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Adventist Review

September 26, 2013

Week of Prayer Issue

And They
Followed
Him



Greetings From the President



How is your Christian life? Does each day draw you closer to the Lord, or do you seem to be stuck in your relationship, or possibly even drifting away from Him?

This year's Week of Prayer readings, "And They Followed Him," focus on "Revival and the Christian Life," and how we can have a vibrant, happy, and rewarding relationship with God. You won't want to miss a day of these special readings that go beyond outward appearances and aim straight for the heart.

In our first Sabbath reading we sit at the feet of Jesus as He reveals the blueprint for Christian living in the Sermon on the Mount. During the weekly readings Pastor Larry Lichtenwaller encourages us to examine who we are, why we do what we do, and why it matters. Looking at practical lifestyle matters such as materialism, sexuality, entertainment, interpersonal relationships, truthfulness, and integrity, Pastor Lichtenwaller focuses on how the Holy Spirit can renew and revive all who are willing to follow His leading. Bringing the entire "Revival and the Christian Life" theme together, we will end the week with inspired counsel from the pen of Ellen White.

If you have younger ones in the home (of if you simply enjoy great stories!) you won't want to miss the accompanying children's readings, written by Saustin Mfuné, associate director of the Children's Ministries Department at the General Conference.

May the Lord bless you as we come together as a world church to study and pray during this special Week of Prayer.

Ted N. C. Wilson
President

Adventist Review

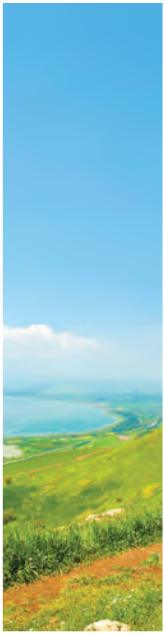
"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ by presenting stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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First Sabbath

Living With Heaven in Our Hearts

JESUS SHOWS US THE WAY

BY TED N. C. WILSON

Last year I had the wonderful experience of walking beside the Sea of Galilee for the first time. As I stood by its side, gazing upon that ancient sea and the green hills surrounding it, I could easily picture life there 2,000 years ago, when Jesus walked along those very shores.

In my mind's eye I could see Him standing in the early-morning sun, people of all ages crowding around, trying to get as close as possible to this unusual Teacher, Healer—and possible Deliverer?—on the narrow, rocky beach.

Realizing the crowd was too large and the beach too small, Jesus led the people back to the slope of the mountain where He had spent the previous night praying for His disciples. After that all-night prayer session, Jesus called the twelve to Him, and “with words of prayer and instruction, laid His hands upon their heads in benediction, setting them apart to the gospel work.”¹

Jesus knew that it was time for the disciples to become more directly involved in His work, so that after His ascension they could carry the work forward. He

was aware of their weaknesses as well as their strengths, “yet they had responded to the love of Christ, and, though slow of heart to believe, Jesus saw in them those whom He could train and discipline for His great work.”² He also knew that they, along with all of Israel, had been misled by the teaching of the rabbis about the Messiah and His mission, and He longed to open their eyes to the truth.

Back on the Mountainside

Now Jesus and the disciples were once again on the mountainside, this time surrounded by crowds of people who were searching, longing, for something better in their lives. They came not only from Galilee but from all over Judea, including Jerusalem. Others traveled from areas east of the Jordan, including Perea and Decapolis. People came from as far north as the Phoenician coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon, and as far south as Idumea, southwest of the Dead Sea. Everyone had heard about this wonderful Teacher and Healer, and all hoped that perhaps He was their longed-for Messiah who would free them from the Romans at last!

Visions of national glory and power, riches and splendor, filled their heads as they hoped that this would be the day Jesus proclaimed Himself king. Others focused on their desires for better houses, more food, nicer clothing, and days filled with plenty and ease.

Walking partway up the mountainside, Jesus sat down on the soft green grass. The disciples, sensing that something unusual was about to happen, gathered closely around Him. The rest of the crowd, eager to hear what the Master had to say, sat down, unaware that their world was about to be turned upside down.

An Upside-down Worldview

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” He told the astonished listeners. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:3, 5, 6).³

The poor, the meek, the hungry and thirsty—are *these* the ones whom God would *bless*? Not according to the scribes and Pharisees; they claimed that a curse

rested upon the suffering. These leaders had taught “as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9), causing much additional sorrow as people struggled to keep the countless rules, laws, and regulations that these false teachers had placed upon them.

Striking at the heart of the matter, Jesus upheld the immutable character of God’s law while proclaiming that keeping the letter of the law was not enough. “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,

his heart” (verses 27, 28). The Teacher continued the uncomfortable probing by addressing divorce, swearing, violence, true generosity, and loving one’s enemies.

Seeking to Re-form and Revive

Jesus was seeking to reform how His people lived their everyday lives. He longed to revive them by bringing heaven into their hearts. Our religious experience is of utmost importance and should be of the highest priority as we

Jesus wants this closeness to us. After all, He was the one who first formed human beings with His own hands, and breathed the breath of life that made them living souls. Now He sought to *re-form* hearts and minds so that the people’s *characters* would be in His image. He hoped to *revive* His children by breathing upon them the blessings of heaven.

Do we have any less of a need for revival and re-formation today? Christ knows that in many ways we struggle with the same temptations that the people were confronted with back then. His sermon on the mount is just as beautiful and powerful now as it was 2,000 years ago. From the pen of inspiration we read: “Every sentence [of the Sermon on the Mount] is a jewel from the treasure house of truth. The principles enunciated in this discourse are for all ages and for all classes. . . . With divine energy, Christ expressed His faith and hope as He pointed out class after class as blessed because of having formed righteous characters. Living the life of the Life-giver, through faith in Him, everyone can reach the standard held up in His words.”⁵

“OUR SAVIOR LONGS TO FILL OUR HEARTS, HOMES, AND CHURCHES WITH THE PEACE AND JOY THAT IS FOUND IN HEAVEN.”

you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

I can imagine a gasp going through the crowd—if not the scribes and Pharisees, who then would be able to enter the kingdom? Jesus unpacked it more by peeling back the layers of outward behavior and exposing the inner workings of the soul. “You have heard that it was said . . . , ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in

face the last days of earth’s history. We are counseled, “As a people we are sadly destitute of faith and love. Our efforts are altogether too feeble for the time of peril in which we live. The pride and self-indulgence, the impiety and iniquity by which we are surrounded, have an influence upon us. Few realize the importance of shunning, so far as possible, all associations unfriendly to religious life. In choosing their surroundings, few make their spiritual prosperity the first consideration.”⁴

The Blueprint for Revival

Our Savior longs to fill our hearts, homes, and churches with the peace and joy that is found in heaven. As we carefully study His sermon as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5, 6,



and 7, we find the blueprint for “Revival and the Christian Life.” It is here that He reveals most clearly and directly what it means to be like Him. It is in this discourse that Jesus instructs us in the values that form the foundation of His law, His character—values that will last forever: honesty, purity, kindness, unselfish love, generosity, and faithfulness.

