. From her family (V.28)
2. From her husband (V 28, 29)
3. From Gods word (vs 30)
4. From her works (v.31)

May God help every member of our families to get to understand that we have a work to do day in, day out.

As we come to the rest of the Sabbath. It will genuinely be a real rest after a busy week. God bless us all.

DAY 2

Returning and Giving

In many meetings you attend, especially on Sabbaths, the leading appeal or promotion, is to give. Many if given time to defend themselves, you will hear them say “We do not have”. This is the reason why many, when they hear the term STEWARDSHIP quickly think of money demands. Even, on a set agreed, well planned day to bring blessings to God, the amount always given is not equivalent to those in attendance. Many will not give however much you take time to promote.

WHY ARE WE NOT GIVING

This question always have two quick answers.

A. We do not have means.

B. We are poor.

Now, let's answer to some extend following question

WHY MATERIAL POVERTY?

1. Our Agricultural Products fetching lowest returns in our local market.
2. Individual Conduct ie Lazy, inactive, unproductive Read Proverbs 6:1-6
3. Calamities; diseases, draughts, floods etc
4. End time mentality – Extreme in prophecy presentation and interpretation
5. Conservatives and their belief that it's hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.
-Note that to be poor in order to inherit the Kingdom of God is not part of our fundamental believes.
6. Those who sit back and lament as they see work as punishment from God.
7. Traditional beliefs that men are the sole bread winners thus women do nothing yet what man brings home is not enough for the family and to support God's work.
8. Time Wasting - Idleness is too much among many believers e.g during Political rallies
-No work done -Idleness is the stupidity of the body while stupidity is the idleness of themind. Get out of both
9. Some lack direction on What to do When and Where
10. Some are used to cheap life of getting handouts and donations, e.g. After every political outcome people enter into a world of hangovers for yet another long period busy analyzing why and how others failed.

Before we come up with some way forward, it is good to check on the following:-

EFFECTS OF POVERTY

1. Lack of Basic needs (1Tim 5:8)
2. Psychological effects
3. Inferiority before the rich.
4. Evangelism become less because of less funds
5. No Financial support to hasten Church matters
6. Poor return of Tithes and Offerings.
Hence -Less Pastors.
-Slow Church Planting
-No Completion of many Church projects.

After opening our minds on the effects of poverty on human life lets now get to the way forward to see if we can get revived into Action.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO.

1. Educate people on What can attract resources in their territory.
2. Do business that is less competitive in your area.
Note; Anything you do, do it as business and business means profit.
3. Look for better ways of getting started i.e capital - Begin small.
4. Start Simple Income Generating Project (IGPs)
 - What simple things can be done in your area that can give you money?
 - Where will be your market?
 - Who are your Customers?
 - When is the best time to do it?
5. If in a position get engaged in. "high-technology farming and diversity of commerce and industry."
 - Be Creative
 - Think creatively
6. Intentionally, all people in the family and Church Community should work
7. Read Spiritual Books.
8. Attend Church Seminars.
9. Pray hard
10. Do your best according to your ability

Now after improving our understanding on why some may not be giving, let's get the real understanding of what Christian Stewardship means.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

STEWARDSHIP DIVINED

What is stewardship?

It is a prescriptive doctrine that deals with the manner and basis upon which decisions are made concerning the management of God's property. It is prescriptive because it tells how human beings ought to do.

When God gave man mandate to control the earth, what is in the sea and on air, He wanted man to bring them close to his reach and make the use for his own benefit and the benefit of other human beings, and moreso to use in expanding God's Kingdom through making disciples.

So man should know that stewardship involves the following:-

1. Time Psalms 90:10, 12
2. Body Temple. Gen 2:7, I Cor. 6:19-20
3. Talents Matthew 25:14, 15
4. Treasure. Haggai 2:8, Prov. 3-9

If we use our time well, strength of our bodies, discover our talents, God will give us enough of what is profitable to us. We shall be in possession of all the treasures that God has bestowed unto us.

God's intention in giving us mandate to control the Earth and it's fullness is that we may be self-reliant.

When God makes a call through his servants to Give, He is not making an appeal of what he doesn't know that it is possible. It's only human that became reluctant on bringing them to his reach to make it available to give when required.

A reminder on Biblical self-reliance

Read the following verses keenly and see the demand of God in each and put in practice what's applicable -

Genesis 1:29 Man given everything

Genesis 2:15, Man to be weeding.

Genesis 3:19. Man to eat out of his sweats till death

Proverbs 6:6-8 Man to learn from ants who have no King or governor but aan save for their families to use in future.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-13 – Those who work among you

2 Thessalonians 3:10-11 – Men who are not working instead are only busy bodies are not to eat

Genesis 30:30 - Man Jacob told Laban “When shall I be free to work and provide for my family.

1 Timothy 5-8- Any man, who doesn't provide for his own family is worse than unbeliever,

Acts 2:44 – Believers When is one accord brings everything.

Acts 4:32 – Non said that what he had belonged to him.

Obadiah 1:17 – House of Jacob shall Possess their possessions

When Christians get serious and plan on how to subdue the Earth, all resources Shall be withinour

reach and we shall have full control of the Earth, everything that is in the farm, air, and beneath the waters shall always be available to give to the owner – the Creator God. Because we are now self-reliant and everything is in our control, God now calls for a return of the tithing and giving of offerings.

Leviticus 27:30

TITHE

Tithe must:

1. Be the 10th
2. Come from all Grains or fruits
3. Also come from the animals that we have
4. Come from our finances
5. Come from gifts we get (from every increase)

Because we have everything in our hands as a blessing from God, we shall freely Return the tithe and Give Offerings.

Tithe: is a sign of obedience to God.

Offerings: is a sign of Love towards our God and is the beginning of giving. Be willing to be made, willing to return and give what belongs to God

DAY 3

Acceptable and Unacceptable Offerings

After we have learned that we should diligently work and earn or possess the earth, we should be careful on our spiritual health. The enemy always is ready to divert our attention from God and fix it on wealth.

We should always get to know that God is just allowing us to use His own for our own comfort and to hasten His arrival for the climax of man's salvation. If the enemy may not prevent us from returning and giving what God has bestowed unto us, he will make us proud and as we give, he makes sure it is not acceptable by God.

First look at the following scriptures:-

Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Thus says the Lord; "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might; Nor let the rich man glory in his riches,

But, let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, exercising loving, kindness, judgement and righteousness in the Earth. For in these, I delight" says the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgements and His statutes which I command you today, lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold are multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, when your heart is lifted up and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage...and you shall remember the Lord your God for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers as it is this day”.

Psalms 24:1

“The Earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”.

Haggai 2:8

“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of Host”,

Psalms 50:10-12

“For every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountain, and wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all its fullness”.

So, always as we take back to God His own, our hearts should not be lifted that we encourage too much of self than God who permitted riches to be under our full control.

If man cannot consider giving as a lifestyle, he will be giving what cannot be acceptable in the eyes of God.

Unacceptable offerings

1. Giving under pressure
2. Giving too specific objects
3. Competitive giving
4. Show off giving
5. Giving to appease God
6. Giving to pacify God
7. Giving to be remembered

Acceptable offerings

1. Sacrificial giving
2. Giving willingly
3. Giving cheerfully
4. Heartfelt giving
5. Giving out of love
6. Giving that is regular and systematic
7. Giving to be God’s channel of blessings
8. Giving to God’s treasury
9. Giving out of every increase

As believers gives, each one should give from the heart, purely honouring the giver who made it possible that we own all we have.

Remind yourself the following:

Deuteronomy 16:17 “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessings of the LORD your God which He has given you”.

2 Corinthians 8:12 “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have”.

2 Corinthians 9:7 “So let each give as he purposes in his heart not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver”.

2 Corinthians 8:1-3 “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality”.

2 Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich; yet for your sake He became poor that you through His poverty might become rich”.

As we always give for the advancement of God’s Kingdom, we should have in mind that He is the source of everything.

Whether we are returning tithe, giving weekly offerings or camp meeting offerings, we need to do so cheerfully and with great appreciation and acceptance of love that God showed us through His only son Christ Jesus.

For those who do not give, what does the spirit of prophesy record concerning them?

Selfishness

“Selfishness, the sin of the world has become the prevailing sin of the church” ST 204

Tithe

“If the law required tithes and offerings thousands of years ago, how much more essential are they now” 3T 396

“To promote the assembling of the people for religious service as well as to provide for the poor, a second tithe was required. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality” PP 530

Deuteronomy 15:11 Poor people among you always

“If systematic benevolence were universally adopted according to God’s plan and the tithing system carried out faithfully by the wealthy as it is by the poor classes, there would be no need of repeated and urgent calls for means at our large religious gatherings.

There has been a neglect in the churches of keeping up the plan of systematic benevolence and the result has been an impoverished treasury and a backslidden church” 3T 309

Let us give out of love and from deep inside the heart and God will be ready to accept because it is not from human perspective and spirit of selfishness.

Home Stewardship

For our own good, if God has blessed us with means, we should be very appreciative and ask him to give us a heart of wisdom that we may manage as we increase what we have.

Money is a medium of exchange, you cannot stay without it and be very comfortable. It is what

we should have to make everything successful in this life.

Ecclesiastes 10:9

“A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes merry; but MONEY answers everything”

This is a true saying, that money is the sixth, “sense” that if someone does not have it, he cannot make a proper use of the five common senses we know.

One also may say, “One out of every four individuals is mentally imbalanced because of economic challenge”.

While on the other hand, one said that we have a lot of money on Earth but it is that the formula of collection is very poor.

When someone see such a topic as home money management, troubles comes to the mind on the line of what is to be managed when the money completely is missing.

Another question also may arise that; “must we be poor forever?”

For Christians and especially Adventist who have a balanced mind, allow me give you a list of simple ways to try if money can be attracted to your hands.

Following the Chinese proverb that says “BEGIN SMALL”, try if all of us depending on where you come from or live if you have exhausted the following line of business.

Think of;

1. Agricultural lines
2. Transportation
3. Timber sales
4. Posho mill
5. School supplies
6. Landscaping
7. Water supply
8. Counselling services
9. Mediation services
10. Writing of training materials
11. Mentoring services
12. Wedding decoration
13. Laboratory services
14. Drawing and design
15. Car or motor cycle spare parts
16. Welding services
17. Sale of old medals
18. Keeping of chicken
19. Vegetable supplies
20. Vegetarian diet
 - a. Training centre
 - b. Mobile hotel during market days
21. Repair of homes
22. Plumbing
23. Baby daycare centres near universities, colleges and busy offices

24. Buying and selling of cereals

The list cannot be exhausted, but a room is left for each one of us to think of others especially what can be applicable in your area. The underlying principle here is, “How can I make money?” I am very sure that none of us have tried all the above and failed in all.

If you can still recall the above early question, “Must we be poor forever?” Your answer will automatically be a big NO.

You need a small piece of land and you will be good to go. Check the following bible text.

Proverbs 28:19

“He who till his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows, empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty”.

Read also;

Genesis 3:23

Genesis 4:2

Genesis 17:19

Proverbs 12:11

2 Samuel 9:10

Ecclesiastes 5:9

These and many more are just dealing with tilling on land for the production of food.

Why are we not achieving our goals in life?

