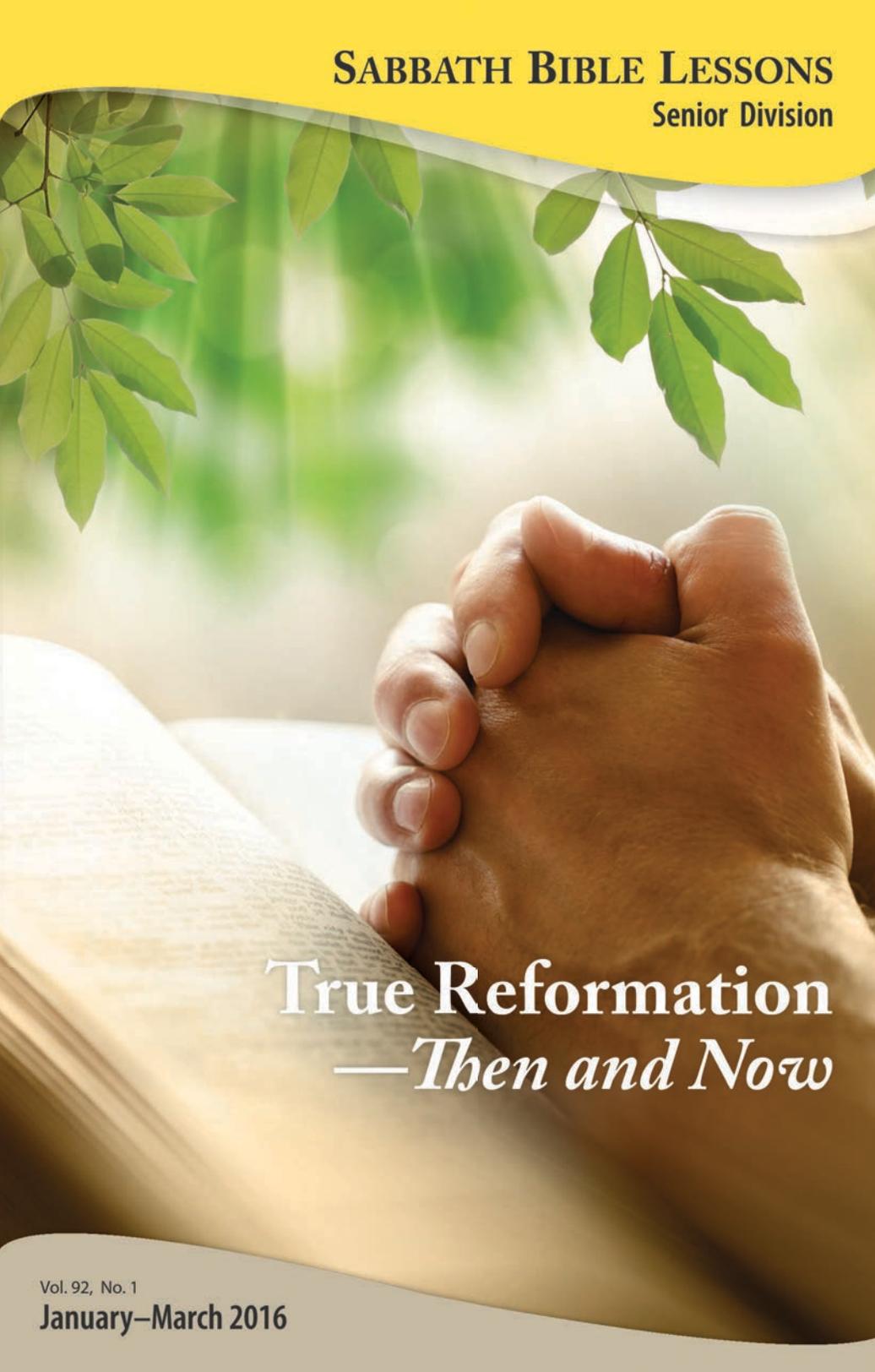


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



True Reformation
—Then and Now

Vol. 92, No. 1

January–March 2016

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

Today, more than ever, the world seems to be in constant change. Heartfelt desires for relief from oppression, human suffering and woe motivate calls for reformation in government policies, laws, institutions, and behaviors. However, history has shown that such calls, shackled by human self-interest or limitations, have either failed or fallen far short of their intended aims.

True reformation goes far deeper than external measures go. It begins with the individual. It involves an inner change that embraces the whole person and, in turn, every other aspect of his or her life. This kind of reform only God can accomplish—a spiritual reformation. But in order to accomplish such a reformation, a person must first be made aware of his or her need to reform. This work God entrusts to true reformers—men and women who engage wholeheartedly with Him in bringing about true reformation in themselves and in those they minister to.

The Bible is replete with examples of such reformers. Two notable ones in their time were Elijah and John the Baptist. Elijah fearlessly rebuked the sins of God's people and called upon them to take a stand for God. John was called to prepare the way for the first coming of Christ. His life, like that of Elijah, was a rebuke to the extravagance around him. His teaching reached the heart.

As God's professed people today, we are called to uphold a lifestyle different from the world and teach a life-changing message. We are to prepare the way for Christ's second coming. God has given a message for the church to arouse her to action, that she might be faithful in giving His message for the world.

"We need a thorough reformation in all our churches. The converting power of God must come into the church. Seek the Lord most earnestly, put away your sins, and tarry in Jerusalem till ye be endowed with power from on high. Let God set you apart to the work. Purify yours souls by *obeying* the truth. Faith without works is dead. Put not off the day of preparation. Slumber not in a state of unpreparedness, having no oil in your vessels with your lamps. Let none leave their safety for eternity to hang upon a peradventure. Let not the question remain in perilous uncertainty. Ask yourselves earnestly, Am I among the saved, or the unsaved? Shall I stand, or shall I not stand? He only that hath clean hands and a pure heart shall stand in that day."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 443.