He wants to set our sights higher, much higher than this temporary, fallen world. Instead of longing for earthly riches, where “moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19), the Savior invites us to store up “treasures in heaven” (verse 20) that will last forever. Rather than pursuing power in this world, Jesus urges us to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Addressing fears for temporal needs, Jesus urges us not to worry, “saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:31-33).

A Vibrant Christian Life

How simple and yet how profound. How straightforward and yet how challenging. How can we have a vibrant Christian life? By making God’s king-

dom and character our top priority. By nourishing our souls daily on His Word of life (see John 6:53-58), and taking the time to converse with Him in honest, private prayer every day.

As we get to know God through His Word and prayer, we will develop an abiding trust in Him, believing that He knows the best way for our lives, and we will want to follow wherever He leads. We will want to serve others as Jesus did, bringing hope and healing wherever we can. We will realize the true insignificance of the things the world values and will want to share the marvelous story of redemption with as many as possible. Coupled with that, because we genuinely care about others and their eternal welfare, we will feel the urgency of proclaiming the special three angels’ messages found in Revelation 14 to all the world. Starting with the “everlasting gospel,” these messages point to worshipping Him “that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:6, 7, KJV).

But “how then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard” if no one shares Him with them (Rom. 10:14, KJV)? One of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of living a renewed, vibrant Christian life is having the privilege of sharing Jesus with others—both through our words and our actions.

During this Week of Prayer I encourage each one of us to spend time in God’s Word, searching deeply for the messages He has for us today, and to take time to pray, asking Him for the blessings He longs to give—the blessings He spoke about long ago on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee, the blessings that come from living a life like Him today and point us to a life of eternal blessings at Christ’s soon coming. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 232.

⁵ E. G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. viii.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. What kind of Messiah were the Jews expecting and how do their expectations differ from ours as we look forward to the Second Coming?
2. How can we have “heaven in our hearts”?
3. In what ways was Jesus seeking to reform the Jews, and how is He seeking to reform us today?
4. What is the foundation of God’s law and how can we build upon it?
5. What does it mean to have a “revived” Christian life, and how might one attain it?



Sunday

Things Deeply Hidden—Yet Seen

BY LARRY LICHTENWALTER

Albert Einstein was 5 years old the first time he saw a compass. The needle captivated him. Whichever way he twisted and shook the old contraption, trying to fool it into pointing off in a new direction, the compass needle always found its way back to magnetic north. *A wonder*, he thought.

Einstein liked to tell the story about that moment when he first sensed that “something deeply hidden” had to be behind things. The curious boy went on to study those hidden forces and became a great physicist who proved what defied explanation and identified what we couldn’t see—the mysterious connection between energy and matter, the unseen that determines the seen.

A Wonder for Paul

Life with Jesus was Paul’s wonder. Things unseen were at work at the deepest part of his life, where thoughts germinate, values build, and decisions begin. Things unseen worked in his inner life to shape a character that all could see as the product of God’s marvelous grace. How

did it work? Paul’s explanation is basic and simple: “The love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14, NKJV). The word translated *compels* means to hem in, encircle, control, constrain. Paul suggests we are held, as in a vice, by the love of Christ. But this constraint is far from static. It is dynamic, forceful.

Like White-knuckle Rafting

Imagine white-knuckle rafting in the raging gorges of the Colorado River rapids. Raging white-water force propels you along between sheer rock cliffs. You can’t swim against the current, and you can’t grab the cliffs and climb out. You’re thrust in one clearly defined direction from which there’s no stopping, turning around, or getting out. You’re in a roller-coaster ride to the very end, scared out of your wits but thrilled beyond imagination.

Imagine Christ’s love hemming you in like rock walls looming on either side; you can’t be distracted to the left or to the right. Imagine His love propelling you forward like powerful surging water in a restricted channel; you can’t stay

where you are. This is love that encapsulates your life—all that you are and all that you have. This is love that radically prioritizes your life—you are propelled by just one moral direction. You have one focus. One passion. One point of reference. One spring of thought and action. Jesus Christ! Here is a passion that others can see clearly because of what you have become—Jesus on the inside showing up on the outside (2 Cor. 5:15, 17; cf. Phil. 2:21; 3:7-14).

The one thing that focused Paul—until there was nothing else on his horizon—was the love of Christ. “For to me, to live is Christ,” he tells the believers in Philippi (Phil. 1:21). For him Jesus was magnetic north, invariably reorienting his moral and spiritual compass at every turn.

Beside Yourself for Jesus

Have you ever followed a Labrador retriever to the water’s edge with a stick in your hand? As you near the edge of the lake together, she’ll begin dancing, panting. Swing the stick in circles over your head, and she’ll circle at your feet,

leaping, yipping. She is beside herself—focused, eager, ready to lunge. One doesn't have to teach a Lab to retrieve. It's in her blood. She lives for the recovery. She's almost crazy to run, to retrieve. The moment you release the stick, before she's even seen it in the air, she's gone after it.

"If we are beside ourselves," says Paul, "it is for God" (2 Cor. 5:13, NKJV). In other words, we are consumed, enthusiastic, radical, obsessed, out of our minds—for Christ. Like the overpowering instinct of a retriever, we are driven by an overpowering vision and passion.

Looking at Paul, we know that something unseen and powerful is constraining what we see: hard work; prison sentences; beatings, whippings and stonings; endless miles on rugged roads and tossing seas; weariness, pain, and sleepless nights; days of hunger, cold, and exposure; a day and night hanging on to a piece of shipwreck. What we see are his moral and spiritual choices, his life and lifestyle, his faith and faithfulness (2 Cor. 6:3-10; 11:22-33; cf. Phil. 3:7-10).

These visual clips from his life provide the backdrop against which he asserts that the love of Christ compels him to no longer live for himself. The gospel message, the priority of God's work for the lost, the people of God, the honor of God—all this looms larger in Paul's thoughts than anything else, especially himself: *I'll do anything for Jesus. For free. No strings attached. No limits. No conditions. No matter what it may cost.*

Worth Dying For

How does Christ's love reach down into anyone's inner private world of thought, feelings, values, and will like this? How does it become such a controlling power that it can shape who someone is deep inside and change how they live every day on the outside?

For Paul this inner orientation is directly linked to your heart grasping the unseen reality of Christ's death: "One died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was

raised again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Paul is referring to Christ's substitutionary death for us and applying what it means for our life: Because Christ died, we die! We die to the self-life. We die to self-centered living. We die to the passions and lusts that absorb us. We die to the world's values and its so-called valuables. We die to the comfort zones of our everyday life.