1. Lack of concentration
2. Fearing to attempt
3. Failure to number our days
4. Overspending on unimportant things
5. Luxurious life
6. Diseases
7. Failure to pursue priorities in life
8. Too many friends
9. Fashionable family members depending on single source
10. Endless family disputes
11. Secret dealings
12. Frequent movements
13. Pretending to be rich
14. Too much borrowing – always on loans

For the few who have attempted and somehow achieved, do we have a budget? Do we have a control over our expenditure? Do we invest? etc

Allow me also to touch on:-

Men and Budgeting

Remind yourself on earlier verses

from:-1 Timothy 5:8

Proverbs 14:23

If you want to be successful on what you already have, follow the following simple ways of handling funds:

1. God's tithe and offerings
first Tithe 10%
Offerings 10%
2. Food – Monthly storage
– Yearly/annual storage of what can be stored e.g maize, bean, rice lentils e.t.c
3. Bills – electricity
– rent where applicable
– water
– milk
– kerosene
– fuel
– firewood/charcoals
– gas
4. Savings– Save for emergencies e.g
– fees
– household goods
– clothing
– investments
– medication
5. Children's allowances
For those who have teenagers, allow them have some money for free use. This will allow you check if they are economical.
 - What will they bring home?
 - Will they remember Tithe?
 - Will they remember a suffering friend?From these and others, you will tune them to the right channel needed by the creator as you prepare them serve God at their own, later in life.
6. Supplementing
 - Have a garden – vegetables locally
 - Have chicken for eggs
 - Animals for milk

A message to all men whom the bible refers them as the heads of the wife, read and acquaint yourself with the following spirit of prophecy quotation:-

“Give your wife a share of the money that you receive. Let her use it as she desires. She should be allowed to use the means that she earns as she is in her judgement deemed best.

If she had a certain sum to use as her own without being criticized, a great weight would have been lifted from her mind”. AH Page 378

Meeting the challenge of Home stewardship

1. Be reasonable

- Don't start your children's life with high expectations
- Tell them your house is not a reflection of where they are going to start
- If guilty and spiritually weak-
 - Educate them
 - Teach them to begin small
 - Tell them your story
 - God blesses someone according to their abilities
 - Gifted differently
 - God wants us to live within our means

2. Simplify your lifestyle

We are blessed differently so:-

- No to imitation
- No to pretense of being rich
- If you cannot afford designed cloths go to the second hand and get yours there
- Drive a car of your budget – you better walk on foot, own a bicycle, a motorbike than abig car on loan just to be congratulated by villagers and friends yet suffering inside andstruggling on impossibilities.

3. Make necessary adjustments

- If you can no longer support your children in boarding schools, try day school and be inpeace
- Get out of high cost rental homes and own a simple house of low cost or your own
- Go to the rural home where you don't purchase many things
- Supplement many things that takes away moneyProverbs 3:21

4. Avoid debt

- Avoid debt like leprosy/cancer
- Stick to priorities – misplaced priorities, people end up in debt. Proverbs 22:7
- The easiest way to bet yourself into slavery is by simply borrowing
- Borrowing limits your freedom
- One of the ways to destroy friendship is to borrow from a friend

5. Give spiritual growth priority

The God first principle is the best for every individual

10 WAYS OF GETTING OUT OF DEBT AND STAYING OUT OF IT.

The church introduced CFMS few years ago. One clear reason that many church members don't use it is because of simple loans that they have engaged into e.g fuliza and others.

Let me open your mind a bit that we may try to get out of this slavery.

1. Decide never to add any more debt on what you have already.
2. Make a solemn covenant with God not to falter on the decision
3. Make a list of debts from the largest to the smallest and start clearing

4. Follow an established budget.
5. Cancel all credit facilities.
6. Start purchasing all items on cash basis.
7. Make a sale of:-
 - Plots
 - Suits
 - Machines
 - Laptops
 - Sofa sets
 - Cars etc to allow you pay off debts
8. Trust and be faithful in tithe return as a priority
9. Break from spendthrift habits
 - Don't live beyond your budget especially while in debt.
10. Don't quit
 - Trying to pay, are discouraging moments and times but don't quit, just pay.
 - Many give up and stop putting principles into practice
 - Never give up

Steps towards financial freedom

1. Face your situation Proverbs 27:23
2. Set some specific goals in life Proverbs 22:29
3. Consider your choices carefully
4. Seek wise counsel Proverbs 19:20
5. Work hard Proverbs 28:19, Proverbs 24:30-34, 1 Thessalonians 3:10-11
6. Learn to be contented Ecclesiastes 5:10
7. Give to God what belongs to him
8. Live within your means by not pretending to be rich
9. Avoid extravagance
10. Practice economy and teach family members do the same
11. Invest wisely if you must
12. Save little by little for later days

God's Ownership

Psalms 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein".

In a case where men forgets, God takes an initiative to remind that He is the owner. The moment mankind accepts that they are just managers taking care of the world on God's behalf, they will live differently.

Everything we see or have belongs to God. He may ask for it anytime He wishes only that human beings tries to control as if it belong to them – when God ask for it that He may use as Hewishes, we seem not to understand that He wants His own.

"There are many who in their hearts judge God with being hard master because He claims their possession and their service. But we can bring to God nothing that is not already His. "All things

come of thee”, said King David; and thine own have we given Thee;

1 Chronicles 29:14 All things are God’s not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary”. Christ’s object lessons P.362

We are stewards of what God owns, nothing more. God promises that if we practice good stewardship, He will bless us greatly. Read Malachi 3:8-12

God always sends His servants of the church i.e pastors, elders and other officers to remind believers of their duty of faithfulness in letting go what belongs to God but some receive the message reluctantly as if God have not made Himself clear.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

“A labourer should never leave some portion of the work undone because it is not agreeable to perform, thinking that the minister coming next will do it for him,

It is part of the minister’s work to teach those who accept the truth through his efforts to bring the tithe to the store house as an acknowledgement of their dependence upon God. The new converts should be fully enlightened as to their duty to return to the Lord His own. He who neglects to give instruction on this point, leaves undone a most important part of his work”

(GW 369,370)

THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AND OFFICERS

“It is the duty of the elders and officers of the church to instruct the people on this important matter, and to set things in order;

As labourer’s together with God, the officers of the church should be sound upon this plainly revealed question. The ministers/pastors themselves should be STRICT to carry out to the letter the instructions of God’s word. Those who hold positions of trust in the church should not neglect, but they should see the members are faithful in performing this duty.

Let the elders and officers of the church follow the direction of the sacred word, and urge upon their members the necessity of faithfulness in payment of pledges, tithes and offerings”. CS, 106, 107

Having seen the above spirit of prophecy counsel, the pastors, elders and all members of the church have a duty to perform. None should neglect the given assignment of faithfulness as a person/individual and to tune other believers to follow suit in doing the work of God.

If all the believers will take charge and instruct new members, remind the old members, we shall see the best performance in the way God will bless His church.

Look at what happened in the times of Old Testament when people got it well.

2 Chronicles 31:5

“As soon as the commandments was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the

first fruits of grains and wine, oil and honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything”

Nehemiah 10:35, 37,38

“And we made ordinances to bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of all trees, year by year to the house of the Lord; to bring the first fruits our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil; to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities, and the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of God, to the rooms of the storehouse”.

Having checked these scriptures keenly, you notice that the Israelites never left anything to chance. They taught all people diligently and they brought all they had to the house of God.

What are these things that the Israelites brought that we can also bring to our Lord in our times?

As you can see, they brought many things in kind. As members of the Seventh-Day Adventist church, we have many things in kind that are available to be brought to the storehouse.

If we have never brought them, could it be that we haven't been asked to? Or we are not ready to serve the owner? Or the pastors, elders and officers of the church have neglected their duty?

All in all, this is the time the Lord has seen that He comes up with a reminder that we need to understand that when the owner instruct the manager to release whatever is required, the manager have no option but to comply. Let's be faithful in bringing to the Lord His own.

Take it to the Lord in Kind

The following are within our reach and we can take them to God in kind:-

1. Animals – cows, sheep, goats etc
2. Trees
3. Fruits
4. Plots
5. Grains – maize, wheat, beans, rice, lentils etc

God is ready to receive anything we have in kind for the advancement of His work. What is it that you have, that God can accept? Have a willing heart and make a decision then take a step to take it to the Lord as an acknowledgement of your dependence upon Him.

These tithe and offerings in kind are received by God the way He receives tithe and offerings in cash from those who have an additional blessings of being employed. Salary is being considered by God as an increase thus require a tenth from it every pay day. Let us all be faithful in serving God.

Tithing whether in cash or in kind helps us to maintain our relationship with God. It makes us remain connected and focused to God's will. When you give, you feel a sense of belonging, connected, joyful and free.

The church cannot win when greater percentage of the population are not faithful. The mandate given to pastors and elders is that they should tell the believers the truth without sugarcoating the direct message from God that all should be up to the task of returning what belong to God.

Exodus 20:15: "Do not steal", This don't, is sufficiently emphatic. Anyone who considers very well that this don't is from God will not go ahead to steal. Spirituality is made up of stewardship details. Let's all adjust our lives to the way that God wants it.

Ecclesiastes 5:4: When you vow, fulfill it and don't delay.

Revelation 2:10: Let us be faithful until death.

Hebrews 3:14: Let us be faithful to the end.

DAY 4

"Let My People Go"

This is a message that God sent his servant Moses to inform Pharaoh that His people must go out of Egypt in readiness to worship Him in a land of freedom. Time that no one should get into slavery again. To get out of suffering and be in a position to obey God.

Exodus 10:3 So Moses and Aaron came into Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go that they may serve me."

Moses had reason to be humble (**Numbers 12:3**). He was sent to face an arrogant king to release slaves – What a loss to Pharaoh. Egypt was so great as a result of the presence of God's people in the land.

Does the greatness of a nation automatically make its ruler great? Pharaoh seemed to think so. Not only did Pharaoh rule with absolute power, he also displayed absolute ignorance. He thought of himself as a god and demanded that others see him the same way.

How ironic that the wealth of a nation along with its power, came into Pharaoh's possession through the hand of the Lord's servant, Joseph (Gen 47).

Years passed and another servant and another servant of God approached another man sitting on the throne of Egypt, an ugly confrontation erupted. Pharaoh reveals his arrogant character through his defiant response to Moses' request that he let the people of God go into the wilderness to worship their God, "**Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD nor will I let Israel go (Exodus 5:2).**"

Pharaoh's pride led to arrogance and his arrogance to rigidity, in time, his heart became stone-cold and hard. He could have written a song, "**My way or the Highway.**" Of course, the Israelites chose the highway and headed for the Promised Land leaving Egypt with their pockets stuffed with Egyptian gold.

The Israelites made it clear to Pharaoh that they must go with everything that the LORD had blessed them with.

Exodus 10:9

And Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, without flocks and our herds, we will go for we must hold a feast to the LORD.”

It is with the same tone that the spiritual Israel should declare to the same Satan who used Pharaoh to disturb Israel and almost prevented them from going that he should let us go.

The World Church in this quinquennium have the theme, “I WILL GO,” a word that is so simple to pronounce but putting it into practice and into reality is a bit tricky. Same Satan that used to try control the world is still alive and in this last days is taking a full control of the inhabitants of this world.

It is because of the ongoing Great Controversy that the church is in trouble. Satan cannot allow us run the business of God in a smooth way. He must fight those working for the salvation of mankind. He will even use our possessions, our wealth, our abundance to make us loose focus and to be arrogant like Pharaoh, forgetting the mission that has been given to the Church.

The Spirit of Prophecy has this to say: As the People of God approach the perils of the last days, Satan holds earnest consultation with his angels as to the most successful plans of overthrowing their faith. He sees that the popular churches are already lured to sleep by his deceptive power. By pleasing sophistry and lying wonders, he can continue to hold them under his control. Therefore, he directs his angels to lay their snares especially for those who are looking for the second coming of Christ and endeavoring to keep all the commandments of God. Says the great deceiver, “We must watch those who are calling the attention of the people to the Sabbath of Jehovah, they will lead many to see the claims of the law of God, and the same light which reveals the true Sabbath, reveals also the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and shows that the last work for man’s salvation is now going forward. Hold the minds of the people in darkness till that work is ended, and we shall secure the world and the church also.