God wants us individually and as a church to embrace this work. He wants us to reform our lives, our families, and our churches. Let us awake from the slumber of indifference. Let us go forward in humility and in repentance and take hold of the work before us. As the work of reform goes forward, God will work mightily, adding His power to the last warning. May we be a part of this final reformatory movement and thus hasten the Lord's coming.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a church in Ghana

Ghana is a country situated in West Africa, bordering with Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east, and Ivory Coast in the west. With a population of nearly 27 million, the main religions there are Islam (18%) and Christian (70%), the latter divided between Pentecostal, Protestant, and Roman Catholic, plus various other Christian denominations. The message



of Reformation came to Ghana in the 1990's. The work began in the capital of Accra, and from there it extended to other places within the country. The religious liberty that the country offers facilitates greatly in the advancement of our message. We thank God that our church organization is officially registered and recognized by the government.

However, despite the progress of the work and the freedom to preach the gospel message, our members here do not have a house of worship we can call our own. In Accra our brothers and sisters hold their Sabbath meetings under a tree that is providentially situated on a rented piece of land. Unfortunately, when it rains, they are deprived of a dry worship place which often discourages the interested persons in our message. Even though devoid of means to adequately sustain the work, our brothers and sisters are encouraged to hold evangelistic campaigns, distribute leaflets, and organize group Bible studies. We currently have over 50 people attending baptismal classes, and by the time you read this, we hope that these souls will make their covenant with the Lord and become members of the church by baptism.

“Our General, who never makes a mistake, says to us, Advance. Enter new territory. Lift up the standard, establish memorials in every place. Let it be known that God has a people on the earth who have not forgotten that He has a law, binding upon all human beings. In all the churches there are those who know not that the seventh day, and not the first day, is the Sabbath. These are to hear the message of present truth.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 5, 1902.

We appeal to all our brothers and sisters around the world to support this building project with your prayers and finances, to establish a church in Accra that will stand as a memorial to the inhabitants of Accra, and that our meetings for worship there may be held regularly without interruption even during the rainy season.

The Regional Secretary for Africa

True Reformation

“As [the Lord God] spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began” (Luke 1:70).

“We must now begin the work of reformation by turning unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. Let the work begin, that the heart may be softened, and that Christ may mold and fashion you after His own divine image.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 22, 1892.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, October 12, 1904.

Sunday

December 27

1. THE FOUNDATION OF TRUE REFORM

- a. **How can we distinguish between true and false reforms?** Isaiah 8:20; Philippians 3:9.
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“The safety of society, and the progress of reform, depend upon a clear definition and recognition of fundamental truth. The principles of God’s law must be kept before the people as everlasting and inexorable as the character of God Himself. Law is defined as a rule of action. . . . The good of society and the safety of man require that the law be respected. All enlightened law is founded on the law of Jehovah, given on Mount Sinai.”—*The Health Reformer*, August 1, 1878.

“Every true reform has its place in the work of the gospel and tends to the uplifting of the soul to a new and nobler life.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 171.

- b. **Upon whom should we place our trust?** Psalm 118:8; Proverbs 3:5.
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“Whatever position in life we may occupy, whatever our business, we must be humble enough to feel our need of help; we must lean implicitly on the teachings of God’s word, acknowledge His providence in all things, and be faithful in pouring out our souls in prayer.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 427.

2. TRUE REFORM BEGINS WITH THE HEART

- a. What is the precursor to reformation? Joel 2:12, 13; Psalm 51:10; 2 Corinthians 7:11.
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“There is sin, enormous sin, charged against many who profess to be Christians. The great Pleader says, My claims upon the human heart have been ignored. God calls for repentance, for reformation.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 8, 1896.

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 23.

“Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: ‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow’ (Isaiah 1:16, 17). ‘If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die’ (Ezekiel 33:15). Paul says, speaking of the work of repentance: ‘Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter’ (2 Corinthians 7:11).”—*Ibid.*, p. 39.

- b. What yearning cry at the time of Pentecost acknowledged a great personal need? Acts 2:37, 38.
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“How shall a man be just with God? How shall the sinner be made righteous? It is only through Christ that we can be brought into harmony with God, with holiness; but how are we to come to Christ? Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the Day of Pentecost, when, convicted of sin, they cried out, ‘What shall we do?’ The first word of Peter’s answer was, ‘Repent’ (Acts 2:37, 38). At another time, shortly after, he said, ‘Repent, . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Acts 3:19).”—*Ibid.*, p. 23.

3. THE FRUITS OF TRUE REFORM

a. How are reformers in these last days described? Isaiah 58:12, 13.

“[Isaiah 58:8, 9, 12–14, quoted.] Here are given the characteristics of those who shall be reformers, who will bear the banner of the third angel’s message, those who avow themselves God’s command-keeping people, and who honor God, and are earnestly engaged, in the sight of all the universe, in building up the old waste places. Who is it that calls them, The repairers of the breach, The restorers of paths to dwell in?—It is God. Their names are registered in heaven as reformers, restorers, as raising the foundations of many generations.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 13, 1891.

b. What specific evidences of reform will be seen in the life? Matthew 3:8.

“Nothing short of an amended life—fruits meet for repentance—will meet the requirements of God. Without such fruit, our profession of faith is of no value.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 7, 1887.

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 555, 556.

“John separated himself from friends and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel’s hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed. . . . Those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ are represented by faithful Elijah, as John came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ’s first advent. The great subject of reform is to be agitated. . . . Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things. . . .