The love of Christ then literally

JESUS WANTS TO WORK AT THE VERY CORE OF OUR BEING TO BECOME THE SPRING OF WONDROUS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS FOR US.

becomes "love to die for." "I have been crucified with Christ," Paul exclaims, "and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

This unseen reality is telling in its power: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17, NASB).^{*} We become a new creation, a new person, inside and out. Everything is thoroughly prioritized. We lose interest in things once treasured; new things are surprisingly welcomed into our life. The turnaround is unbelievable, incomprehensible—yet radically real.

The unseen converges with the seen at the deepest part of our life where thoughts germinate, opinions form, values are chased, and decisions begin. We are changed by the renewing of our inner world by the converting grace and power of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3-7; John 3:5-8; 1 John 3:9). Jesus becomes our new point of reference. We live now to exalt Him. His honor is most important. His work is priority.

A tourist visiting the mission station where a nurse was attending a leper's ghastly sores pulled back with horror and mumbled, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars!" The nurse replied, smiling, "Neither would I! But I would do it for Jesus for nothing!"

What would you do for Jesus, for nothing? Anything? Everything? Is there a limit? Are there conditions? Why would you ever do anything for Jesus?

Our life can be a wonder too. Whether we are at work or in recreation, in ministry or in rest, Jesus wants to work at the very core of our being to become the spring of wondrous thoughts and actions for us. It may be more than we can explain. But compelled by His love, we can spend the rest of our life seeking to understand it more and more. ■

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ETHICS FROM ANDREWS UNIVERSITY AND HAS BEEN TEACHING REGULARLY AT THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY. HE AND HIS WIFE, KATHIE, HAVE FIVE SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW. RECENTLY THE LICHTENWALTERS HAVE ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO SERVE AT MIDDLE EAST UNIVERSITY, LEBANON, WHERE LARRY WILL HEAD THE THEOLOGY FACULTY AND LEAD THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC AND ARABIC STUDIES.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. How could compulsion—even by love—be a good thing?
2. What does Paul say is his reason for living, and why is it so?
3. What do I need today in order to have Paul's "wonder" experience?



Monday

The Cruciform Mind

WHAT'S BEHIND OUR INTERACTION WITH OTHERS?

BY LARRY LICHTENWALTER

Imagine the simple shape of a cross. Cathedral floor plans, swords with crossguard hilts, aircraft tails, laminin protein molecules, tombstones, earrings, and parachutes, even the Swiss Army watch logo. Objects appearing in the shape of a cross are “cruciform.” Cruciform: cruci = cross; form = shaped.

Now imagine a cross-shaped mind: a cruciform mind. This isn't a human brain in the physical shape of a cross, but a mind that is spiritually and morally shaped by the meaning of the cross: the self-sacrificing, self-giving attitude that led Jesus Christ to so empty Himself for others that He would take the form of a servant, humbling Himself “to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).¹

A Cross-shaped Life

Imagine living a cross-shaped life. Where we choose the way of love, reconciliation, and peace and pour ourselves out unselfishly for the good of others. Imagine “cruciformity” with others: being of the same mind, loving one

another, working together with one mind and purpose, in humility and mutual submission one to another, thinking of others first and better than one's own self. Like Jesus, inside!

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (verse 5, NKJV).²

We stand in awe at the cruciform mind of Christ and the invitation to follow His example. The cruciform mind of Christ is one of the first tectonic shifts that true revival brings to the heart. A drastic change of self in relation to Christ is followed by a change of self in relation to others. The mind of Christ now directs our thought, response, and action toward others. Cruciformity is a profound unseen working behind everything seen in our interaction with others.

A spirit of self and rivalry threads its way through our everyday life. Competition, envy, disagreement, alienation, hostility, and violence of every kind make up human reality. Conflict in some form or another is the stuff of our lives—in our marriages, at the workplace, in the church,

with our siblings, in the world. We are against one another and against God living out the great controversy on the landscape of our own heart. It is how we think—a self-gratifying competitive mind-set that's determined to follow our own will and go our own way. We would win even at the expense of peace, cooperation, and love. Life teaches us that it happens with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Wars of will, power, control, and thought are inevitable. No place is off-limits, no one is exempt.

But the cruciform mind of Christ can break the vicious cycle in our lives.

The Mind of Christ

In Philippians 2 Paul unfolds a “master story” of the mind of Jesus in relation to God and to lost human beings. It's a powerful narrative: Although He was God, Jesus did not hold onto His divine prerogatives or rights to be exploited for his own advantage, but emptied Himself, humbled himself, and was crucified on a cross (verses 6-8).

Christ's “way-of-the-cross” frame of

mind reaches back into eternity past—before the creation of our world, before the spirit of self and rivalry and conflict exploded in heaven and enveloped our world. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Jesus acted in life and death according to the will and character of His Father: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9); “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (verse 7). The Son’s act on the cross was an act of “family resemblance,” of conformity to God. God is Christlike. Cruciformity is a quality of the character of God. The Father, the Son, and the cross are linked. One way in which God is known is through the cross of Christ.

This “master story” occurs within the context of rivalry among Philip-
pian Christians. Their self-serving, self-seeking attitudes were set against the self-sacrificing, self-giving attitude of Christ. Unity in the body was threatened. Only attitudes and actions reflecting the mind of Christ could restore peace to these strained relationships. And so the appeal: be “of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:2-5).

Paul knew what he was asking. His Damascus road encounter with Jesus Christ took him by surprise. It was an experience of utter grace, which brought conversion—a dramatic and radical change of direction deep within his heart. He had been a willful, proud, and selfish person: cocky, aggressive, opinionated, intimidating, heartless, hateful, unforgiving, punitive, and violent (1 Tim. 1:13; cf. Acts 8:3; 22:4, 5). He stormed through innocent people’s lives leaving a trail of destruction, sorrow, and death.

The Power of the Cross

Then he met Jesus, who did not hold on to His rights, but emptied Himself, humbled Himself, was crucified on a cross, for him—the proud, willful, selfish, violent persecutor. Paul was shaken to the very core, haunted now with the vision of the mind of Christ. He wanted his own personal life and ministry to tell a story that corresponded to the “story of the cross”: “[We are] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:10-12). He would re-present in living form the story of the cross.

Our Christian existence is to be transformed into Christ’s image—where nothing is done for self or out of rivalry. Cruciformity is the ongoing pattern of dying in Christ that produces in us a Christlike (cruciform) person. Being spiritual is for us to have apprehended the story of the cross in such a way that it has transformed our entire existence into Christ’s image—a life characterized by self-sacrificing love, in which power is manifest through our weakness; in which we choose the way of peace, reconciliation, unity—love.