“Go make possessors of lands and money drunk with the cares of this life. Present the world before them in its most attractive light that they may lay up their treasure here, and fix their affections upon earthly things. We must do our utmost to prevent those who labor in God’s cause from obtaining means to use against us, keep the money in our own ranks. The more means they obtain, the more they will injure our kingdom by taking from us our subjects. Make them care more for money than for the up building of Christ’s kingdom and the spread of the truths we hate, and we need not fear their influence, for we know that every selfish, covetous person will fall under our power, and will finally be separated from God’s people.” **Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers Pg 472 – 474 Cs. 154.**

As you can see that Satan is so determined to stop all progress of the great commission. He will either prevent us from getting means or prevent us from giving out generously the means we have.

Satan will make us love this world, put our affections on Earthly things till we are found wanting.

1st John 2:15-17

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the father but is of the world, and the world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Zephaniah 1:14-18 (Read)

For our own salvation to be sure:

- We must love the Lord.
- We must love the truth.
- We must love the calling.
- We must love the people.

Philippians 3:20-21 – Our citizenship is in heaven and we are waiting for our Lord to come from there.

However much wealth we may have accumulated here through the assistance of the great deceiver to be too selfish, we will not take anything from this world.

We need to go and let our means go and that will only be our sure way of fulfilling God's mission.

Let us be careful not to divert God's blessings for our own good, comfort and luxurious life under the sun because it will not be too long and everything shall be useless to us and cannot by then advance the cause of God.

“A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity, because his master trusts him. If in any wise he acts selfishly, and turns the advantages gained by trading with his Lord's goods to his own advantages, he has perverted the trust reposed in him.” **Cs Pg. 113.**

“In the great judgement day, those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by the Judge of all Earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.” **Col Pg. 365.**

We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin. It is now that are to form character for the future immortal life. It is now that we are to prepare for the Searching Judgement.” **Col Pg. 342.**

1 Timothy 6:6-10 “Now godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain, we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of

money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

“Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of troubles come, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar, and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. They will be free in the time of trouble, and have no logs to weigh them down.” **Counsels on Stewardship Pg. 59, 60.**

“I saw that the Israel of God must arise and renew their strength in God by renewing and keeping their covenant with Him.” **Testimonies Vol 1 Pg. 140.**

As believers we now know the will of God and we should be ready to Go and get engaged in the work of fulfilling the great mission.

We need to arise and shine for the one who saved us. The sins of the world should not be part of our lives. It's God who needs His people to go and we have no option but to go.

Satan is forever defeated and if we cling to God, He will give us strength to overcome all Satan's temptations as we take the Gospel to a perishing world.

To all the members:

LET US GO WITHOUT FURTHER DELAYS. TO GOD BE THE GLORY.

FAMILY MINISTRIES

Marriage and Family are Being Severely Tested

“As social climates rapidly change around the world, homes and marriages are being severely tested. Clear evidence reveals that the increase in family breakdown, the debilitating stress with which many families live, and the changes in contemporary family structure have left many couples and families confused and bewildered. Changes have brought about alteration in the pattern of the family life cycle, shifts in expectations of one another in the family, and the emergence of a wide variety of family forms. Amid all these changes, many have wondered whether anybody still values or believes in family. Young couples are often afraid to commit themselves to marriage and many choose other types of relationships instead.” Bryan Craig.

A Message of Grace for Difficult Times

We hunger for love and intimacy. With competing interests and conflicting values, however, many people find the development of long term relationships in marriage a difficult and exacting enterprise. Many couples search for clues to revive a dying or stagnant relationship.

In the book of Ephesians Paul seems particularly appropriate. This church was passing through difficult times often of losing the first love. Paul emphasises the grace of God as the only basis for salvation and healing. Paul states that true peace and harmony with the community of faith are attainable only through Christ. He affirms that:

- ✓ Christ destroys the barriers that separate (Eph. 2:14)
- ✓ Christ breaks down the walls of hostility (Eph. 2:14)
- ✓ Christ creates unity out of diversity (2:15)
- ✓ Christ unites us all into one family (2:19)

Through the grace of Christ barriers in marriage is destroyed, the walls of hostility is broken. Christ creates unity of diversity in our marriage and family, and unites us all into one family.

Remember “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8). God’s is the dynamic that brings about reconciliation and inspires the development of responsible and satisfying relationships. “Where grace abounds, peace thrives.”

LESSON TWO

WAYS GRACE INFLUENCES MARRIAGE

By the grace of God marriage can be transformed. When we learn how the Holy Spirit empowers us and invite His presence in us we discover the key to “grace-full” marriages and families. “The power of grace flows most fully when the human will chooses to act in harmony with divine will.” (Gerald May). Here are a number of ways according to Paul that grace works in the life of the believer. They are vital for happy, healthy marriages. They are simple yet effective ways for us to maintain “the life of love.”

Accentuate the Positive (Eph. 4:1-3)

Grace leads us to choose to focus on the positive and not the negative. The biggest problems facing many marriages is the *negative* view of each other in marriage. We focus so much on ourselves and *negatively* on the partner.

Paul mentions four personal values that will help “keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace (v.3)

Humility – humbly the needs of others (4:2)

- A strong marriage begins with humility. “God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble. (James 4:6, Pr.3:34, 1Peter 5:5). Pride is the foundation of all the problems in marriage relationship. Humility keeps conflicts from spiralling out of control. Humility makes communication smoother. It removes the pressure to prove oneself. In humility you’ll create a warm and nurturing space for both of you. Through humility you get to avoid so many unnecessary arguments, and what arguments you do get are resolved quickly and clearly.

1. **Gentleness** – being gentle and respectful, showing that we care and are unwilling to take each other for granted (4:2).

- Every family-even if both spouses are from the same ethnic group- contains differences of opinion and customs that often clash in the process of negotiating everyday life. Yet if we are filled with the spirit of God, we too can relate in our families with gentleness, rather than outbursts of anger and selfish ambition.

2. **Patience** – being slow to avenge wrong or retaliate when hurt by another person (4:2)

- Definition: Patience is the “quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like.” Also “an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or announce when confronted with delay.”

3. **Forbearance** – bearing with one another in love. Mutual tolerance enables two human being to live together in peace and love (4:2).

- Forbearance is must in spouse’s relationship with each other that means patient; to restrain from action or violence.

These four qualities are essential for both people in marriage to have if they are to build bridges of understanding to each other, to take responsibility for their relationship, and to encourage each other’s sense of self-esteem.

The beauty of grace is when you give it, it comes back and changes you, too.

“All should cultivate patience by practicing patience. Being kind and forbearing, true love may be kept warm in the heart, and qualities will be developed that Heaven will approve. A.H.p.106 Have patience, fathers and mothers.

“How many do not manifest patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and true love! Many have their likes and dislikes and feel liberty to manifest their own perverse disposition rather than to reveal the will, the works the character of Christ. The life of Jesus is full of kindness and love. Are we growing into His divine nature?” A.H. p.178.1

LESSON 3

COMMUNICATE IN LOVE

EPHESIANS 4:15, 29

Good relationships depend very much on open honest communication. The essence of honest communication is a willingness to be vulnerable – to share the fragile and tender parts of ourselves with another, to risk opening our fears, and doubts, and to actively listen to another’s thoughts and

feelings. Self-disclosure on our part is an invitation to intimacy with another. It invites the other person to know and understand who we really are.

Healthy marriage relationship requires constant communication between husband and wife. Many relationships flounder because people are simply not willing to trust themselves with another person. Fears drives them to hide parts of themselves with another person or to engage in a variety of negative exchanges that inhibit understanding and prevent the growth of the relationship.

God's grace motivate us to communicate love and acceptance rather than using defensive, self-serving, manipulative tactics. If, instead of the gracious communication of love and acceptance, there is invalidation, minimizing of the other person, indifference or criticism, such toxic exchanges will tend to either an escalation of conflict and misunderstanding or to withdrawal and silence.

Family members should let each other know about their thoughts and feelings. This is important to maintain a good relationship. See what other principle you can find in the following texts: Colossians 4:6; Prov. 25:11, James 1:19.

God's word guides us in how to communication in order to keep unity in our relationships. The book of Ephesians assures us of our vertical relationship and who we are in Christ. Ephe.4:1 "Therefore," because of who we are in Christ and because of our union with him, we told to have a walk worthy of that calling and relationship. Our vertical relationship with God should make a difference in how we get along with our horizontal family relationships. The grace changes the attitude toward those horizontal relationships as expressed in Ephe.4:2. (Humble, gentle, patient, loving).

Communication in Grace

In your communication be:

1. *Be Honest* – Ephesians 4:25

- Be honest in all human relationships motivated by love. "Venting to make yourself feel better in the name of harsh truth is extremely selfish." Some people pride themselves in "speaking their minds" and truth that hurts." God is truth, but His truth frees us! So should ours!
- Our responsibility is to speak the truth in love. When there is a problem say there is problem. "What's wrong? Nothing! Leave me alone! Me...a problem? Of course not!" Denial equals **dishonest**.

2. *Keep Current. Ephesians 4: 26, 27*

- The problem of today is solved today. The sum should not go down with unresolved anger/problem. To do so gives the devil a foothold, and inroad into your marriage life. Today's problems are enough to deal with today.

3. *Attack problems, Not Spouse. Ephesians 4:29, 30*

- Labelling you spouse with words like "stupid" or 'slob' or saying things like "I wish I didn't marry you ... or even things like "you always... or you never..." are attacks on the persons or their character. This does nothing to help solve the problems, but rather makes more problems.
- We must work toward solutions to anything that divide us. Unity happens when we as teammates attack problems! Disunity happens when we attack each other, and God is grieved!

4. *Acts! Don't React – Eph. 4:31,32*

- In communication reacting is very bad. When we react, we “bounce off” the words or actions of another.
- God’s word instructs us to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26) Reactions make problems worse, not better. Choose to act like Jesus, being kind, compassionate, forgiving.

5. *Listen Attentively. James 1:19- 20, Prov.18:2, 13,15*

- We are told in James to be quick to hear and slow to speak.
- Throughout the book of Proverbs, the idea of listening is seen through statement like “pay attention,” or give me your ear” or intone your ear to my voice.” Listen attentively. Some people don’t listen. They are busy stating their opinions or preparing their response, but not listening carefully. Failing to listen fosters mistakes and incites anger. Listening is paramount to knowing how to respond properly and to contribute words of value.

Conclusion

What if all spouses communicated using these five rules of grace. What a difference we could make in our marriage and families. Our homes would be safe havens. We would indeed walk in unity in all our relationships! God bless you.

LESSON FOUR

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

EPHESIANS 4:32

“How many dishonour Christ and misrepresent His character in the home circle! How many do not manifest patience, forbearance, forgiveness and true love!” A.H. p.178

Our families are full of mistakes, anger, quarrels and all types of destructive character, because sin is present with us. “Where there is live there is friction.” “One of the hardest Christian principles to practice is forgiveness.” It is natural to want to hurt back those who hurt us.

While we are called to forgive, in reality forgiveness is not that easy to do. But by God’s power all things are possible. If we “let the mind that was in Christ” to be in us will forgive.

Forgiveness is not always easy, but it is always right. Some hurts go deep down. A spouse whom you have loved dearly hurts you.

Forgiveness may not be able to eliminate the consequences of wrong done, but true forgiveness means that we are willing to release another person from the full weight of our judgement and condemnation, especially when they have done nothing at all to deserve that release. Letting go of bitterness, resentment and pain is truly an act of grace, a gift from God. It maintains the vitality of relationships and ends any risk of alienation or rejection.

Forgiveness involves at least two distinct facts:

One part of forgiveness that unconditional forgiveness which we give to those who have hurt us because Christ has forgiven us. (Eph.4:32). Such forgiveness is not natural for us and we must rely on God’s spirit to help us.

This forgiveness is to be given first within one’s own heart... that is the hardest part- and then offered humbly, sincerely and with awareness that we as forgivers are not more righteous than the one we’re forgiving. Such unconditional, grace-based forgiveness has a freeing effect upon the forgiver, and may create an environment where the offender is drawn to repent, though it is not given for that reason.