“Whoever violates moral obligations in the matter of eating and dressing prepares the way to violate the claims of God in regard to eternal interests.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 62, 63.

4. REFORMATION'S BANNER—TRUTH AND LIBERTY

- a. By what means will I recognize what needs reforming? Psalm 119:142; John 17:17; 14:6.
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“The Lord requires of all who profess His name a strict adherence to truth. This will be as salt which has not lost its savor, as a light amid the moral darkness and deception of the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 356.

“The principle we are to uphold at this time is the same that was maintained by the adherents of the gospel in the great Reformation. . . .

“The banner of truth and religious liberty which these Reformers held aloft has in this last conflict been committed to us. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive God’s word as supreme authority. We must accept its truths for ourselves. And we can appreciate these truths only as we search them out by personal study. . . . The acknowledgment of the truth in word and deed is our confession of faith. Only thus can others know that we believe the Bible.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 402, 403.

- b. What then is the relationship between liberty, sanctification, and God’s law? Psalm 119:44, 45; James 1:25; John 8:31, 32.
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“Entire conformity to the will of our Father which is in heaven is alone sanctification, and the will of God is expressed in His holy law. The keeping of all the commandments of God is sanctification. Proving yourselves obedient children to God’s Word is sanctification. The Word of God is to be our guide, not the opinions or ideas of men.”—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 204.

“Spurious sanctification leads directly away from the Bible. Religion is reduced to a fable. Feelings and impressions are made the criterion. While they profess to be sinless and boast of their righteousness, the claimants of sanctification teach that men are at liberty to transgress the law of God and that those who obey its precepts have fallen from grace. A presentation of its claims arouses their opposition and excites anger and contempt. Thus their character is shown, for ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Romans 8:7).”—*The Review and Herald*, October 5, 1886.

5. INDIVIDUAL REFORM

a. How can I reform? Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:15.

“Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be effected. Human barriers against natural and cultivated tendencies are but as the sandbank against the torrent. Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 1, 1914.

“Christianity proposes a reformation in the heart. What Christ works within, will be worked out under the dictation of a converted intellect. The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed, and always will fail. God’s plan with you is to begin at the very seat of all difficulties, the heart, and then from out of the heart will issue the principles of righteousness; the reformation will be outward as well as inward.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 35.

b. How can I be an active reformer? Galatians 6:9, 10; 1 John 1:3.

“‘Them that honor Me I will honor’ (1 Samuel 2:30). As from such a home the father goes forth to his daily duties, it is with a spirit softened and subdued by converse with God. He is a Christian, not only in his profession, but in trade, in all his business relations. He does his work with fidelity, knowing that the eye of God is upon him.

“In the church his voice is not silent. He has words of gratitude and encouragement to utter; for he is a growing Christian, with a fresh experience every day. He is a helpful, active worker in the church, laboring for the glory of God and the salvation of his fellow men.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 424, 425.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does true reform accomplish in the life of the believer?
2. How does repentance go hand in hand with reformation?
3. In what areas do all need to reform?
4. How can we be a light in the midst of moral darkness?
5. When will we have a genuine reform in our lives?

An Ancient Reformer

“Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

“Far removed from any city of renown, and occupying no high station in life, Elijah the Tishbite . . . entered upon his mission confident in God’s purpose to prepare the way before him and to give him abundant success.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 119.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 119–128.

Sunday

January 3

1. ELIJAH’S ORIGIN AND CALLING

a. Who was Elijah, and what type of man was he? 1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17.

“Elijah . . . was born among the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, and came from a nation that was overspread with the abominations of the Amorites. But he entered upon his work with the word of faith and power on his lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 14, 1913.

b. What kind of person does God often pass by, and whom does He call instead? 1 Corinthians 1:26–28.

“In the common walks of life there is many a toiler patiently treading the round of his daily tasks, unconscious of latent powers that, roused to action, would place him among the world’s great leaders. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse and develop those dormant faculties. It was such men whom Jesus connected with Himself; and He gave them the advantages of three years’ training under His own care. No course of study in the schools of the rabbis or the halls of philosophy could have equaled this in value.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 511.

2. MEETING APOSTASY

- a. **Why did Elijah enter into the king's palace to give a public rebuke of Israel's apostasy? John 16:8; 3:20; 1 Timothy 5:20.**
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"To Elijah was entrusted the mission of delivering to Ahab Heaven's message of judgment. He did not seek to be the Lord's messenger; the word of the Lord came to him. And jealous for the honor of God's cause, he did not hesitate to obey the divine summons, though to obey seemed to invite swift destruction at the hand of the wicked king. The prophet set out at once and traveled night and day until he reached Samaria. On reaching the palace, he solicited no admission, nor waited to be formally announced. Clad in the coarse garments usually worn by the prophets of that time, he passed the guards, apparently unnoticed, and stood for a moment before the astonished king.

"Elijah made no apology for his abrupt appearance. A greater than the ruler of Israel had commissioned him to speak, and lifting his hand toward heaven, he solemnly affirmed by the living God that the judgments of the Most High were about to fall upon Israel. 'There shall not be dew nor rain these years,' he declared, 'but according to my word' (1 Kings 17:1)." —*The Review and Herald*, August 14, 1913.

- b. **For what purpose did Elijah later rebuke the King? 1 Kings 18:17, 18; Job 17:8.**
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"It was disregard of the law of God on the part of Ahab and his people that had brought all their calamities upon them; and Elijah hesitated not to declare the whole truth to the guilty king. The world is full of flatterers and dissemblers, both in palaces and in the ordinary walks of life; but how few there are who have the courage that Elijah manifested—how few who will stand in defense of the broken law of God in opposition to the great men of earth." —*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1884.