Be Like Jesus

Charles (a pseudonym) and his wife were in constant conflict. He was becoming increasingly hurtful and hateful in his response to her words and behavior. Anger and bitterness filled his heart. Love had all but disappeared. Then God spoke, not audibly but deep within: “Charles, if My Son were married to your wife, there would be nothing she could ever do that would cause Him to love her less. There would be nothing that would keep Him from forgiving her, serving her, or putting her before Himself. Charles, if My Son were married to your wife, there would be nothing she could do that would cause Him to be hurtful or hateful in

His response to her words and behavior. Nothing. If My Son were married to your wife, He would lay His self down for her in death, as He already has at Calvary.”

Imagine the implications of a cross-shaped mind for our own lives. What difference would it make in our relationships? Our hearts are an important battlefield in the great controversy. Which way will we choose? Will we allow the way of Christ to direct our thoughts, responses, and how we relate to others? Will we choose the way of nonrivalry? Will we be reconciled? Are we willing to lay aside our way or our will for the sake of others—for Jesus?

This cruciform mind cannot be accomplished through our own effort. Only the Spirit of Christ can direct and empower our hearts toward love, peace, patience, self-discipline, and selflessness (Gal. 5:16-18, 22-24). Like the apostle Paul, that work begins as we are seized by the story of the cross and the cruciform mind of Christ. The death of Jesus provides an authentic picture of the real nature of rivalry and the only way any one of us can truly meet it. In the power of the Holy Spirit, live a cross-shaped life. ■

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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. What is the real nature of rivalry?

2. What does it mean to have a “cruciform mind”?

3. In what specific ways can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that I may have the “mind of Christ”?



Tuesday

What Am I Thinking?

MORAL SENSITIVITY AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

He's not your ordinary chess player gazing at a chessboard and plotting his next move. Like all of Body Worlds' anatomical exhibit of real human bodies, his skin has been completely peeled away to expose muscles, tendons, and ligaments. His back has been stripped of muscle down to the nerves of his spinal cord, and his skull removed to show the brain. From head-on, his brain protrudes above his forehead. From behind you can trace the spinal column from the base of the brain down to the first lumbar vertebra, where it branches off in the sciatic rootlets and nerves that travel under each leg to the feet. You can see the dorsal rootlets, dura mater, vertebral artery, and dorsal root ganglion branching to other parts of the body. The obvious? The brain is intimately connected to every part of the body. After all, it takes brains to play chess. Or to do anything with your body.

This lifeless chess player accentuates the unavoidable truth that human beings are far more than mere body—

and brain. Physiologically speaking, the brain is central to human existence and identity. It's hard to imagine that the three-pound human brain—100 billion neurons that handle 70,000 thoughts, regulate 103,000 heartbeats, 23,000 breaths, and more than 600 muscles every day—also plays a central role in determining the nature and value of our lives. Within each brain is a hidden world of thought, which Body Worlds can neither dissect nor display—a world of self-awareness, intellect, reason, imagination, emotions, values, longings, moral discernment, spirituality, convictions, will, personality, and character.

Scriptural Insight

Scripture includes this hidden world of the mind in its picture of the transformed life: "Do not be conformed to this world [*aiōn*, age] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2, RSV; cf. Eph. 4:23).¹ A renewed mind brings transformation

of life, despite the incessant squeeze of our contemporary world.

Earlier in the book of Romans Paul traces the downward spiral of humanistic thinking that leads to moral dysfunction and the rejection of God (Rom. 1:18-32). But there is promise that this moral decline can be reversed as we nurture our lives of thought with what is important to God: what is good, acceptable, and morally/spiritually perfect (*telos*, mature). Which way the scale of moral and spiritual exposure tips determines our battle against Satan: "I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (Rom. 16:19). It's the principle of moral innocence. No clearer insight into the stewardship of our minds can be found. When we consider how revival and a transformed life intersect within our hearts, our inner life of thought takes center stage.

Better Than Apple

Retina Display is a brand name used by Apple, Inc., for liquid crystal displays that Apple claims have a high enough

pixel density that the human eye is unable to notice pixelation at a typical viewing distance. The term is used for several Apple products, and each is designed for optimum visual experience. But no high-end display matches the phenomenon of the human mind—to see, hear, imagine, feel, or display reality across our consciousness. The real Retina Display is smack between our ears. The tissues of our minds have recorded and stored billions upon billions of memories: the sound of a whisper 30 years ago; the hatred cherished since childhood; the delight never experienced but often imagined; the exact pressure of a single finger on a single string; the precise curve of a lip, a hill, an equation; the scent of a garden; the vision of a blade of grass; all the books read and movies watched, billboard messages seen, radio ditties heard, hymns sung, and prayers voiced. It's all there. Our minds are living libraries.

The sobering thing is that the sum total of all that we have put into our minds makes up the kind of people we are today and will be tomorrow. We don't fully understand how this vast living library translates into day-to-day behavior, but we do know that as the years pass, more and more we become "prisoners of our library." Once images, experiences, and ideas are stored in the archives of our minds, there is no delete button.

Divine Mind Molding

With good reason Paul's warning is graphic: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Rom. 12:2, Phillips).² He reminds us that an infiltrating force molds and threatens our thinking, character, and conduct. He alludes to the power of social groups, cultural norms, institutions, worldviews, media, entertainment, music, fiction, fashion, sports, and traditions to mold the individual. When Paul contrasts being renewed in our minds with the press of this age, he invites us to be mentally alive to God rather than to the world.

When we meet Jesus Christ and surrender our lives to Him, our minds acquire a new way of thinking and a new capacity to clean up old ways of thinking. We become new people with new desires and values (2 Cor. 5:17). The very "spirit" of our minds is renewed (Eph. 4:23, NKJV; Rom. 12:2; cf. 1 Cor. 2:12-14; Eph. 1:18, 19).³ Through exposure to Scripture our ability to grapple with moral issues increases (Heb. 5:14). Christ becomes our focus (Phil. 1:21). His cruciform way becomes our way (Phil. 2:1-8; 1 Cor. 2:16). As Jesus nurtured moral innocence, filling His mind with Scripture, ever seeking what was pure and pleasing to His Father and uplifting to others (Luke 2:40), so will we.

Exercising the Mind

We must exercise our new capacity to think, setting our minds on the things of the Spirit rather than on the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-8). We must let heaven fill our thoughts and not think only about things down here on earth (Col. 3:2). By beholding Jesus, we will become increasingly like Him in our thinking (2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 12:1-3).

Simply put, some things need to be left unheard, unseen, unread, unexperienced, unspoken, unvisited, unimagined, unknown. Our "thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul" (Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 107). We do this by keeping our minds focused on Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:5-8) and being renewed regularly by exposure to the thinking and will of God found in Holy Scripture (Rom. 12:2; Ps. 1:2; 119:9-16, 99).