The second aspect of forgiveness has to do with a process which the two person enter. (Luke 17:3, 4). It can only be effective when the first aspect of forgiveness is present with the one who has been hurt and when humility, confession and repentance are present with the offender. If the process is to lead to reconciliation, there must be reciprocity which involves dialogue, a working through of issues that caused the hurt, and a commitment to communicate, handle anger, and solve problems more effectively so that the wounding and estrangement does not continue.

People often push back on the idea of forgiveness because it is a misunderstood and misrepresented concept. Therefore, it is always important to posit some principles of forgiveness that make it tenable:

- Forgiving someone does not mean that they didn't hurt you.
- Forgiveness does not mean that their offenses was unimportant or should be overlooked.
- Forgiving does not mean that you forget the offense as if it had never happened.
- Forgiveness is to be extended whether or not the offender ever asks for it.

These points make clear that forgiveness is a divine spiritual value. People who are good forgivers have significantly advanced on the spiritual development ladder. "From a psychological perspective, forgivingness tends toward life and unforgiveness toward death." Anne Lamott is credited with quipping: "Not forgiving is like you drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat die."

Conclusion

Forgiveness is not always easy, but it is always beneficial. Forgiveness do not mean that we completely forget the wrong that was done to us, but we give up our right for retaliation or vengeance. We no longer dwell on the injustice with feelings of anger and pain. We turn the matter over to the righteous Judge who says, "Vengeance is mine" (Rom. 12:19).

Feeling of forgiveness may not be instantaneous, depending on the depth of the hurt. But time is a great physicians. As we keep going to God, He will provide the healing and the spirit of forgiveness.

Forgive your spouse and I "say again forgive one another."

SINGLE PARENTS LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Being single is the “new normal” today for many adults. The number of single is increasing in the world and church. Regardless of the trends encouraging singleness, the church as a body is being offered unprecedented opportunities to actively embrace singles and celebrate their gifts. Whether singleness is a short or long term experience for individuals, they can contribute toward building up the body of Christ in unique and powerful ways.

This year we are dealing with RESILIENCE in the family. When people endure difficult situations and bounce back despite the hardship they have experienced, that reality also is identified as resilience.

The dictionary define resilience as: “the ability of a person to adjust to or recover readily from illness, adversity, major life changes, etc. “Essentially, resilience is by definition buoyancy; which is as defined as a “lightness or resilience of spirit.”

SINGLE PARENTS- BUILDING RESILIENCE

DAY 1

TEXT: Phil. 3: 13, 14

INTRODUCTION

When you hear the term “single parent,” what image comes to mind? Describe exactly what you see in your mind’s eye. Perhaps our attempts towards judging present a picture that is far from accurate. Did you imagine a person of courage and resourcefulness? What about a person who exhibited resilience?

What is resilience, and how is it built?

Resilience is defined “as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress---such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves bouncing back from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.” (APA, 2021)

Philippians 3:13-14 reminds us of the importance of forgetting what is behind and pressing on. The ability to press on regardless of the past is resilience in action. There is little doubt that most single parents may be in a situation that has demanded forgetting the past and pressing on. As leaders, how may we be a part of assisting single parents in the process of building **resilience**? Perhaps you have heard rude or judgmental comments from others, even church members, towards or about single parents. This may seem unfair, and it is. But we cannot allow someone else’s uninformed opinion and misguided judgement to **define who you** are or how you feel. The leaders of the church, and Singles, should educate others and be part of revealing the true picture of the love of God along with the strength, resilience, and resourcefulness of single parents.

CAUSES OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD

There are a multitude of different routes that take one into single parenthood. For some, single parenting is a path they purposefully chose. Others may have had difficult journeys strewn with heartbreak, abuse, loss, or grief. Some are parenting alone because their spouses has died suddenly, some were cheated on, and others abandoned. Still, others are parenting alone because they have fled a domestic violent situation or a partner with addiction. The point is that every situation is unique, and the reasons that led to becoming a single parent vary from person to person.

Let's repeat what we said earlier... God does not give one's neighbours, friends, family, or even their church family the role of judge! Neither do you need to judge yourself also.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Single parents deal with so much, internal and external, and the last thing on their to-do list should be dealing with the misplaced judgment of others. Learning to set appropriate boundaries can help deal with negative emotions. Here are seven tips to share with single parents to put those boundaries in place:

1. Stop the negative self-talk

Do not let the criticism of others affect how you talk to yourself. Stick some positive affirmations on your bathroom mirror, read them at the start of each day, memories them, and repeat them to yourself if those negative thoughts begin to creep in.

2. Focus on good friends.

Think about those true friends you have and surround yourself with them. Do not surround yourself with so-called "friends" who continue to fill your ears with native talk.

3. Focus on what you got right for today.

It is easy to make a list of all the things you wish you could change about the day; however, why not focus on what you got right? Think about the successes in you your day, recount them each night before you go to bed, and thank God for each victory.

4. Honest express your thoughts.

Do yourself a favour and clear out all your frustrations in your heart and mind. Talk to one of those good friend's, write in your journal, blog about them, or go to a counsellor. Let go of all the negative thoughts and feelings, clean them out, and try to replace them with positive practices that refuse to let them back in.

5. Be self-aware.

If you are experiencing negativity, stop and think about what is causing that feeling. Is it bad friends? If so, you need to stop hanging around them. Are you watching too much media that continues to portray negative images? If so, turn off that television. Are you spending too much time sitting around and engaging in negative self-talk? If so, it may be time to get up and use that energy for more positive things. In other words, try to identify the things that are leading to your negative feelings and emotions and replace them with more positive activities.

6. Go outside.

Negative talk from others or yourself will eventually bring you down. Hit the reset button by going into nature. Go out into the fresh air, breathe deeply, walk, talk with the creator, and you will feel the anxiety begin to melt away. Exercising in the fresh air is one of the best things you can do to begin to look at things in new ways.

7. Develop boundaries, walk away, and speak up.

You can choose who to spend time with, who you are going to listen to, and what subjects you will allow conversations to cover. You can say, “NO” and you can walk away. If someone says something out of line about your family or your circumstances, tell the person to stop. Sometimes a person needs to be confronted in order to stop their rude comments.

Conclusion

GOD CHOSE YOU

All parents have felt inadequate at times, regardless of their situation. All parents have yelled, have said wrong things, wished for a do-over or lost patience. And every time the guilt comes crashing down, we are tempted to think that, because of our deficiencies, we will ruin our child forever. Having these feelings is not unique to single parents. No one is a perfect parent except God. God has chosen you for a divine task of parenting.

BE RESILIENT.

DAY 2.

ADMIT WHEN YOU NEED HELP AND GET IT

Welcome to our lesson today. Single like many people enter into problems but stay in denial that no problems or believe that it's normal. No problem is attached to anybody, let no problem define you.

Healing years of emotional pain does not happen overnight. We all want immediate results, but please understand that this process is a journey. There may also be barriers that prevent someone from getting professional help, such as time, lack of insurance coverage that means out-of-pocket expenses, or childcare.

There are times when talking to a trusted friend, or a minister may be exactly what is needed. However, there are other times when talking to a family member may not be in one's best interest and they may need more intensive, objective, and professional help.

Here are some signs single parents need to know that may indicate a need for outside professional help:

1. You cannot remember the last time you had a good night's sleep.

The constant cycle of lack of sleep is a clear sign that things are not working, and you need outside intervention. Your health will soon deteriorate, and this will only make matters worse.

2. Your networking is not working.

Every attempt at talking to a friend or family member leaves you feeling more discouraged. Perhaps they are too close to the situation and unable to be objective. It may be time to bring in a neutral party.

3. There was/is physical and /or emotional abuse.

There is no way you should allow this behavior to continue without getting help and finding safety immediately. Physical, emotional, and verbal abuse should never be tolerated. It is how God would want His daughter to be treated. Even if it is not occurring in the present, you may need professional help to overcome the effects of past abuse. Also, one's child may benefit from counselling if this has been the family's experience.

4. You are afraid to say certain things in your family.

When you do not feel comfortable sharing your feelings and thoughts without being demeaned, criticized, judged, or bullied, something is terribly wrong. You need a safe place to talk.

5. You deny, excuse, or choose to ignore the signs of problems such as drug or alcohol abuse.

Substance abuse is an indication of greater problems than simple emotional distress or fatigue. Perhaps you excuse your behaviour by saying things like, “I can stop anytime; I am not addicted; I will stop as soon as my parenting situation stabilizes.” This is the height of denial and a key indicator that outside help is needed. Once again, the child may benefit from counselling if this has been the family’s experience.

6. You have a recurring thought that your child would be better off without you.

These kinds of negative thoughts are a result of much deeper problems that need professional help. All of us have occasional thoughts that perhaps we are not the best parent; however, when it becomes a daily obsession, this is a key indicator that one needs professional intervention.

Would one perform a root canal on their own molar with a new power drill? Would you take out your own appendix? Of course not. So, why is it that we are reluctant to seek professional help when we need it? Ahh, there we have that word again... STIGMA! We need to break down these barriers and stigma.

Conclusion

The truth is that, sooner or later, all families may face trauma, adversity, or other stressors. The good news is that God offers a roadmap for adapting to life-changing situations, pressing on, and emerging even stronger than before. That is resilience defined! What amazing grace and what amazing love Jesus has for each of us, regardless of our backgrounds. In God’s sight, single parents are precious, honored, and loved beyond measure. He treasures and loves each with a love that has no limit.

DAY 3

RESILIENT WHEN ALONE

INTRODUCTION

Paul makes it clear that if you are single/widow, God can make your situation a blessing rather than bitter if you look to Him to do it. If you are single, take courage and pride in your position because God himself is your purpose. You have been made for Him.

As He says in Isaiah 54:5-6

SINGLE AND PLAN OF GOD

When God said “It is not good for man to be alone” I don’t think He meant everyone needed to get married. If He did then Jesus failed at being the perfect example. I think what God meant was that man needs community.

Culture dictates a great deal how we look at our lives. I think most of us belong to a culture

where unmarried is similar to having untied shoelaces. These are both dangerous and unsightly. In a sense, every Christian is married to the Bridegroom, therefore there are no singles'. Etc. The individual life however, can be lived in so many ways to glorify God... married to a human or not.

The most important thing in life is not being paired up with a person, but with Jesus. Singleness, either chosen, or through circumstances in the church environment has its own issues, and real effort needs to be made to be inclusive without being patronizing. There is no "one solution" to the problem, each person has to be treated as an individual. As we have seen from comments, singles/widow often feels disenfranchised from the church and we need to make some effort to ensure that does not happen.

EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE NOT MARRIED BUT HAPPY:

1. Paul – 1Cor. 7:25,34
2. Jeremiah 16:1-3, It is clear that Jeremiah was a great prophet while he was single.
3. Ezekiel – Ez. 24:15-18 – He was not even allowed to mourn but to continue on with the ministry the Lord had assigned Him.
4. Hosea – Hosea 1:1- 3:3- The prophet Hosea also experienced a broken marriage, but was able to continue in ministry. God was trying to illustrate one-sided love that He has for Israel and for us, but it must have been extremely hard and painful for Hosea to be the object lesson.

DAY 4:

NEED RESILIENCE.

In each of these examples, marital status was not an issue. God was interested in the person's integrity, obedience and ability to say what God wanted him to say. We need to be sure that our life is not defined by our marital condition. Many voices today will tell us that unless we are married we are not complete. Paul would respond "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Romans 12:1-2). A story is told of a young woman who had been found dead in her apartment. Though the death was tragic itself, what made the story worse was that the woman had been dead for more than 10 years before being found. Ten years! Thus, the question that people had asked and rightly so, was: How in a big city like this, with so many people, and with so many means of communication, could a woman who was not a street person, have been dead for so long and no one know?

Though extreme, this story is example of a reality: many people are suffering from loneliness. The New York Times ran an article entitled "Researchers Confront an Epidemic of Loneliness" The problem is real.

From the start, we as human beings were not meant to be alone. From Eden onward, we were to live in fellowship with other human being to some degree or another. Of course, sin came in, and nothing has been right since then.