"The Lord seeks to save, not to destroy. He delights in the rescue of sinners. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked' (Ezekiel 33:11). . . . He gives His chosen messengers a holy boldness, that those who hear may fear and be brought to repentance." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 105.

3. THE CALL TO CHOOSE

- a. When he was on Mount Carmel, calling for reform, what was Elijah's challenging question? 1 King 18:21.
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"Elijah, amid the general apostasy, did not seek to hide the fact that he served the God of heaven. Baal's prophets numbered four hundred and fifty, his priests, four hundred, and his worshipers were thousands; yet Elijah did not try to make it appear that he was on the popular side. He grandly stood alone. . . . Where are the Elijahs of today? . . .

"Nothing is gained by cowardice or by fearing to let it be known that we are God's commandment-keeping people. Hiding our light, as if ashamed of our faith, will result only in disaster. God will leave us to our own weakness. May the Lord forbid that we should refuse to let our light shine forth in any place to which He may call us. If we venture to go forth of ourselves, following our own ideas, our own plans, and leave Jesus behind, we need not expect to gain fortitude, courage, or spiritual strength. God has had moral heroes, and He has them now—those who are not ashamed of being His peculiar people. Their wills and plans are all subordinate to the law of God. The love of Jesus has led them not to count their lives dear unto themselves. . . . 'Fidelity to God' is their motto."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 526–528.

- b. What did Elijah do as a first step in the work of reform? 1 King 18:30.
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"Like a dark cloud, deception and blindness had overspread Israel. Not all at once had this fatal apostasy closed about them, but gradually, as from time to time they had failed to heed the words of warning and reproof that the Lord sent them. Each departure from rightdoing, each refusal to repent, had deepened their guilt and driven them farther from Heaven. And now, in this crisis, they persisted in refusing to take their stand for God.

"The Lord abhors indifference and disloyalty in a time of crisis in His work. The whole universe is watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that they be loyal to the God of heaven?"—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 147, 148.

4. GOD'S POWER REVEALED

- a. Name some reformers from the past. Luke 1:17; Genesis 32:28; Exodus 9:16. How did they obtain the power needed to fulfill their mission? Psalms 27:14; 28:7.
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“If men will walk with God, He will hide them in the cleft of the Rock. Thus hidden, they can see God, even as Moses saw Him. By the power and light that He imparts they can comprehend more and accomplish more than their finite judgment had seemed possible.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 363.

“Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith. The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power.

“Those who are unwilling to forsake every sin and to seek earnestly for God’s blessing, will not obtain it. But all who will lay hold of God’s promises as did Jacob, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. ‘Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily’ (Luke 18:7, 8).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 203.

- b. What promises can today’s reformers claim when they see their need of divine power? Psalm 68:35; 2 Samuel 22:32, 33.
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“Not alone for men in positions of large responsibility is the lesson of Elijah’s experience in learning anew how to trust God in the hour of trial. He who was Elijah’s strength is strong to uphold every struggling child of His, no matter how weak. Of every one He expects loyalty, and to everyone He grants power according to the need. In his own strength man is strengthless; but in the might of God he may be strong to overcome evil and to help others to overcome. Satan can never gain advantage of him who makes God his defense. ‘Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. . . . In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.’”—*The Review and Herald*, October 30, 1913.

5. STANDING ALONE?

- a. **In vindicating God and His law, was Elijah alone? Why or why not? Psalms 34:7; 91:11; 103:20.**
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“Facing King Ahab and the false prophets, and surrounded by the assembled hosts of Israel, Elijah stands, the only one who has appeared to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. . . . But Elijah is not alone. Above and around him are the protecting hosts of heaven—angels that excel in strength.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 18, 1913.

- b. **When standing alone in defense of truth and righteousness, what should we remember? 1 Kings 19:18.**
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“Not all in the world are lawless and sinful; not all have taken sides with the enemy. God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will come soon to end the reign of sin and death. And there are many who have been worshiping Baal ignorantly, but with whom the Spirit of God is still striving.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 171.

“When you suffer reproach and persecution you are in excellent company; for Jesus endured it all, and much more. If you are faithful sentinels for God, these things are a compliment to you. It is the heroic souls, who will be true if they stand alone, who will win the imperishable crown.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 28, 1884.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. From where does God often call people and why?
2. Instead of rebuking sin, what do most people do instead?
3. What does it show if we hide our light, and what will be the result?
4. How do we obtain the blessing of having God’s power working in our life?
5. When we are the only ones standing for the truth, why are we not really alone?

Working for Reform

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

“Never was the kingdom of Israel to be left without noble witnesses to the mighty power of God to save from sin. Even in the darkest hours some would remain true to their divine Ruler and in the midst of idolatry would live blameless in the sight of a holy God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 108.

Suggested Reading: *The Review and Herald*, August 21, 1913.

Sunday

January 10

1. A FAITHFUL REMNANT

a. Was there a faithful remnant in the time of Elijah, as the judgments of God were falling upon apostate Israel? 1 Kings 18:13; 19:18.

b. Does God always have a faithful remnant? Romans 11:5; Revelation 12:17.

c. How does God promise to care for His people as His judgments fall upon the earth? Psalm 27:5; Isaiah 33:15, 16.

“That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that ‘walketh righteously’ is the promise: [Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17 quoted].”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629.

2. PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

- a. What specific request did Elijah make to challenge the national apostasy? 1 Kings 18:19, 20.
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“Elijah demands a convocation at Carmel of all Israel and also of all the prophets of Baal. The awful solemnity in the looks of the prophet gives him the appearance of one standing in the presence of the Lord God of Israel. The condition of Israel in their apostasy demands a firm demeanor, stern speech, and commanding authority. God prepares the message to fit the time and occasion. . . . God will have a fitting message to meet His people in their varied conditions.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 279.