Stewardship of Mind

Because there is no refuge from the ubiquitous presence of popular culture, we are called to steward our minds. There's a difference between what we choose to see or experience and what comes to us in the flow of life. Do not be conformed. "Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (Rom. 12:2, NLT).⁴ In an age

in which everything thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil, Enoch habitually withdrew to refresh his own thought life in God's holy presence. Surrounded by sights and sounds of vice supported by the wealth and culture of the most highly civilized nation then in existence, Joseph, living in Egypt, "was as one who saw and heard not. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects."⁵ Moral sensitivity and spiritual influence increased for both as they stewarded their minds for God.

There's a pop song about a fellow who keeps getting into trouble. "I know what I was feeling," he says, "but what was I thinking?"

When we consider our thought life, Jesus invites us to ask, "What am I thinking?" ■

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⁵ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 214.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. What images and thoughts do we fill our minds with each day?
2. Do we dwell mostly on what is good and pure, or on what is evil and defiled?
3. What can we do to become better stewards of our minds?



Wednesday

Integer or Fraction?

LIVING THE WHOLE PACKAGE

A Long Beach, California, man stopped by a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) franchise to pick up a container of chicken for himself and the young woman with him. Inadvertently the manager of the store handed the man a KFC box he had used as camouflage to carry the day's cash proceeds to the bank.

The fellow took the box, and the two drove away. When they stopped at a park to enjoy their chicken, they discovered nearly \$3,000 instead. What should he do? Realizing there had been a mistake, he returned to the KFC restaurant and handed the box back to the manager. The manager was elated: "I want to call the news and have them write up a story and take your picture. You're the most honest guy in town."

"Oh, no, don't do that!" he pleaded.

"Why not?"

"Well, you see, I'm married, and the woman I'm with is not my wife!"

Honest yet dishonest! Truthful? Not at all: integrity cannot be compartmentalized. It is an internal consistency, the

opposite of hypocrisy. Integrity is defined as the state of being complete, unified, without division, genuine. It comes from the world of mathematics—an integer is a whole number (1, 2, 3, etc.), not a fraction (which is only part of a whole). In ethics, integrity is regarded as the truthfulness or consistency of one's thoughts, actions, and words. This means being what we say we are. Doing what we say we will do—truth speech. Integrity defines who we are—truthful people, not just people of the truth.

Renewal Touches Everything

Scripture links revival in our hearts with truthfulness: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. . . . Laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:23-25, NASB; cf. Col. 3:9, 10).¹ With the new identity we experience in Christ at conversion, integrity moves onto center stage. Putting on the



new self in Christ involves laying aside falsehood and speaking only truth to those around us. Truthful speech becomes a pattern of the way we talk. We nurture truthfulness as the foundation for mutual trust in all our relationships. This truthfulness expresses both righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). The “holiness of truth” stretches our moral vision beyond doctrine and theology to God Himself, who alone is holy (Rev. 15:4). The profound reality is that truth and truthfulness are personal.

Truth in Action

“What is truth?” Pilate asked Jesus. A good question—perhaps the most profound question in the entire Bible (John 18:38). It echoes our secular worldview and culture. It is at the core of who we are as moral beings. The next thought is “Am I a truthful person?”

Before Pilate even asked, Jesus had already declared, “I am the way, and *the truth*, and the life” (John 14:6, NASB). This is a bold biblical definition: *Jesus is truth*. His nature, His very spirit, is

truth. At its core, truth is a Person. This means truth is personal. It is not abstract, not mere teaching. It is first a matter of character and is expressed in actions or words by a person. The teachings of Jesus are true because they express who He is. Truth, then, brings us into a personal relationship with the very Source of authentic life—Jesus Christ. As the Truth, Jesus will always engage us personally. His person encounters our person—to the truthfulness of our own *being* and *doing*. His person brings example, hope, courage, and power to be true in a world of deceit and illusion.

Truth then requires us to question our personal inner moral consistency. “Am I a truthful person? Would I be, like Jesus, truthful at the core of my being?”

Truth in the Remnant

The book of Revelation describes God’s end-time people as impeccable with unquestionable integrity—even at

risk of life and fortune. No lie or falsehood is found in the mouth of those who follow the Lamb: they are blameless (Rev. 14:5). The vision echoes Zephaniah, who says, “The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths” (Zeph. 3:13, NASB). As first-fruits who have experienced the renewing power of the Lamb’s blood, God’s people imitate and reflect Christ’s truthfulness in both word and action—for He is named both Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11; 3:14). That is how they think. The mind of Christ has become their own (cf. Rev. 7:1-14; 14:1-5).

The contrast between the forces of evil and the Lamb’s followers is between deceit and truth—what comes out of the mouth (cf. Rev. 12:15, 16; 13:5, 6; 16:13, 14; 14:5). Only truthful people will be able to enter the Holy City (Rev. 21:27; 22:14, 15). The reference to those “who love and practice

lying” presses the question of one’s *being* in relation to *doing* (Rev. 22:15, NASB; cf. Rev. 22:11; 21:8, 17; cf. 2 Thess. 2:7-13; John 3:19-21). Truth is a moral orientation. To “love . . . lying” goes deeper than to “practice lying.” A tendency toward falsehood leads to lying. The person who loves falsehood has a kinship to it and the father of lies: one speaks from one’s own nature (John 8:44). Who we are at our core perfectly corresponds to how we act. Our commitment to truth is verified by our

Betsie ten Boom telling the gestapo exactly where she and Corrie were hiding the fugitive Jews they kept in their home? The pounding at their door had come unexpectedly, sending a thrill of terror through everyone sitting around the dining room table eating supper.

It was all very rehearsed. As Corrie methodically made her way toward the pounding, everyone scooted the large table aside, lifted the rug underneath, opened the trapdoor below, grabbed their plate and silverware and every-

the truth always. Amazingly, when Betsie told the truth to the gestapo officer, God used that very truth to distract his thinking. Unable to imagine the truthfulness of such a claim, he didn’t believe her—and left.

Is it safe to trust Jesus with the truth; with being truthful; with truth speech? When Jesus is our point of reference and identity, we will. Integrity in the depths of our hearts will always reflect our connection with Christ. We will be truthful people, not just people who know truth.

“Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the Lord. Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies!” (Ps. 34:11, 12, NLT).³ ■

“TRUTHFULNESS ALLOWS US TO LOOK AT OURSELVES IN THE MIRROR. IT WILL ALLOW US TO LOOK INTO OUR SAVIOR’S EYES AS WELL.”

words and deeds. We must first be truthful people if we hope to speak or to live truthfully. Truthfulness runs deeper than doctrine or theoretically reflecting God and His truth to a deluded world. It is about every aspect of our lives. The religious and moral aspects are indivisible.