COMPANIONSHIP

Companionship and loneliness at various times of life that, perhaps, all of us have at some time faced. Singles/widows need some strong organization in the church to remove loneliness and create fellowship. Every church need good organized “Adventist Single Adult Ministries”. Let us organize the groups and you will save yourself from loneliness.

WHEN A MARRIAGE ENDS

Some marriages ends through divorce, and separation. Some experience fear, fear of the unknown, financial anxieties, and fear of being unable to cope. Some may go through a period of depression, anger, and, yes- loneliness. (Mal.2:16; Matt.5:31, 32, 19:8; 1Cor. 7:11-13) As single, single mothers, widows, and widowers, let’s have programs of support for broken families, divorced, and widowed.

DEATH AND LONELINESS

Death and how people struggle with it. (Isaiah 57:1; Rev.21:4, 1Thess. 4:17-18; Matt. 5:4, 2Sam 18:33, Gen.37:34)

SPIRITUALLY SINGLE

Isaiah 54:4; Hosea 2:19, 20, Psalm 72:12.

YOUTH DEPARTMENT

DAY: 1

Taking a Stand for God. Text: Daniel 1:8-16

The book of Daniel begins on a political tone as God pass partial judgment upon His sinful people- Judah for their rebellion, while at the same time making plain the heavenly mysteries intertwined in His plan of Salvation, and ultimately, the final redemption of His people across the world of the spiritual Israel to life eternal in Jesus Christ.

The book of Daniel, begins with the fulfillment of the prophecy (Deut. 18:22) about the punishment of the Kingdom of Judah due to her unfaithfulness.

However, when this punishment had taken place, there were some faithful Hebrews who still stood for the Living God. In Daniel 1: 6 We meet the four Hebrew boys: **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah** who had studied at their home school back in Judah and probably at Jerusalem. This home schooling made these Hebrew boys develop a true faith in their God and could not be corrupted to bow down to or serve other gods in spite of the benefits. No wonder Ellen G. White wrote that, **“The home that is beautified by love, sympathy, and tenderness is a place that angels love to visit, and where God is glorified. The influence of a carefully guarded Christian home in the years of childhood and youth is the surest safeguard against the corruptions of the world. In the atmosphere of such a home the children will learn to love both their earthly parents and their heavenly Father.”**¹ This became true of the four Hebrew boys in the book of Daniel.

However the book of Daniel 1:8-16 focus on a Youthful Daniel. He is an example of how a youth of today should take a stand for God.

What do we mean by taking a stand for God? This basically means seizing the opportunities God gives us to prove our love and devotion to Him....to prove our fidelity to Him. I believe that God gives us such opportunities all the time. To take a stand. To stand up for what's right. To do what's right. To prove our faith...God wants us to really prove something!

- ✓ To prove that we're his disciples - John 15:8
- ✓ To prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God - Rom. 12:2
- ✓ To prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach - Phil. 2:15
- ✓ To prove yourselves doers of the word and not hearers only - James 1:22
- ✓ To prove yourselves zealous for what is good 1 Peter 3:13.
- ✓ To taking a stand for God.
- ✓ - Question: Did you have such an opportunities this week to do just that?.....we all

¹ Ellen G. White, Adventist Home, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1952 p. 19.2

did.....how'd you do?

Today we would like to look at the life of a young man....probably a teenager....who was faced with a terrible situation.....

NOTE: Daniel had no parental accountability. There was a great pressure to compromise. Well the desire by those around him to literally make a Babylonian out of him was stirred.

But God enabled this young man to know how to take a stand.

- We've learned that the book begins in the year 605 BC when God allows King Nebuchanezzar from Babylon to come to Israel and besiege the city of Jerusalem.
- Nebuchanezzar took a group of the choice young people, along with some choice articles from the Jewish temple, and carted them back with him to Babylon.
- One of those taken was a teenage young man named Daniel.
- So he been forcibly removed from his home....
- He was being schooled in Babylonian ways and customs.....
- His name was changed to one that honored a Babylonian god....
- And he was offered food and wine from the kings table.

Taking a keen reading from Daniel chapter 1 verse 8, Daniel takes a stand.
- read 1:8-13.

We do find three principles to help us take a stand for God.

I. Make Up Your Mind Ahead of Time.

A key phrase in this passage occurs in the early part of verse 8 --- "But Daniel made up his mind"

- The King James Version translates the phrase, "Daniel purposed in his heart."
 - The NIV says, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself.
 - If you are going to be the kind of person who seizes the opportunities God gives you to prove your love and devotion to Him....then you are going to have to decide in your heart ahead of time to do so.
 - Daniel's victory in this story did not begin when he opened his mouth, it began when he opened his heart.
- - The issue here is what Daniel chose to put in his heart.
 - That principle has significant application to the growth process, or the sanctification process, or the biblical counseling process,,,
 - The ideas you place in your heart are going to have a significant impact on your behavior.

In other words, what did you put in your heart?....what kind of a heart did you bring to the equation?

- In Daniel 1:8 ---this key verse we've been studying ---- this word "purposed" in his heart, or "resolved in his heart"
- What Daniel was doing in Daniel 1:8 is exactly what NT believers in Jesus Christ need to do if we want to grow....and its exactly what God wants us to do if we have the privilege

of helping someone else grow.....

- A critical piece of the equation is ---- what are you placing in your heart?
- What decisions are you making in your mind.

-But I believe that God would be greatly pleased for a number of us in different ways for different reasons saying this morning with Daniel....I am purposing within my heart that I am going to take a stand for God in this particular area of life

II. Know How and When to Take a Stand.

It's very important to note that there were certain things that the Babylonians tried to do to Daniel that he allowed, and certain things he didn't.

- In other words, he didn't take a stand on everything.

No, Daniel didn't take a stand on everything.

- 1) They deported him to a foreign nation....no sign of resistance.
- 2) They changed his name to one that would have been very offensive to him.....no resistance.
- 3) They made him attend their schools....no resistance.

But then they offered him their food ---- and he asked permission to not have to eat it. Now why was that? What was unique about the food that was not true of the other facets of this trial? What's the answer?

- The food was a biblical issue.
- Eating this food would have been a violation of OT dietary laws, and it had probably been offered to their pagan gods.....

This principle helps us identify two clear extremes in this matter.

- 1) Some people who call themselves Christians will not stand up for anything.

- ✓ They are so ruled by the fear of man that they are hiding their light under a bushel basket and hoping desperately that no one finds out they're a Christian.....
- ✓ They are ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ....
- ✓ And had they lived during Daniel's day they would have justified eating the food because of the unique circumstances....

- 2) Some believers, on the other hand....take positions on everything....they've got an opinion on every subject [which isn't necessarily bad] until they baptize those opinions with the authority of Biblical truth.....

- Its only when there is a clear violation of the Word of God that Daniel stands up for what he believes.

- Daniel was able to be Daniel because of his love for and obedience to God's Word.
- Now, there's an obvious contrast going on in this text on this particular point.
- Who's the other Jewish man who was mentioned earlier in the chapter?

Jehoiakim ---- and what was his relationship to the Word of God?

- He was the one who took Jeremiah's scroll...and because he didn't like God's message, cut it up and threw it in the fire.

-So you've got the king of Judah on the one hand, despising and rejecting God's Word, and this young teenager Daniel, loving and obeying God's Word....and at the risk of his popularity, and his future, and his career, and his own life.....was willing to stand up for God's Word.

Some who call themselves Christians hear about LGBTQIA and champions for it. Do you think that is biblical. Couldn't be that Daniel would have accepted that?

- Listen Daniels become Daniels because of their allegiance to the Word of God.

There has been a gross lack of fidelity to the Word of God in the Christian counseling movement which has led to all sorts of error.

- Man in his pride believes that he can find truth that is superior to that of the Scriptures.
- So counseling becomes whatever is the latest fad of the day.....like the Athenians in Acts 17 who spent their time in other other than telling or hearing some new thing.

- And its exactly what the apostle Paul predicted the end times would be like when he said men and women would be ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- Jesus said --- Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth...and Daniel was able to be Daniel because he was willing to take a stand for the truth.

- Taking a stand doesn't mean being arrogant....it doesn't mean being proud....it doesn't mean being condescending.

- That's why Paul said in Col. 4:6 - Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

- In our dealings with those who don't know the Lord....when we have to take a stand.....let it be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so we may know how to answer everyone.

- Daniel knew when, and Daniel knew how, to take a stand.

- Most of us, could take a lesson from him there.

III. Believe That God Will Bless Your Efforts.

- Daniel went into this situation believing God- trusting in God.
- And I'm not saying that Daniel knew that if he proposed this experiment, that God would have to bless their only eating the vegetables.
- Daniel's faith was in the fact that if he obeyed the Scriptures, God would take care of him.
- How, he didn't know.
- When, and where? He didn't know.
- But Daniel left all of that up to God.

- Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

DAY: 2

A Rose Among Thorns. Text: Genesis 37:1-11

I want to take the first eleven verses of this chapter and show you the **ways** Joseph was different from his brothers. I want to show you **A Rose Among Thorns**.

I. The purity of Joseph's life Gen. 37:2

A. One of the most striking ways Joseph was different was in the purity of his life. Every time you see Joseph, he is doing the right thing. This made him very different from his brothers. Purity, integrity and a desire to do the right things at all times marked the life of Joseph.

Verse 2 brings us face to face with the holy heart that beat or mind within the head of Joseph. We are told that Joseph was tending to his father's sheep with his half-brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. You might remember that Bilhah was Rachel's handmaid and Zilpah was Leah's handmaid. These two women had been given to Jacob by his wives and he had fathered two children with each. The sons of Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah were Gad and Asher.

As you read the story, you get the impression that this is the first time that Joseph has been sent out to work with these men. What he saw them doing must have shocked him deeply. This may have been Joseph's first exposure to the vile nature of his brothers.

The brothers of Joseph were an evil bunch. Among other things, they were guilty of **murder**, Gen. 34:25; **incest**, Gen. 35:33; **hatred**, Gen. 37:4; **envy**, Gen. 37:11; **enslaving their brother**, Gen. 37:38; **lying**, Gen. 37:31-33; and **immorality**, Gen. 38:12-18.

Whatever it was that these men were doing, it shocked Joseph so much that he came and told Jacob. These events surely caused problems between Joseph and the rest of his brothers. It may have been the seed plot where the root of bitterness in the hearts of his brothers began to grow.

B. Some authors accuse Joseph of being a talebearer. They believe that Joseph brought about the hatred of his brothers because he acted like a "**goody two-shoes**". In reality, Joseph displayed absolute integrity in going to his father with the evil report concerning his brothers.

Joseph had a responsibility to his father. Whatever his brothers were doing, it involved the flocks of Jacob. Thus, it involved his good name in the area. He needed to know what was going on with his sons. Joseph did the right thing when he went to Jacob and told him about the evil deeds of his brothers.

C. There are some lessons in this verse that we need to take to heart today.

- **Everything of our lives should be marked by purity.** The God we serve is a holy God and He expects His people to be a holy people, **1 Pet. 1:16; 2 Cor. 6:17**. He wants us to stand

separate from this world and its evil ways. He wants us to be different. We should be different in the way we act, talk, think, live, etc. Purity should be the hallmark quality of our lives!

- **It isn't easy, but we should always strive to do the right thing in every situation.** Our lives should be marked by integrity. There are plenty of people who are willing to do the wrong thing, especially if it makes life easier for them, but we should always do right in spite of the personal cost. It would have been easier for Joseph to just cover up what his brothers were doing. It would have been easier still to have joined them in their sin. But, he was determined to do the right thing, even if it cost him everything.

It's easy to tell a "*little white lie*" to keep the heat off your life. Don't do it! Tell the truth! It's easy to cheat a little here and there to make things easier for yourself. Don't do it! Always be above board in all your dealings. It's easy to cut corners at school and at work so you will fit in with the crowd. Don't do it! Do the right thing at all costs! (Ill. **Eph. 6:5-9**)

- **One other lesson has to do with the proper use of the tongue.** We should never be guilty of being a talebearer, **Lev. 19:16; Pro. 26:20-22**.