- b. Who else made a firm stand for God in carrying forward a work of reform? Nehemiah 5:9.
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“The Lord will use in His work men who are as true as steel to principle, who will not be swayed by the sophistries of those who have lost their spiritual eyesight.

“Nehemiah was chosen by God because he was willing to cooperate with the Lord as a restorer. . . .When he saw wrong principles being acted upon, he did not stand by as an onlooker and by his silence give consent. He did not leave the people to conclude that he was standing on the wrong side. He took a firm, unyielding stand for the right. He would not lend one jot of influence to the perversion of the principles that God has established.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 2, 1899.

“When Nehemiah moved out as a reformer and deliverer in Israel, he was actuated by love to God and anxiety for the prosperity of His people. His heart was in the work he had undertaken; his hope, his energy, his enthusiasm, his determination of character, were contagious and inspired others with the same courage and lofty purpose. Each man became a Nehemiah in his own sphere and helped to make stronger the hand and heart of his neighbor; and soon feebleness was succeeded by strength and courage.”—*Ibid.*, March 18, 1884.

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

3. A CALL TO REPENTANCE

- a. **What was the purpose of the judgments sent upon Israel? Isaiah 1:16–18; Luke 11:32. What effect did they have on Ahab? 1 Kings 18:17.**
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“The object of this [sudden] affliction was to arouse Israel to a realization of their sin, to bring them to repentance, and turn them to God, that they might honor Jehovah as the only true and living God. After three years and a half of drought, the Lord said to Elijah, ‘Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.’ ‘And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim’ (1 Kings 18:1, 17, 18).”—*The Review and Herald*, May 26, 1891.

“Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 39.

- b. **What is the difference between true repentance and a false repentance? 2 Corinthians 7:9–11.**
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“Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin. Such was the grief of Esau when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever. Balaam, terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with drawn sword, acknowledged his guilt lest he should lose his life; but there was no genuine repentance for sin, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil. Judas Iscariot, after betraying his Lord, exclaimed, ‘I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood’ (Matthew 27:4).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24.

“In this chief of the publicans was awakened a longing for a better life. . . . Zacchaeus had heard of the call to repentance. . . . He knew the Scriptures and was convicted that his practice was wrong. . . . He felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God. . . . Zacchaeus began at once to follow the conviction that had taken hold upon him and to make restitution to those whom he had wronged.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 553.

4. A CALL TO OBEDIENCE

- a. Upon what does our happiness and salvation depend? Psalm 106:3; Job 36:11; Jeremiah 7:23.
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“Our happiness and salvation depend upon eating the bread of life; that is, obeying the words and doing the works of Christ, advancing righteousness and restraining unrighteousness. Nothing can give such self-reliance, such courage, such an increase of talents and ability, as a true estimate of the requirements of God’s law. . . . Love for Jesus Christ leads us to obey God’s commandments, which are a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, securing for us the illuminating, purifying, blissful presence of both the Father and the Son. He who is obedient can commune with God even as did Enoch.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 194.

- b. What attitude is revealed by those who resist obedience to God? Acts 7:51–53; 2 Timothy 3:8. How will they regard God’s people in the last days? Matthew 24:9.
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“The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God’s commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity. Thus the accusation urged of old against the servant of God will be repeated and upon grounds equally well established: ‘And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim’ (1 Kings 18:17, 18). As the wrath of the people shall be excited by false charges, they will pursue a course toward God’s ambassadors very similar to that which apostate Israel pursued toward Elijah.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 590.

“All the temptations of Satan, Christ met with the word of God. By trusting in God’s promises, He received power to obey God’s commandments, and the tempter could gain no advantage.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 181.

5. A WORK OF RESTORATION

- a. What are the “old paths” that require restoration? Jeremiah 6:16; Isaiah 58:12–14.
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“Jeremiah called [the] attention [of the nation] repeatedly to the counsels given in Deuteronomy. More than any other of the prophets, he emphasized the teachings of the Mosaic law and showed how these might bring the highest spiritual blessing to the nation and to every individual heart. ‘Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein,’ he pleaded, ‘and ye shall find rest for your souls’ (Jeremiah 6:16).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 411.

- b. What is included in the work of restoration, and who is called to do this work? Isaiah 62:6; 58:1.
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“It is an alarming fact that indifference, sleepiness, and apathy have characterized men in responsible positions, and that there is a steady increase of pride and an alarming disregard of the warnings of the Spirit of God. The barriers which God’s word places about His people are being broken down. Men who are acquainted with the way in which God has led His people in the past, instead of inquiring for the old paths and defending our position as a peculiar people, have linked hands with the world. The most alarming feature in the case is that warning voices have not been heard in remonstrance, entreaties, and warnings. The eyes of God’s people seem to be blinded, while the church is fast drifting into the channel of worldliness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 513.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did God’s faithful remnant live, even though they were at times surrounded by idolatry? How does this apply to us today?
2. What did Nehemiah do to inspire others to work with him?
3. What kind of changes are necessary in our lives if we are truly repentant?
4. Where does true happiness come from and why?
5. Instead of seeking the “old paths,” what have some done instead, and how has this affected the church?

A Second Elijah

“And [John] shall go before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

“John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless. If their life and character were not in harmony with God’s law, they were not His people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 97–108.

Sunday

January 17

1. ISRAEL'S CONDITION

a. What was the work of the messenger that God sent to prepare the way for the Lord’s first advent? Malachi 3:1–3.

b. What type of person was this messenger? Luke 1:13–17.

c. What was the condition of God’s people that they required such a messenger? Luke 5:37–39; Matthew 15:8, 9.