Truthfulness and Revival

Why does Scripture again and again link revival with truthfulness? It is because trust is the foundation of authentic relationships. Community requires openness and honesty. There can be no genuine community between false people. Being dishonest with others falsifies us. We are called to be whole so that we may keep and build up fellowship. Integrity sets us free to live with our sibling or spouse or colleague or friend. We can look into another person’s eyes without shame or guilt. We are whole for one another—and for God! Truthfulness allows us to look at ourselves in the mirror. It will allow us to look into our Savior’s eyes as well (Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 5:6; 6:16; 19:12; 20:11).

There are no exceptions to, or degrees of, truthfulness. “God requires that truthfulness shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril.”² Remember

thing that would give the appearance of a large gathering, and hurriedly stepped down into the darkness. By the time the gestapo rushed through the door, Betsie was standing at the table as if only she, her father, and Corrie had been eating. When they had thoroughly checked the premises and found no one, the officer in charge demanded the Ten Boom family to tell him where they were hiding the Jews.

“I know they are in here. Don’t lie to me!”

After some strained silence, Betsie finally gave them away. “They are under the table.”

With that Corrie almost died of a heart attack. The officer, however, didn’t take Betsie seriously. “Don’t make fun of me! Where are they?”

“They are under the table,” she repeated, pointing again to the floor under the table. He just scoffed and stomped off.

Corrie later rebuked her sister: “Why did you tell them they were under the table? We could have lost everything for sure.” But Betsie was adamant. She chose to be truthful because being so reflected the mind of Christ. She would trust Him with the truth and consequences, no matter what. She would tell

¹Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

²Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 656.

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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. How would you react if you would suddenly find a large amount of cash in your shopping bag? What principles would guide you in your decision?
2. Are truthfulness and integrity really that important? After all, we are all sinners and saved by God’s grace.
3. Why is truthfulness so important for God’s end-time people? Are they held to a higher standard than all the other sinners throughout history?
4. Why did Jesus claim to be *the* truth? How can we communicate that truth in a world that revels in relativism?

Renewable Energy

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Thursday

What Will It Take?

DOING THE BEST WE CAN WITH ALL WE HAVE

MARK 10:17-22

Seeing career: handsome, wealthy young man, full of fun, loves travel, has military commission.

Job offer: missionary to help open central Africa to the gospel. Must be prepared for deprivation, illness, and possibly a violent death.

Only God could bring those two classified ads together and create the story of James Hannington, the first Anglican bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa. Although other missionaries served longer and may be better known, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) stated, “Bishop Hannington did more for Africa in his death than in his life.”

Once the wealthy young Brit experienced personal conversion, he became more concerned about saving souls than saving money. The murder of two CMS missionaries on the shores of Lake Victoria challenged Hannington. In 1882 he led an evangelistic team into the wilds of Uganda, where a fearful Ugandan king Mwanga ordered him killed. On October 29, 1885, Hannington was speared to death. A survivor tells of

his final moments.

“Go tell your king that I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood!” Hannington told his assailants before crumpling to the ground in a pool of blood. Within weeks after the news reached England, 50 men, inspired by Hannington’s commitment and sacrifice, volunteered to serve in Africa.

Inspired by the sacrifice of others. Inspiring the sacrifice of even more. Who or what inspires us to sacrifice for Jesus? Is there a place or ministry that calls out our deepest dreams and desires to serve Him?

Radical Generosity

Centuries earlier another young man—energetic, wealthy, and concerned about spiritual things—saw the gentle love Jesus had shown for the little ones, and his own heart responded with love. He wanted to be like Jesus, kind and caring. He was so deeply moved that he literally ran after Him. Throwing himself at Jesus’ feet, he asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17).

His question is about how to be saved, but Jesus shifts the issue to where his heart is: “One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (verse 21). Jesus wanted him to recognize the allegiance he held to his possessions.

Jesus loved this wealthy young man. He saw in him just the help He needed if he would become a collaborator with Him in the work of salvation. He longed to make him like Himself, a mirror in which the gracious generosity of His Father would be reflected.*

Not only are we to put our treasure where our hearts are—we are to experience something truly revolutionary: radical generosity. God is a God of radical generosity. God loved our world (us) so much that He gave Himself (John 3:16). When God considered the investment of redeeming our lives for eternity, He never asked, “What can we spare?” He asked, “What will it take?” He gave Himself. He gave His Son. He gave heaven’s best. He still pours all the resources of heaven and the Holy

Spirit toward that compelling vision of saving us.

When Paul sought to encourage Corinthian Christians to be people of radical generosity, he pointed them to this truth about God: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9, 10).

Later Paul shares how this radical generosity was at work in his own life: “I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well” (2 Cor. 12:15). That meant in real life many labors, imprisonments, beatings, life-threatening experiences, stoning, shipwrecks, exhausting and dangerous travel, sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, cold and exposure, the daily pressure of concern for all the churches, the weak, the tempted, and the fallen (2 Cor. 11:23-31).

When the gospel of Jesus Christ takes root in our lives, God’s radical generosity becomes the story that shapes, informs, and defines our life decisions and direction. It is the mind of Christ. Like Jesus, we gladly become poor, giving sacrificially of our lives to enrich the lives of others—not just friends or family, but those who are removed, including our enemies and the unlovely.

Like God, we will no longer ask, “What can I spare?” Rather, we will ask, “What will it take?” The more we see the needs of this world, the more we will be compelled to give in the name of Jesus.

John Wesley (1703-1791) once made a purchase for his little apartment. He had just bought some pictures for this room when one of the chambermaids came to his door. It was a winter day, and he noticed that she had only a thin linen gown to wear for protection against the cold. He reached into his pocket to give her some money for a coat, but found he had little left.

It struck him that the Lord was not pleased with how he had spent his money. He asked himself, *Will Thy Master say, ‘Well done, good and faithful steward’? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money that might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not*

these pictures the blood of this poor maid?

Was it wrong for Wesley to purchase pictures for his wall? Of course not! Yet, as he realized, that expense was an unnecessary decoration in view of a woman without a coat.

A Change of Perspective

Our perspective on our possessions radically changes when our eyes are open to the needs of the world and the largeness of God’s redeeming work for

those who are lost, or suffering, or poor. When we have the courage to see the needs around us, Christ will change our desires, and we will long to sacrifice our resources for the glory of His name. We will begin to wonder if some things in our lives could be classified as more of a luxury than a necessity.

In his celebrated sermon on the handling of money, Wesley asserts that it is urgent that God’s people know how to make use of their money for His glory. He offers three simple rules that he chose to govern his own life: *Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can*. Operating on the idea that God has given us excess, not so we could have more, but so we could give more, Wesley set a cap on his lifestyle. He found a modest level of expenses that he could live on every year and gave the rest away.