II. The Promotion of Joseph's Life. Gen. 37:3-4

These verses tell us a little about the atmosphere within the home of Joseph. It seems clear that Jacob was guilty of favoritism in his relationship with his children. We are clearly told that "***Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children***".

Jacob's choice of Joseph did not result purely from a desire to elevate him above his brothers. It appears from the text that Jacob has chosen Joseph to be the head of the household on his death. This is indicated by two statements: "***because he was the son of his old age***" and "***he made him a coat of many colors***". Let's consider those two statements in greater detail.

- The phrase "***because he was the son of his old age***" can refer to the fact that Jacob was 91 years old when Joseph was born. He had waited many years on a child from his beloved wife Rachel and when Joseph was born his heart's desire was realized. But, there is another possibility.
- The phrase can also be translated "***because he was a white head on young shoulders***". This might mean that Jacob saw wisdom and strength of character in Joseph that was missing in the rest of his sons. Jacob is 108 when these events take place. He does not know how much longer he will live. He needs one of his sons to take over when he dies. The oldest son, Reuben, disqualified himself when he committed incest with Jacob's concubine Bilhah, **Gen. 35:22**. The oldest sons of Bilhah and Zilpah the handmaids would not have been his choice. The only choice that remained was Joseph, the eldest son of his favorite wife.
- We are also told that Jacob made Joseph "***a coat of many colors***". We always seem to picture this as being a little striped jacket that screamed "***I'm special! Father loves me more than he loves you!***" This garment said far more than that!
- The phrase translated "***coat of many colors***" literally refers to "***a shirt with long sleeves***". This was a special type of garment what was multi-colored, and heavily ornamented. It would have had sleeves that reached all the way to the hands and the hem of the garment

would have reached to the ankles.

It marked its wearer as a chieftain, or as the head of a clan. This type of garment was not worn by a common worker. It was only worn by overseers and royalty; those who were above work! This garment was worn by the heir!

When Jacob gave this coat to Joseph, it identified him as his father's choice to be his replacement as the head of the family. It identified him as the superior son in the family. That coat told the other brothers, "***You don't report to Jacob any longer. You work for Joseph now!***"

This was a big deal in families of that era. The head of the household literally held absolute, life and death authority over the members of the family. When the brothers of Joseph saw him wearing that garment, they knew exactly where they stood in the pecking order within the family!

C. Joseph carried himself well and he earned the respect of his father. As time went on, his father gave him more and more responsibility within the family. He carried himself so well, and proved himself to be so trustworthy, that his father appointed him to be the heir of his place as head of the family. By the way, this position would have also entitled Joseph to a double portion of his father's inheritance.

All of this attention from Jacob toward Joseph created jealousy among his older brothers. In fact, we are told that they "***hated him and could not speak peaceably to him***". The word "***hated***" is a very strong word. It has the idea of "***persons or things that are detested and despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship***". The brothers of Joseph wanted nothing to do with him at all. They could not even say "***Shalom***" when they met him. They didn't have a kind word for Joseph. In fact, their hatred grew with each passing day, **v. 4, 5, 8, 11**.

D. That's a lot of background from the text, now let me make a few points of application before we move on.

- **When we live a life of integrity and holiness, the Father notices.** When we are faithful in our service to Him, He will promote us to greater areas of service, **Matt. 25:21**. The true character of our heart is revealed in the faithfulness of our service to the Lord, **Luke 16:10**.
- **When we are promoted, we must not boast about our achievements.** Any advancement in the spiritual realm is purely the good grace of God working in our lives, **John 1:26-30**.
- **When others prosper and are promoted, we must guard against becoming jealous.** Instead of being angry that they are progressing, we should be thankful for what the Lord is doing in their lives. Your true self is revealed in how you respond to the promotions, blessings, achievements and advancements of others!

III. The Promise Joseph's Life

A. As trouble was brewing in this family, God was working in the life of Joseph. God spoke to Joseph in two dreams. In these dreams, God revealed some of His plans for Joseph's life. Let's take a look at the two dreams Joseph dreamed.

- **v. 5-8** – This first dream was of Joseph and his brothers gathering grain in a field. They were cutting wheat and binding it up in sheaves. In the dream, Joseph's sheaf stood up and the sheaves belonging to his brothers bowed down before it. His brothers immediately interpreted the dream to mean that Joseph would one day rule over them and they reacted in anger. They defied the dream and hated Joseph even more than they had before.
 - **v. 9-11** – These second dream consisted of the sun, the moon and eleven stars all bowing down to Joseph. This time he not only tells his brothers, he also tells his father. Jacob immediately understands the implications of this dream and issues a mild rebuke. But, we are told that he "*observed the saying*". This means "*to take heed to*". Jacob is having his choice of Joseph confirmed by a dream from the Lord. Of course, this dream, like the other, caused the rift between Joseph and his brothers to grow even wider. Not only has their father obviously chosen Joseph over them, now God is speaking through Joseph. They see all these things and become increasingly jealous of their brother.
 - It should be noted here that Joseph does not seem to have told his dreams because he wanted to brag or boast. He told them because they were so strange that he needed to share them with others. I do not detect any impurity in Joseph's motives here.
- B. These dreams are the first indication that God has big plans for Joseph. Eventually, they will be completely fulfilled. I would imagine that it was these dreams that sustained Joseph through the pain of the pit, Potiphar's house and the prison. It was these dreams that reassured that God had a plan for his life and that, eventually, everything would turn out all right.
- C. Let me share a few points of application from this portion of Scripture.
- **There is a word here about dreams.** God does not speak through dreams in our day. In Joseph's time they did not have the Bible. They did not have a complete revelation of God's Word. We do! In our day, God speaks through His Word, alone! The Bible is superior to dreams and visions in several ways. First, the Bible speaks to many subjects; dreams are more limited in their focus. Second, the Bible is far more trustworthy. Anyone can read it. A dream is only known to the dreamer. Third, the Bible has absolute authority, dreams mean nothing. Fourth, the Bible is certain and fixed. Dreams fade with time. Put no faith in the dreams and visions of the night. Instead, read, study and build your life upon the word of God.
 - **There is a word here about hope.** In his dreams Joseph received the shadow of a promise from the Lord. He held onto those dreams and they sustained him through some trying times. When God births a dream in your heart, let nothing take it away! Rest assured that God will accomplish in your life all those things that please Him in His time!
 - **There is a word here about hatred.** When you serve the Lord, live clean and follow the dream God gives you, some people are going to rise up against you. Don't be surprised when you are hated for following the Lord. They hated Him and they will hate you, **John 15:18-20**. Don't let the haters stop you from achieving your fullest potential in the Lord.

DAY: 3

The Valley of Decision: 1 Kings 18:24

Introduction:

Elijah called on the multitudes in the valley of decision to make up their minds.

There are three groups on Mt. Carmel.

A. Elijah, the lone prophet standing for Jehovah the true and living God.

B. The 450 prophets of Baal.

The first commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Yet here they are 450 strong standing in rebellion against God, and the prophet of God. They are leading others to turn others away from God and to worship the false god Baal.

C. The indecisive crowd. Those who are wanting to serve both Jehovah and Baal.

Truth be told, those same three crowds do exist today amongst the youthful people also. Aren't you aware that: The true servants of God, always seem to be in the minority. While the false prophets who are in open opposition against God, the false Sunday teachers, preachers, Reverends, the Hollywood movie industry and the media who seek to turn people from faith in God and lure them to worship the flesh. Then you have this halting multitude comprising of the youths who are trying to serve both.

Didn't you hear Jesus said, that no man can serve two masters for he will hate the one and love the other or he will hold to the one and despise the other, you cannot serve God and Mammon. In spite of what Jesus said, there are multitudes who are trying to do just that today. People on the fence trying to have enough of the Lord to escape the judgment of hell, while bowing to, and living for the gods of this world.

They are like those of whom the scripture said: "They feared the Lord and worshipped their own gods." They want to do their own thing, worship their own gods, but when real trouble rises they hope that God will be there to bail them out. You had better hope that when the real hour of need arises, maybe your child is deathly sick, maybe you are dying and when you cry to God for help, that He doesn't say to you like He did to the children of Israel: In Judges 10:13 "You have forsaken Me, and served other gods: Therefore, I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress."

We as young people at times play dangerous games with God and gamble with our eternal destiny.

(a). Somehow we think that even in our apostate condition God will always be there for us. (b). The youth seem to forget that God said that His Spirit would not always strive with man. I) The prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jer. 14:11 "Then the LORD said to me, Pray not for the good for these people. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. God said to Hosea, "Ephraim is joined to her idols let her alone. Let them alone, do not pray for their good, what heavy words coming from God." What we forget is that, God is under no obligation to save you, He owes you nothing, the book of Hebrews tells us: (Hebrew 10:26) "For if we go on sinning willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for the judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of God. Those that despised Moses' law were put to death without mercy when two or three would witnesses against them, how much worse do you suppose the punishment shall be for those who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, an unholy thing, and have done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that has said,

Vengeance belongs to Me, I will repay saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (a). That is exactly where many of us youths are today. We’re tramping on the Son of God, we’re doing despite to the Spirit of grace. (b). You are in a fearful place.

II) The Prophets Cry, “How Long Will You waver Between two opinions (1Kings 18: 21) A. This story took place long ago and far away, but it is as modern as today.

1. People with divided hearts standing in the valley of indecision.
2. Elijah is asking them how long they are going to stand there.
3. You must choose one or the other, you cannot have it both ways.

In 1John 2:15 “Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” James 4:4 “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” This then is the choice that I must make, to be a friend of God or to be a friend of the world. To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. Your God is the master passion of your life. You can have many passions, but only one master passion. If Jehovah is God (or the master passion of your life) then serve Him. If Baal is your god, (the master passion of your life) then serve him.

Paul wrote to the Romans: Romans 6:16 “Know ye not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you become; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” If you follow the commandments of God to obey God you are a servant of God. If you follow the suggestions of Satan to obey your passions, then you become a servant of Satan. You are either serving God or Satan. How long will you try to halt between the two opinions? How long will you attempt to sit on the fence. In reality, if God is not ruling over your life then Satan is. You are really not on the fence at all. Jesus said, “He that is not for me is against Me.”

III. Have you ever witnessed a contest between Jehovah and baal.

A. Elijah ordered two altars to be erected. (1). The 450 prophets of Baal build their altar to Baal. (2). Elijah said, “I will build an altar unto the Lord.”

B. We will put the sacrifices on the altar but no fire. You will then ask Baal to send a fire to consume the sacrifice, and I will ask Jehovah to send a fire to consume my sacrifice

The God that answers by fire, let Him be acknowledged as the true God.

The worship of Baal was the worship of the Sun, thus he was the fire god. Then, if he is the fire god, then surely he could send fire to consume the sacrifice.

C. The altars were built and Elijah gave to them the choice of the bullocks, and let them pray first. He wanted to give them every advantage.

1.They prayed all morning to no avail. Now Elijah is going to have some fun with them. 1King 18:27 “And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry louder for he is a god; maybe he is talking, or he is hunting or on a journey, possibly he is asleep and you need to wake him up. And they cried louder, and cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.”

2. The time had come for the evening prayers and Elijah in effect said to them, “OK fellows, you have had your turn now it is my turn, but first dig a trench around my altar, and pour water over my sacrifice. Then he said pour more water.”

3. The prayer of Elijah: 1Kings 18:36 “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I

have done all these things at your word.” 1Kings 18:37 “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are Jehovah God, and that You have turned their heart back again.”

4. The answer of God: 1Kings 18:38 “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.”

6. The result: 1Kings 18:39 “And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah He is the God; Jehovah He is the God.”