“The **skin bottles** which were used as vessels to contain the new wine, . . . Jesus presented [as] the condition of the Jewish leaders. . . . They thought their own righteousness all-sufficient, and did not desire that a new element should be brought into their religion.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 278, 279. (emphasis added).

“The **fig tree** [which Jesus had cursed] withered away. This fruitless tree symbolized the condition of the Jewish nation at that time. Every opportunity and privilege were granted them.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 23, 1900. (emphasis supplied).

2. JOHN THE BAPTIST, GOD'S MESSENGER

- a. **How did Jesus refer to John the Baptist? Matthew 11:9, 10, 13–15.**
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“It was believed also that before the Messiah’s advent, Elijah would personally appear. This expectation John met in his denial; but his words had a deeper meaning. Jesus afterward said, referring to John, ‘If ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come’ (Matthew 11:14, RV). John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to do such a work as Elijah did. If the Jews had received him, it would have been accomplished for them. But they did not receive his message. To them he was not Elijah. He could not fulfill for them the mission he came to accomplish.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 135.

- b. **Who went out to listen to John the Baptist? Matthew 3:5, 6; 21:32; Luke 11:1.**
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- c. **Why were they attracted to John rather than to the teachers of their day? Matthew 3:1–3.**
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“With no elaborate arguments or fine-spun theories did John declare his message. Startling and stern yet full of hope, his voice was heard from the wilderness, ‘Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matthew 3:2). With a new, strange power it moved the people. The whole nation was stirred. Multitudes flocked to the wilderness.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 54.

- d. **Was John the Baptist afraid of speaking the truth? Matthew 14:3, 4.**
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“He looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was lost sight of. He beheld the majesty of holiness and knew himself to be inefficient and unworthy. It was God’s message that he was to declare. It was in God’s power and His righteousness that he was to stand. He was ready to go forth as Heaven’s messenger, unawed by the human, because he had looked upon the Divine. He could stand fearless in the presence of earthly monarchs, because with trembling he had bowed before the King of kings.”—*Ibid.*

3. HIS PREPARATION, THE WILDERNESS

- a. In what ways did country living prepare John the Baptist for his mission? Isaiah 40:3–5; 30:15; Psalm 101:3.
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“In the natural order of things, the son of Zacharias would have been educated for the priesthood. But the training of the rabbinical schools would have unfitted him for his work. God did not send him to the teachers of theology to learn how to interpret the Scriptures. He called him to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature’s God. . . .

“Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of Providence. The words of the angel to Zacharias had been often repeated to John by his God-fearing parents. From childhood his mission had been kept before him, and he had accepted the holy trust. To him the solitude of the desert was a welcome escape from society in which suspicion, unbelief, and impurity had become well-nigh all-pervading. He distrusted his own power to withstand temptation and shrank from constant contact with sin, lest he should lose the sense of its exceeding sinfulness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 101, 102.

- b. In order to be ‘a workman approved of God’ what were John the Baptist’s primary sources for study, and what effect did these have on him? 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 19:1–3; Luke 1:80.
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“John was not indolent. . . . Everything that surrounded him in his mountain home was to him a book of instruction, containing lessons of deepest importance in regard to the character, the benevolence, and the love of God.

“. . . Away from the busy world, whose cares and alluring pleasures would divert his mind and pervert his thoughts and imaginings, he was shut up with God and nature. Here he would not be influenced by evil surroundings, his understanding would not be blinded, nor his spirit become familiar with wickedness. In the calm retirement of the wilderness, John became strong in spirit. By his strictly temperate habits he secured to himself physical, mental, and moral health. His discernment was clear, his judgment correct.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, January 7, 1897.

4. ONE FOCUS

- a. **What was John's life focus? Acts 13:24. Like the apostle Paul, how did this focus affect the habits of his life in general? 1 Corinthians 9:27.**
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"A great work was before John, and in order for him to have a sound physical constitution and mental and moral power to do this work, he must control appetite and passion. John was to lead out as a reformer and by his abstemious life and plain dress rebuke the intemperate habits and the sinful extravagance of the people."—*The Review and Herald*, January 7, 1873.

"But the life of John was not spent in idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation. From time to time he went forth to mingle with men; and he was ever an interested observer of what was passing in the world. From his quiet retreat he watched the unfolding of events. With vision illuminated by the divine Spirit he studied the characters of men, that he might understand how to reach their hearts with the message of heaven. The burden of his mission was upon him. In solitude, by meditation and prayer, he sought to gird up his soul for the lifework before him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 102.

- b. **Describe the diet and dress of John the Baptist. Matthew 3:4; Luke 1:15. Why was this significant in John's ministry?**
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"Dedicated to God as a Nazarite from his birth, [the son of Zacharias] made the vow his own in a life-long consecration."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 102.

"John was to go forth as Jehovah's messenger to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God's requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness. Such a messenger must be holy. He must be a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God. In order to fulfill his mission, he must have a sound physical constitution, and mental and spiritual strength. Therefore it would be necessary for him to control the appetites and passions. He must be able so to control all his powers that he could stand among men as unmoved by surrounding circumstances as the rocks and mountains of the wilderness."—*Ibid.*, p. 100.

"So far from being lonely, gloomy, or morose, he enjoyed his life of simplicity and retirement, and his temperate habits kept all his senses unperverted."—*The Youth's Instructor*, January 7, 1897.