At one point Wesley made the equivalent of \$160,000 a year in today’s terms, but he lived as if he made \$20,000 a year. As a result, he had the equivalent of more than \$140,000 to give away. Scripture teaches that God intends our plenty to supply other’s needs (2 Cor. 8:14).

What would happen if we gave like

God? Not just our money, but our very selves: our time, our talents, our energy, our influence, our bodies, our opportunities—whatever resources we have.

There will never be a day that we stand before God and He says, “I wish you would have kept more for yourself.” Rather, we’ll ask ourselves, “Why didn’t I give more, do more, be more?”

God will take care of us. Anything we expend for Him and others will be multiplied in return. But it’s not about

return; it’s about the very heart of God, and being like Him in the world. God so loved that He gave. Will we? ■

* See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 519.

NOT ONLY ARE WE TO PUT OUR TREASURE WHERE OUR HEARTS ARE—WE ARE TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING TRULY REVOLUTIONARY: RADICAL GENEROSITY.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. The author mentions four individuals in today’s reading—James Hannington, the rich young man, the apostle Paul, and John Wesley. With which of the four do you most closely identify? Why?
2. If someone were to ask for an example of radical generosity in your life, what would you offer as evidence?
3. Make a list of at least three spiritual and material needs of your congregation and community. Provide a one-sentence action plan that meets each of those three needs (beyond prayer).



Friday

Leave the Light On

WHAT IS REVEALED WHEN CHRIST LIVES IN US?

EPHESIANS 1:1-17

Benjamin Franklin wanted to convince the citizens of Philadelphia to light their streets at night. The American founder had a good case: streetlights would protect against crime and provide convenience for evening activities. As persuasive as he was, he failed to convince them.

Franklin decided to show his neighbors how compelling a single light could be. He bought an attractive lantern, polished the glass, and placed it on a bracket extending from the front of his house. Each evening he lit the wick. Passersby realized that the warm glow helped them avoid tripping over stones in the roadway. Soon others placed lanterns in front of their homes. Eventually the whole city was well lit.

Children of Light

The apostle Paul wrote, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and

truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. . . . But everything exposed by the light becomes visible. . . . This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Be very careful, then, how you live” (Eph. 5:8-15).

The contrast between light and darkness is a reminder that something radical takes place in our lives when we welcome Jesus into our hearts. We are no longer what we once were (2 Cor. 5:17); we are light (Eph. 5:8; cf. Matt. 5:14; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:5).

The text doesn’t say that we used to be *in* darkness, and now are *in* light; it says we *actually are* light (Eph. 5:8). Our lives—not just our environment—have been changed from darkness to light. Conversion (revival) is nothing less than waking up out of sleep, rising from death, and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ to live as light.

This transformation takes place *in the Lord*, the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).

A Clear Distinction

This transformation from darkness to light is threefold: we separate from darkness (Eph. 5:3-7, 11); we live as children of light (verses 8-10); our lives expose and transform others (verses 11-14; Matt. 5:15, 16).

An advertisement for Epson printers displays a full-page spread of a herd of zebras. They’re packed so close that all you see is a page full of white and reddish-brown stripes. A green box on the left reads, “With ordinary printers you see the stripes on the zebra.” A matching box to the right announces, “With our printer you see the woman on the zebra.”

Suddenly you search for the elusive woman you missed at first glance. She’s there, in a matching white and reddish-brown zebra-striped hoodie jumpsuit. Flesh tones of her face match those of the zebras’ noses. Once seen, she’s easy to spot. At first, though, you’d miss her for sure. She’s incredibly well camouflaged.

Not so with children of light. The distinction between light and darkness cannot be camouflaged or blurred. Our

separation from the moral darkness of contemporary culture should be so clear that no one would ever miss us: “Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. . . . Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret” (Eph. 5:3-12).

It’s not a comprehensive list, but it mirrors our world, which breeds brazen vulgarity and general disrespect for almost everything. It is a world increasingly shameless, open, and bold in its “anything goes” “politically correct” amoral mind-set; a world that hardly knows how to blush anymore.

We are to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:3; cf. 1 Peter 1:13-16), a holy life full of “goodness, righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:9). Our focus is discerning what is acceptable to the Lord (verse 10). It is something only the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit makes possible (Titus 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Yet holy light radiating from our lives brings us face to face with the world and with the practical decisions and concerns of our everyday lives. Our lives manifest purity, modesty, respect, and decency, which affirm the dignity of others and give us a heart for their welfare.

Our biggest challenge is having the courage not only to be different ourselves, but to be a transforming influence to those around us. Not only does light reveal what darkness conceals—whatever it touches can take on the quality of light: “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light” (Eph. 5:13).

Those around us can be both exposed and transformed by the moral spiritual quality of our lives. As light exposes and is then accepted, it transforms. As with Jesus, our light pierces darkness and overpowers it (John 1:4-9; cf. Isa. 60:1-5). The darker the darkness, the brighter we glow as light for Jesus and His king-

dom of light. This shining forth is not merely doctrinal or theological, but moral—our lives transformed by the mind of Jesus: how we treat others, our attitudes, purity, kindness, respect (Matt. 5:16; 1 John 2:6, 9, 10; cf. 1 John 3:18).

To Glorify God

The story is told about some candles that refuse to be taken from a storage closet to provide light during an electrical storm. They all have excuses why

indifference. The actor then set down the radio and turned to a station, letting its news, music, or commercials play in the background while the play went on. This night, however, a voice came on the radio with a live news bulletin: “Today the American president John F. Kennedy was assassinated . . .”

The audience gasped and the actor immediately switched off the radio, but too late. In one sentence the reality of the outside world had shattered the artificial world of the theater. After that,

CHRIST CALLS US TO LET THE MORAL QUALITY OF OUR LIVES SHINE LIKE A CANDLE ON A HILL SO CLEARLY AND RADICALLY THAT OTHERS WILL SEE GOD AND WANT TO GLORIFY HIM.

they should not give off light. When the husband tells his wife that the candles won’t work, she explains, “Oh, they’re church candles.”

Such is the tendency to hide our light. But Christ calls us to let the moral quality of our lives shine like a candle on a hill so clearly and radically that others will see God and want to glorify Him (Matt. 5:15, 16). We are invited to be in dynamic connection with Him who said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

We are called, not to isolate ourselves from the world, but to live differently from our non-Christian friends and acquaintances. We cannot share their attitudes and behaviors in sexual standards, attitudes toward money, or the way they joke, tell stories, and engage in verbal innuendo. We are different; we are light.

The British novelist and playwright David Lodge was watching one of his own creations, a satirical revue, the evening of November 22, 1963. The theater audience chuckled as an actor in the play showed up for a job interview with a transistor radio clutched to his ear, demonstrating his character’s blasé

anything happening onstage seemed superficial and irrelevant.