D. What do you suppose it will take to convince you that the right choice is to allow Jesus to master your life?

- What calamity or disaster will it take to cause you to call on Him?
- Joshua called on the people saying, “Choose you this day whom you will serve.”
- As you walk out of the doors of this sanctuary this day you will have made your choice.
- As you walk out today, you are walking out as a servant of Jesus Christ, or a servant of Satan. You are what you are by your own deliberate choice. Commitment call: Please dear young people choose God. Make friendship with Him and not the World. Those who choose to walk and talk with Him will receive great blessings in their lives.

DAY 4

CHOOSING A MARRIAGE PARTNER

Christian marriage, with families living in the enjoyment of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus and living in accordance with the pattern set out in the Scriptures, is a wonderful blessing, and a pillar in the gatherings of the Christian Church.

Older believers, parents and those who work with young people, I believe we owe it to the generation following, to be clear and uncompromising in our advice and principles in matters of this kind. What I am pleading for is a united stand against the levity with which relationships with the opposite sex are often treated with gossip and joking. Our young people's spiritual welfare is at stake and we look to see the joining of Christian young people in marriage, as guided by our Lord, with the resultant joy and blessing as they serve Him together.

If anyone reading these pages has not yet yielded to Christ and accepted Him as Lord and Saviour this must be the first step before anything else. These words are written for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord and desire to live their lives for His pleasure.

What we ought to know about Marriage!

GOD'S PATTERN FOR MARRIAGE

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh" Genesis 2 v 24.

All the way through the Scriptures starting at Genesis chapter 2 we see that in marriage a man and woman leave their parents and are joined together by God to set up a distinct family unit.

This is a picture of the marriage of Christ and His church (His bride) which He loved and for which He gave Himself for. In speaking of marriage in Ephesians 5 v 32 Paul says "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." The marvel of this great story of love; of the Love of Christ who gave all that he had that He might win that which He valued so highly. A marriage that will last for eternity, a picture of which we can experience now.

What we ought to know about Marriage:

- Our marriages should be full of this love of Christ; giving them a holiness and a powerful testimony in the world, which thing Satan hates. He hates all that is precious to Christ!
- Marriage is for the raising of children in a secure loving environment. We see the problem in society where children are raised without this security, and the instability it brings to children when this is broken.
- Marriage is the God-given relationship for the display of our natural affections and desires. Being "one flesh" would indicate oneness of activity and purpose and also the physical relationship.
- Marriage is until the Lord shall come or death breaks the bond. Matthew 19 v 6 says "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."
- In marriage too, an individual loses his own identity and both become a new person: "And they twain shall be one flesh: so that they are no more twain but one flesh." (Matthew 10 v 8) If we take Christ as our pattern we should give our love to our partner, wanting only their love in return. (He loved us and gave Himself for us. Ephesians 5 v 25) and as this is displayed love will grow.
- The husband has the rôle of responsibility as head and the wife the subject position. This is God's order to which we must be prepared to submit if we wish His blessing Ephesians 5 v 22 and 23 "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husband, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife."

If you are considering marriage are you prepared to share everything with your spouse as one person: yourself, your time, your money, your interests, your friends so that all you do will be only that which you are both happily agreed upon before the Lord? Ephesians 5 v 21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord."

CHOOSING A PARTNER THE SCRIPTURAL WAY

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh." Ephesians 5 v 31.

- There is only one ideal for marriage running right through the Scriptures, and that is one man joined to one woman. Nowhere do we get the idea that we should try various partners before choosing the right one. We see that the selection of a partner was often made by parents, or sometimes as a reward; but the suggestion in the New Testament is of the choice of two people to come together of their own free will; only in the will of the Lord.
- Marriage is for mature people; men and women (not boys and girls) who are able to form a separate family unit, independent both in finance and moral responsibility.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2 v 24.

- Our natural desires can easily lead us into a wrong even dangerous position. Especially when we are young it is easy to become so convinced that we have found the right one that our judgement becomes blurred if not blind. There have been many who through an impetuous decision have been led into a sad relationship or led away from a path of devotion to the Lord and obedience to His Word.

The term 'falling in love' is often used when a couple start to be friendly; this can be superficial, and we should be wary of this concept as it gives the idea of uncontrolled emotion. This could easily be led by our old nature in a mere infatuation simply because of physical attraction, because of being continually in their company or even because of undue pressure from others. Some like to act as match makers encouraging couples who they think are suitable for each other. This is a dangerous game and has had many sad results.

The love of the marriage relationship, is an act of will under the guidance of our Master. An intelligent and permanent decision, which is taken in mature consideration of the issues involved and which will endure through every pressure and circumstance which might otherwise cause a couple to 'fall out of love'. The Lord has decreed that marriage is for life and if we want the Lord's blessing we must follow his instructions. It is the lie of the devil that we can be happy with someone else. We must reject his subtle whispers.

GOD'S BEST

The question arises: "Will I get married and to whom?" The pressures around us from our peers, parents and the world in general are often very strong. They are seen to be failing. A relationship with a girl or boy may also be used as an expression of ego and superiority in young people who want to be seen with a partner. However it may just be the done thing, "everybody else does it, so I'll do it too." We have to realise, too, that young people have natural desires to be with members of the opposite sex of their own age. The fear of being "left on the shelf," apparently unwanted, with the real stigma that this may bring can also lead some to be desperate to marry someone.

How does the young person steer himself or herself through this minefield? - Let's answer a few questions.

Firstly the Christian is a person who has committed his life to the Lord Jesus Christ and come under His lordship and direction. If in our hearts we have truly yielded to Him then our own desires or indeed the plans of those around us are of no account. Only His will shall be my aim and only His will is BEST.

Does God want the best for me?

If I trust the matter of my marriage to God will I have to make do with somebody that no one else wants? Will I ever get married? Will I perhaps miss out on a lot of fun? Let us think about our God! "All things work together for good to them that love God" Romans 8 v 28.

"Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." Psalm 35 v 27.

"Delight thyself in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37 v 4 and 5.

As a young man I had many lessons to learn. I thought I knew all the answers but at the age of seventeen I came to realise that I needed to completely rethink my attitude to this subject. I came to the conclusion that God knew what was best for my life and if He wanted me to be married He would guide me to the right person when His time was right. I did not want to do anything that would prevent my receiving His best. I realised that God knew how to give me a wife, if that was His will, so I determined that I would not in any way commit myself to anyone until I was sure it was the Lord's will. (I was sure that in such an important matter I would not be in any doubt.) I made a simple rule for myself that I would not go out alone with or show attachment to any girl until I was sure of God's will. This way I avoided being carried along by a momentary whim.

God knew that I needed a wife and that we could serve the Lord better together than apart and His

will is best. Pray to God to show you His way, don't decide what you want and then pray about it. Pray that He may make His mind clear to you and then you will be able to thank Him when He gives the answer.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

We have spoken about God's leading to the right partner for us if it is His will, but there is also another aspect to consider and that is our responsibility to act according to the Scriptures and with wisdom.

Prayer for wisdom and direction is as essential in this area as it is in every aspect of our lives. There have been many that have made mistakes: remember Samson and Delilah; Esau and the daughters of Heth; Solomon and his many wives; Ahab and Jezebel.

The Scripture is clear that it is quite wrong for a Christian to marry an unbeliever:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." 2 Corinthians 6 v 14 - and of course this must apply to courtship as well. We may think we can bring good out of our wrong action, but let us not be deceived, this has been the downfall of many young and older Christians. If all we are looking for is the physical and natural aspects of marriage we may be misguided into thinking that a non-Christian can provide this. Remember there is no true happiness and joy without Christ being the centre and He cannot bless us if we are disobedient. (This does not, of course, disallow His grace and forgiveness with us), but remember marriage is for life and a wrong step taken here is taken for life.

We should ask ourselves the question - Are we ready to make a decision as to who to marry and to begin to take on the responsibility of a new family unit before facing the Lord's request to be baptised and remember Him in the Breaking of Bread and drinking the cup? The Lord has the first claim to our love, obedience and devotion. We cannot say we are spiritually mature unless we have responded to His request. Luke 22 v 19 "This do in remembrance of me"!

Physical attraction makes up part of the bond we have with our partner but this must not take priority over the spiritual and mental aspects of our relationship. The world around us makes almost everything of the physical and we must guard against this playing too great a part in our choice of partner. The world is led on by Satan who is against the idea of marriage as instituted by God. If we allow ourselves to be exposed to the media's perceptions of relationships they can unconsciously enter our minds and affect our actions. Let us guard ourselves from songs, films, books, plays etc. that entertain low morals or overplay the physical and emotion aspect of choosing a partner.

As I said at the beginning, pray. Earnest prayer is vital, we must be guided by the Lord in these things - but even in this there is a danger. How often has someone starting down a foolish road quickly justified himself or herself by saying 'but I have prayed a lot about it.' We must realise that the flesh is weak and it is so easy to persuade ourselves that the Lord is sanctioning our actions because we want it that way when we have already committed ourselves to our own will. Patience is a safeguard while we pray. Wait patiently upon Him. "For all seek their own not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Philippians 2 v 21.

ENGAGEMENT

The Scripture does not say much about engagement but it does refer in several places to betrothal or espousal. This is shown in the case of Mary and Joseph and mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Engagement is a time when a man and woman are preparing for a marriage to which they have committed themselves.

Engagement is a time to prepare yourselves for a new life and attend to the many practical matters

that need to be sorted out: a wedding to prepare; a new home to find; and studies to complete for example.

First and foremost, however the engagement period should be used to grow closer together spiritually, mentally and physically (with self-control).

The length of an engagement will vary according to different circumstances. If there is a clear knowledge of the Lord's will and there is no reason to delay, it could be frustrating to wait too long before the full enjoyment of living and working together can be enjoyed; especially if the couple are in the same town and see each other often. This, of course, is only my personal view.

Engagement should be used to get to know each other by talking over different matters; praying together and reading God's word. Habits formed at this stage will provide a foundation for married life. We must leave until marriage that freedom to enjoy all the privileges of physical closeness and union; we are forbidden to have intercourse outside of marriage and must not allow our physical emotions to control us. Such actions as staying unaccompanied in the same house should be avoided as they could lead to temptation and suspicion. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5 v 22.

PHYSICAL

"Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled." Hebrews 13 v 3.

As part of the blessing of marriage God has given us the pleasure of showing love through physical union and the freedom of the display of mutual affection; all within the bounds of a secure relationship.

In the marriage relationship there is complete freedom in this respect but outside marriage this is forbidden as we can clearly see from our scripture. The world does not see this distinction and the holiness and purity that God intended is destroyed. This relaxation of God's standard where physical relationships are entered into wherever and with whoever one chooses, can only bring guilt and misery.

In all our relationships with the opposite sex we must make a clear and positive stand against this attitude; this will save us from being ensnared ourselves and will show a clear testimony to the world and an example to other believers.

The whole of Scripture is full of the sin of fornication (Acts 15 v 29) and adultery (Exodus 20 v 14). The first is sexual relationship outside of marriage and the second sexual relationship with a married person. We must clearly state that physical affection is only intended by God for one man and one woman and that within the confines of marriage and to a very limited extent by a couple committed to marriage.

With the current attitude of the world to these things we must ensure that our standards are not lowered so that the old nature within us is allowed to work and make us prey to the temptations we will face. Remember Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Genesis 39 v 13, "Flee youthful lusts." 2 Timothy 2 v 22.

Choosing to live together rather than marry is prevalent in the world around us. "Flee youthful lusts." 2 Timothy 2 v 22.

This is clearly fornication; there is no commitment to marry and no public declaration of marriage. The laws of most countries states that marriage must be lawfully enacted and Romans chapter 13 verse 1 tells us "the powers that be are ordained of God", they must, therefore, be obeyed.

So as we grow from our youth let us keep our bodies (the temples of the Holy Spirit) pure and private until, in the will of God, He gives us a partner in marriage; in this holy relationship our physical desires can be satisfied.