5. OUR MESSAGE TODAY

- a. How do we know that the Elijah message did not culminate with John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner? Malachi 4:5, 6. What is our message today? Acts 3:19; Isaiah 58:1.
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"John was called to do a special work; he was to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight His paths. . . . [Isaiah 40:3-5 quoted.] This is the very message that must be given to our people; we are near the end of time, and the message is, Clear the King's highway; gather out the stones; raise up a standard for the people. The people must be awakened. It is no time now to cry peace and safety."—*The Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890.

- b. How can this message have an effect upon the church and the world today? Acts 22:15; Romans 10:13.
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"We are under personal obligation to society to . . . exert an influence in favor of God's law. We should let our light so shine that all may see that the sacred gospel is having an influence upon our hearts and lives, that we walk in obedience to its commandments and violate none of its principles. We are in a great degree accountable to the world for the souls of those around us. . . . Let the world see that we . . . desire them to share our blessings and privileges through the sanctification of the truth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 59.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Under what condition are we considered God's people today?
2. How was John's message delivered to the people, and what was the result?
3. What are some of the benefits of living away from the cities?
4. Why was John temperate in all of his habits of life?
5. How does God want us to share the same message today?

John's Message

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

“[John’s] work and ministry pointed back to the law and the prophets, while he, at the same time, pointed the people forward to Christ as the Saviour of the world. He called upon them to ‘behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).”—*The Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905.

Suggested Reading: *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 47–57.

Sunday

January 24

1. CHRIST, THE CENTER

a. To whom did John direct his hearers? Matthew 3:11; Acts 19:4; John 1:29.

b. What was the source of John’s knowledge? Luke 3:2. How should our manner of study be similar to John’s? Hebrews 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“John the Baptist in his desert life was taught of God. He studied the revelations of God in nature. Under the guiding of the divine Spirit, he studied the scrolls of the prophets. By day and by night, Christ was his study, his meditation, until mind and heart and soul were filled with the glorious vision.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 54.

“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. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

2. A CALL TO REPENTANCE

- a. What was the content of John's message? Luke 1:17; Matthew 3:1, 2, 8.
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"The preaching of John the Baptist created intense excitement. At the beginning of his ministry, religious interest was very low. Superstition, tradition, and fables had confused the minds of the people, and the right way was not understood. Zealous in securing worldly treasure and honor, men had forgotten God. John went forth to herald the Lord's anointed and call men to repentance."—*The Youth's Instructor*, May 17, 1900.

"John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and called the people to repentance. As a symbol of cleansing from sin, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. Thus by a significant object lesson he declared that those who claimed to be the chosen people of God were defiled by sin, and that without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah's kingdom."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 104.

- b. What is the condition of people today? 2 Timothy 3:1–4. What message are we to give them? Acts 17:30; 26:19, 20.
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"We must persuade men everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. They have souls to save or to lose. Let there be no indifference in this matter. The Lord calls for workers who are filled with an earnest, decided purpose. Tell the people to be instant in season and out of season. With the words of life upon your lips go forth to tell men and women that the end of all things is at hand.

"Let us keep our souls in the love of God. The note of warning must be given. The truth must not languish upon our lips. We must rouse people to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us. My faith is as strong as ever that we are living in the last remnant of time. Let every teacher present an open door before all who will come to Jesus, repenting of their sins."—*Evangelism*, p. 217.

"Genuine repentance springs from a sense of the offensive character of sin. . . . There is a vast difference between admitting facts after they are proved, and confessing sins known only to ourselves and God."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 997.

3. THE TRUE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

- a. What claim did the Jewish leaders make? How did John respond to this claim? Matthew 3:7–10.
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“John rebuked [the Pharisees’ and Saducees’] selfish pride and avarice. He warned them of their unbelief and condemned their hypocrisy. He told them that they had not fulfilled the conditions of the covenant on their part, which would entitle them to the promises God made to a faithful and obedient people. Their proud boasts of being children of Abraham did not make them really such. Their exhibitions of pride, their arrogance, jealousy, selfishness, and cruelty, stamped their characters as a generation of vipers, rather than the children of obedient and just Abraham. Their wicked works had disqualified them to claim the promises God made to the children of Abraham. John assured them that God would raise up children unto Abraham from the very stones, to whom He could fulfill His promise, rather than to depend on the natural children of Abraham who had neglected the light God had given them and had become hardened by selfish ambition and wicked unbelief. He told them that if they were really the children of Abraham, they would do the works of their father Abraham. They would have Abraham’s faith, love, and obedience. But they did not bear this fruit. They had no claim to Abraham as their father, or the promises God made to the seed of Abraham.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 51.

- b. How did Jesus later address this same claim made by the Jews? John 8:39, 40.
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- c. How can we be considered Abraham’s seed today? Galatians 3:26–29.
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“While they were professing to be God’s commandment-keeping people, their works denied their faith, and without true repentance for their sins they would have no part in the kingdom of Christ. Justice, benevolence, mercy, and the love of God would characterize the lives of His commandment-keeping people. Unless these fruits were seen in their daily life, all their profession was of no more value than chaff which would be devoted to the fire of destruction.”—*Ibid*, pp. 51, 52.

4. TRUE GREATNESS

- a. What is the strength and foundation of true greatness? Psalm 27:1; Exodus 15:2; Galatians 2:20.
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“The strength of nations and of individuals is not found in the opportunities and facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. That alone which can make them great and strong is the power and purpose of God. They themselves, by their attitude toward His purpose, decide their own destiny.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 180.

“True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 48.

“What you say in the world will be marked with special consequence if it corresponds with what you say in the church. Your attitude, your words, your spirit, are constantly making an impression upon those with whom you associate.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 198.