A single light in darkness is commanding. The greatest power on earth to change others is the influence of personal example—our own holy life glowing in the moral darkness around us.

Leave the light on! ■

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. Think back on your Christian experience. Which individuals at one time or another demonstrated what it meant to live as “children of light”? How did they do it?
2. If your friends or neighbors were to notice something in your life that sets you apart as living in the light, what might they notice?
3. If Christians are “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), why does it seem as though our influence is diminishing in society at large?



Second Sabbath

Our Present Duty

WHAT STEPS ARE WE TAKING HEAVENWARD?

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:3-7).*

The disciples were anxious to know the exact time for the revelation of the kingdom of God; but Jesus tells them that they may not know the times and the seasons; for the Father has not revealed them. To understand when the kingdom of God should be restored was not the thing of most importance for

them to know. They were to be found following the Master, praying, waiting, watching, and working. They were to be representatives to the world of the character of Christ. That which was essential for a successful Christian experience in the days of the disciples is essential in our day. “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” And after the Holy Ghost was come upon them, what were they to do? “And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (verses 7, 8).

Yield, and Witness

This is the work in which we also are to be engaged. Instead of living in expectation of some special season of excitement, we are wisely to improve present opportunities, doing that which must be done in order that souls may be saved. Instead of exhausting the powers of our mind in speculations in regard to the times and seasons which the Lord

has placed in His own power, and withheld from men, we are to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, to do present duties, to give the bread of life, unadulterated with human opinions, to souls who are perishing for the truth.

Satan is ever ready to fill the mind with theories and calculations that will divert men from the present truth, and disqualify them for the giving of the third angel’s message to the world. It has ever been thus; for our Savior often had to speak reprovingly to those who indulged in speculations and were ever inquiring into those things which the Lord had not revealed. Jesus had come to earth to impart important truth to men, and He wished to impress their minds with the necessity of receiving and obeying His precepts and instructions, of doing their present duty, and His communications were of an order that imparted knowledge for their immediate and daily use.

Jesus said: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). All that was done and said had this one object in view—to rivet

truth in their minds that they might attain unto everlasting life.

Jesus did not come to astonish men with some great announcement of some special time when some great event would occur, but He came to instruct and save the lost. He did not come to arouse and gratify curiosity; for He knew that this would but increase the appetite for the curious and the marvelous. It was His aim to impart knowledge whereby men might increase in spiritual strength, and advance in the way of obedience and true holiness. He gave only such instruction as could be appropriated to the needs of their daily life, only such truth as could be given to others for the same appropriation. He did not make new revelations to men, but opened to their understanding truths that had long been obscured or misplaced through the false teaching of the priests and teachers. Jesus replaced the gems of divine truth in their proper setting, in the order in which they had

been given to patriarchs and prophets. And after giving them this precious instruction, He promised to give them the Holy Spirit whereby all things that He had said unto them should be brought to their remembrance.

Pray for Change of Heart

We are in continual danger of getting above the simplicity of the gospel. There is an intense desire on the part of many to startle the world with something original, that shall lift the people into a state of spiritual ecstasy, and change the present order of experience. There is certainly great need of a change in the present order of experience; for the sacredness of present truth is not realized as it should be, but the change we need is a change of heart, and can only be obtained by seeking God individually for His blessing, by pleading with Him for His power, by fervently praying that His grace may come upon us, and that our characters may be transformed.

This is the change we need today, and for the attainment of this experience we should exercise persevering energy and manifest heart-felt earnestness. We should ask with true sincerity, "What shall I do to be saved?" We should know just what steps we are taking heavenward.

Christ gave to His disciples truths whose breadth and depth and value they little appreciated, or even comprehended, and the same condition exists among the people of God today. We too have failed to take in the greatness, to perceive the beauty of the truth which God has intrusted to us today. Should we advance in spiritual knowledge, we would see the truth developing and expanding in lines of which we have little dreamed, but it will never develop in any line that will lead us to imagine that we may know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. Again and again have I been warned in regard to time-setting. There



will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ. . . .

Watch, Wait, Pray, and Work

The times and the seasons God has put in His own power, and why has not God given us this knowledge? Because we would not make a right use of it if He did. A condition of things would result from this knowledge among our people that would greatly retard the work of God in preparing a people to stand in the great day that is to come.

WE ARE IN CONTINUAL DANGER OF GETTING ABOVE THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.

We are not to live upon time excitement. We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed. Jesus has told His disciples to “watch,” but not for definite time. His followers are to be in the position of those who are listening for the orders of their Captain; they are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for the coming of the Lord; but no one will be able to predict just when that time will come; for “of that day and hour knoweth no man” (Matt. 24:36). You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years.

It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning, to be as men that wait for the Bridegroom, when He shall return from the wedding. You have not a moment to lose in neglect of the great salvation that has been provided for you. The time of the probation of souls is coming to an end. From day to day the destiny of men is being sealed, and even from this congregation we know not how

soon many shall close their eyes in death and be habited for the tomb. We should now consider that our life is swiftly passing away, that we are not safe one moment unless our life is hid with Christ in God.

A Call to Witness, Through the Holy Spirit

Our duty is not to be looking forward to some special time for some special work to be done for us, but to go forward in our work of warning the world; for we are to be witnesses of Christ to the uttermost parts of the world. All around us are the young, the impenitent, the unconverted, and what are we doing for them? Parents, in the ardor of your first love, are you seeking for the conversion of your children, or are you engrossed with the things of this life to such an extent that you are not making earnest efforts to be laborers together with God? Do you have an appreciation of the work and mission of the Holy Spirit? Do you realize that the Holy Spirit is the agency whereby we are to reach the souls of those around us? When this meeting shall close, will you go from here and forget the earnest appeals that have been made to you? Will the messages of warning be left unheeded, and the truth you have heard leak out of your heart as water leaks out of a broken vessel?

The apostle says, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . ?” (Heb. 2:1-3).

Our Present Duty

The third angel’s message is swelling into a loud cry, and you must not feel at liberty to neglect the present duty, and still entertain the idea that at some future time you will be the recipients of great blessing, when without any effort on your part a wonderful revival will take place. Today you are to give yourselves to God, that He may make of you

vessels unto honor, and meet [fit] for His service. Today you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. ■

* Bible texts in this article are from the King James Version.



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ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1891. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE THAT **ELLEN G. WHITE** (1827-1915) EXERCISED THE BIBLICAL GIFT OF PROPHECY DURING MORE THAN 70 YEARS OF PUBLIC MINISTRY.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. Why is it so counterproductive to focus upon the exact time of Jesus’ coming when Jesus calls us to be prepared?
2. What drove the immense mission progress of the early church, and how would this be applicable for us—2,000 years later?
3. Read the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. What principles of active waiting can we discover in this important story?
4. How can we become active witnesses and reach a world that seems to be less and less interested in the gospel?