GOD'S GLORY AND OUR BLESSING

God's will for marriage is that a couple may form a family unit to His glory, so that love may be displayed to those within, and reach out to those outside. A sphere where His honour may be maintained and obedience to Scripture practised and where children can be raised in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord”. Ephesians 6 v 4. It is also for the blessing of man and wife. God gave Eve to Adam for an "help meet" to be his companion through life.

As with everything in the Scriptures marriage is for the glory of the Lord Jesus. He is the one who was the originator of the creation and all the laws and order in it. It is part of that grand design. The beauty of the marriage relationship is testimony to his divine wisdom. Evolution theory, which rejects the early chapters of the Bible, therefore rejects the account of Adam and Eve and the marriage bond established by God in the garden of Eden. This is the great lie of our times.

My prayer is that as young people grow up, amidst all the temptation with which Satan will surround them in the world, they may, in patience and obedience, and as under God's clear direction, experience God's best in this area of their lives. Find a marriage partner (if this is their calling) to display love to each other as a type of Christ and His church, His Bride, and know God's best together until our Lord comes.

EVANGELISM

Chosen for Discipleship-John 15:16
Are You Experiencing all the Hopes of Christ?

Christ's 1st Hope: Be His True Disciple

John 15:5-8, I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will become My TRUE disciples.

Christ's 2nd Hope: Be Effective Disciple Makers

Matthew 28:19. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

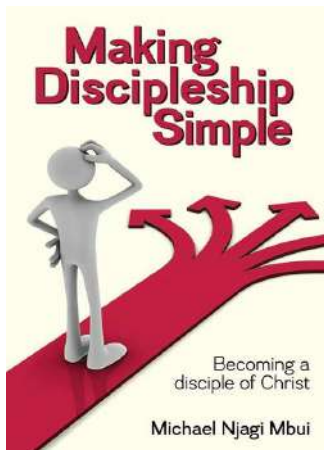
Christ's 3rd Hope: We Grow Disciple Making Churches

Matthew 16:18 Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. *"Upon all who believe, God has placed a burden of raising up churches."* (E. G. White, Medical Ministry, 315)

The Hope of Christ- John 15:5-8

John 15:5-8, 16. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this is My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. *(NLT When you produce much fruit, you are –becoming- my true disciples.*

This brings great glory to my Father). ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.



1. What was and is Christ Hope?
 2. Why does Christ have this hope?
 3. How do followers then and now experience this hope?
- A. They Bear much fruit – vs 5, 16
 - B. They would become true disciples and Glorify the Father – vs 8
 - C. They abide in Christ and make Christ to abide in them –vs 5, 7

Christ's 1st Hope is for all followers to be True Disciples

Who are the Disciples of Jesus?

General meaning: A learner or pupil attached to a teacher, attending or a school of thought.

NT Greek Matt 5:1 "mathetes from manthano—to learn" (SDA Dictionary, 288)

In the NT Christ's Disciples are MORE than Learners –Matt 11:29. Disciples are also called to be

1. Followers: Matt 4:19, Mk 10:21,
2. Obedient Lovers: Matt 22:39-40, Jn 14:15 and
3. Fruitful Witness: Acts 1:8, Matt 5:16

Most Comprehensive and Inclusive meaning of a Disciple

Gal 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;

John 15:5: I am the vine you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much (of my) fruit;

2Cor 5:20:

We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead,

A Person LIVING the life of Christ: 2Cor 5:15: Jesus died .. that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him

A Person REFLECTING the life of Christ: Matt 7:16 "You will know them by their fruits"

A Person REPRESENTING the life of Christ: 1Cor 4:1-2 "We are Servants of Christ and Stewards of the mysteries of God"



1. Discipleship not a Status we are accorded but an Experience we are afforded. A Life of Following & Fishing, Living & LEAD others to Jesus
2. REFLECTION 1: Whose life did you live this week? His life or your life? What thoughts-think, words-speak, songs-sing, stories-tell,

The Disciples Prayers Songs- 570; 412; 318,

Siye Mimi Ninaishi

Siye mimi ninaishi bali Christ ndani yangu x2. Yu hai x 2 Yu hai ndani
yangu Siye mimi ninaishi bali Christ ndani yangu x2

Siye ninayenena; Siye ninayeimba; Siye ninayewaza; Bali Christo Ndani Yangu. 570: Not I but Christ

Not I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted; Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard; Not I, but Christ, in every look and action, Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.

Not I, but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow. Not I, but Christ, to wipe the falling tear: Not I, but Christ, to lift the weary burden, Not I, but Christ, to hush away all fear.

412: Look upon Jesus

Look upon Jesus, sinless is He; Father, impute His life unto me.

My life of scarlet, my sin and woe, Cover with His life, whiter than snow.

Cover with His life, whiter than snow; Fullness of His life then shall I know; My life of scarlet, my sin and woe, Cover with His life, whither than snow.

Longing the joy of pardon to know; Jesus holds out a robe white as snow; "Lord, I accept it! Leaving my own, gladly I wear Thy pure life alone."

Prayer Pause: Please pray with your neighbor



1. To become the true disciples of Jesus
2. To always live, reflect and represent the life of Christ

What it Takes to live, reflect and represent Christ

Jn 3:3-8: unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

2Pet 3:18: Grow in the grace and knowledge of Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Matt 5:13-16: You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world

1. To live the life of Christ, the disciple must receive Christ or be born again through the Holy Spirit: John 1:12, 3:3-8, 16:12-14



2. To Reflect Christ, the disciple must Grow in the full life of Christ through the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 4:15; 2Peter 3:18:



3. To Represent Christ the disciples must show and share Christ with others - the GIFTS of the Spirit. Matt 5:13-16; Acts, 1.8.



4. Discipleship is not an event BUT a Process of Continuous Growth.



Birth/Baby Stage

1. Growing in Christ
1. Living Christ's Life
1. Following Jesus



1. Teen/Youth Stage

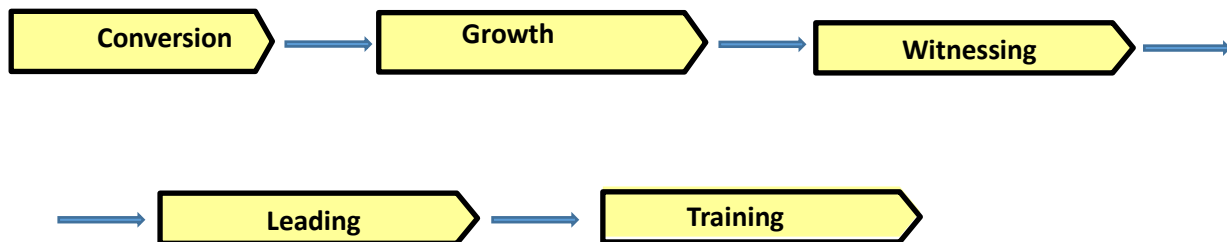
2. Glowing with Christ
2. Reflecting Christ
2. Fellowship with others



2. Adult/Parent Stage

3. Going for Christ
3. Representing Christ
3. Fishing 4 other followers
3. Mission

The Major Stages of Discipleship: 1John 2:12-14



REFLECTION 2: What is your current stage in discipleship? Are you at the Baby, Youth or Adult stage? How are you growing to your next stage? How is your church growing all willing members to be adult disciples?

How do disciples grow in the life of Christ?

Jn 1:35-39. They said to Him, “Rabbi.... “where are You staying?”
 39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). **Jn 3:4-5, 7.**

Jesus asked Disciple to do 2 things:

1. Abide in Him- Jn 15:4-5, 7:
2. Make Christ or His words to Abide in them. Jn 15:4- 5, 7:

3. What does ABIDING mean and involve

Jn 3:5.24. I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God whosent me have eternal life.,
2Cor 3:18: ‘By Beholding Christ, we are Transformed into His likeness even by the Spirit’
Heb 12:1-2 let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith,

To ABIDE IS

1. Position or Put oneself in the presence or company of another - Jn1:35-39:
2. Jesus chose the 12 to BE WITH HIM before going for HIM -Mk3:13-15:

Abiding allowed the disciples to do 3 things.

1. Learn about Jesus and from Jesus Jn 1:41, 45: Matt 11:28-29.
2. Live for Christ Jn 1:43-44, Gal 2:20, 2Cor 5:15.
3. Lead others to Jesus Jn 1:41-52, Andrew and Philip

Prayer Pause: Please pray with 2 neighbors

- The conviction and commitment to learn about and from Jesus
- The conviction and commitment to live for Jesus
- The conviction and commitment to lead others to Jesus

How did the disciples learn from Jesus?

How did Disciples learn about Jesus and from Jesus?

1. Listening to what Jesus said - John 5:24, Matt 7: 24
2. Looking at what Jesus did - Jn 3:14-15, Heb 12:2.
3. Looking and Listening allowed the Holy Spirit to Transform their lives - Phil 2:5-8

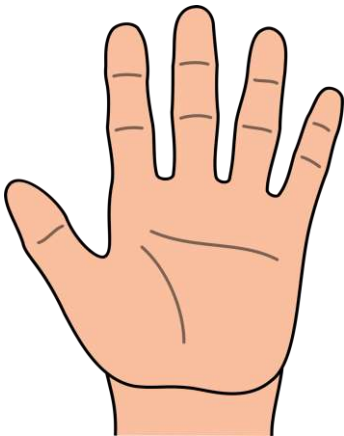
1. How do Disciples look and listen to Jesus TODAY?
2. Looking and listening to the Scriptures - Jn 5:39-40:

Make Christ's words to abide in us - Jn 15:7. "Let the words of Christ dwell in you" - Col 3:16. "Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I may not sin against you" - Ps 119:11.

How can disciples hide the words of Jesus in their minds?

1. Memorise & meditate on Christ's words and works - Jos 1:8, Ps 1:2:
2. Mining and ministering the GEMS or TRUTHS in the words and works of Jesus to yourself and others - Matt 13:44-46:

The 5-4 KPIs (Practices) of True Disciples



The 5 Daily Routines

1. Looking at Jesus - Heb 12:2, Ps 27:4
2. Listening to Jesus - Mt 7:25, Jn 5:24
3. Learning from Jesus - Mt 11:29
4. Living for Jesus - Gal 2:20
5. Leading others to Jesus - Acts 1:8

The 4 Daily Habits

1. Memorise the words and works of Jesus - Jos 1:8
2. Meditate on the words & works of Jesus - Ps 1:2
3. Mine the GEMS in the life of Jesus - Matt 13:44-46
4. Minister them to yourself and others - 1Pet 1:22

EG White on Disciples Growing in the life of Jesus

- EG White: Desire of Ages, pp.83. "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.
- EG White: Gospel Workers. pp. 479. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image. But by beholding Jesus, talking of His love and perfection of character, we become changed into His image.

- EG White: Great Controversy. 555. It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth.

Reflection on Being True Disciples

My Prayer - William Longstaff - SDA Hymn 500 "Take Time 2 B Holy"

Take time to be holy, speak out with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word. Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Reflection 3

1. How much time alone do you spend with Christ every day?
2. How are you currently learning of Christ and from Christ?
3. How is your Church training members to learn from Jesus?

Actions for Becoming True Disciples

My Prayer 4 YOU - Jn 5:39 & SDA Hymn 539 "I will early seek"

I will early seek the Savior. I will learn of Him each day. I will follow in His footstep. I will walk the narrow way.

For He loves me, yes, He love me. Jesus love me, this I know. Jesus loves me, died to save me. This is why I love Him so.

3 Important Action Plans

1. Start to memories and meditate on the Scriptures especially the words and works of Christ - Ps 119:11, Col 3:16.
2. Partner with another disciple to sharpen each other - Prov 27:17.
3. Journal or write somewhere the convictions of the Holy Spirit - Heb 8:10.

PAUSE TO PRAY IN TWO'S

Assignment - Read John 1:1-12

1. Memorise by heart at least 1 verse
2. Write at least one truth you learn about Jesus
3. Write at least one truth what you learn from Jesus



Prepared by:
Pr. Sammy Cheluget
Stewardship/Church Development Director,
West Rift Valley Field