- b. What is more powerful than words in conveying a knowledge of God to others? Matthew 5:14–16; 2 Thessalonians 3:9 (last part).
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“It is impossible for any of us to live in such a way that we shall not cast an influence in the world. No member of the family can enclose himself within himself, where other members of the family shall not feel his influence and spirit. The very expression of the countenance has an influence for good or evil. His spirit, his words, his actions, his attitude toward others, are unmistakable. If he is living in selfishness, he surrounds his soul with a malarious atmosphere; while if he is filled with the love of Christ, he will manifest courtesy, kindness, tender regard for the feelings of others and will communicate to his associates, by his acts of love, a tender, grateful, happy feeling. It will be made manifest that he is living for Jesus and daily learning lessons at His feet, receiving His light and His peace.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 33, 34.

“Let all seek to discover the excellencies rather than the defects. Often it is our own attitude, the atmosphere that surrounds ourselves, which determines what will be revealed to us in another.”—*Ibid.*, p. 105.

5. THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE

- a. What drew such a large number of people to the wilderness? Mark 1:4; Luke 3:15.
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“Steadfast as a rock stood the prophet of God, faithful to rebuke sin and crime in all their forms, in kings and nobles, as readily as in the unhonored and unknown. [John the Baptist] swerved not from duty. Loyal to his God, in noble dignity of moral character, he stood firm as a rock, faithful to principle.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 72.

“Multitudes accepted the preaching of John and followed him from place to place. Many cherished in their hearts the hope that he was the Messiah. But as John saw the people turning to him, he sought to direct their minds to the coming One.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 28, 1907.

- b. What marked changes were taking place in people’s lives? Matthew 3:8; Acts 18:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:17.
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“Salvation . . . is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him.”—*Evangelism*, p. 319.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How should our daily study be like that of John the Baptist?
2. How is the message we are to give today similar to that of John?
3. How can we be considered children of Abraham today?
4. What are some ways in which we can exert a positive influence on others?
5. How were people changed by John’s message?

First Sabbath Offering for World Disaster and Welfare

“[The Lord] executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry” (Psalm 146:7).

The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7): The poor are all around us, the distressed, the afflicted, the sorrowing, and those who are ready to perish. There is a great need for the exercise of mercy today as ever was. God has made us His stewards, and He is not to be charged with the sufferings, the misery, the nakedness, and the want of humanity. The Lord has made ample provision for all of us. He has given us large supplies with which to alleviate the want of these sufferers and underprivileged ones.

Every day we hear of earthquakes, war, floods, volcanoes, and other disasters and troubles all over the world resulting in destruction, great damage to properties, and life. As soon as we here about a calamity, we immediately swing into action to respond to their needs. The way we respond depends deeply on the nature of the disaster, the country, the economic and geo-political situation at hand. We immediately begin to assess the situation to determine the most appropriate actions.

In addition to this, in time of peace the Welfare Department provides assistance such as funding through proposals, technical assistance, training, mentorship, and project identification and implementation. Where we have expertise, we want to assist by providing oversight and guidance as needed. Our goal is to empower the local church to meet the needs of their community; whether in the form of food, clothing, blankets, shelter, or emotional support and counseling.

Sharing God’s love around the world is like an airplane which needs fuel to propel it. Your liberal offerings are the fuel that propels almost every aspect of helping these destitute. Without your involvement and this fuel, our best efforts are sure to be a disaster as well. It is hard for everyone to go to the site of calamities, but your means can go far. We appeal to you that your heart may be moved to partake in this noble task. Please give liberally for this cause.



Earthquake in Nepal (2015).

Your brethren from the Welfare Department

Another Elijah

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5, 6).

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1184.

Suggested Reading: *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 225–247.

Sunday

January 31

1. LIVING IN THE END OF TIME

- a. What significance is there to the times in which we are now living? Malachi 4:1, 5.
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“[John the Baptist] was a representative of those living in these last days, to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. John was a reformer.”—*Ibid.*, p. 71.

- b. What kind of service is called for as we face the end of time? 2 Peter 3:11; Luke 16:13; 10:27.
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“He who would build up a strong, symmetrical character, he who would be a well-balanced Christian, must give all and do all for Christ; for the Redeemer will not accept divided service.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 483.

“We must work with one spirit, even with the mind of Christ; and if we do this, new life will come into the church.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 29, 1898.

2. BEING A WATCHMAN

a. What is the responsibility of a watchman? Ezekiel 33:6–9.

“The watchmen anciently placed upon the walls of Jerusalem and other cities occupied a most responsible position. Upon their faithfulness depended the safety of all within those cities. When danger was apprehended, they were not to keep silent day nor night. Every few moments they were required to call to one another to see if all were awake and no harm had come to any. Sentinels were stationed upon some eminence overlooking the important posts to be guarded, and the cry of warning or of good cheer was sounded from them. This was borne from one to another, each repeating the words, till it went the entire rounds of the city.

“These watchmen represent the ministry, upon whose fidelity depends the salvation of souls.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 402, 403.

“It is now no time to relax our efforts, to become tame and spiritless; no time to hide our light under a bushel, to speak smooth things, to prophesy deceit. No, no; there is no place for sleepy watchmen on the walls of Zion. Every power is to be employed wholly and entirely for God.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 720.

b. What should we consider as we view the times in which we live today? 1 Corinthians 15:34; Romans 13:11, 12.

“My brethren, we are living in a most solemn period of this earth’s history. There is never time to sin; it is always perilous to continue in transgression; but in a special sense is this true at the present time. We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world and stand in a more solemn relation to time and to eternity than ever before.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 147.

“Enoch had temptations as well as we. . . . He was unsullied with the prevailing sins of the age in which he lived. So may we remain pure and uncorrupted. He was a representative of the saints who live amid the perils and corruptions of the last days. For his faithful obedience to God he was translated. So, also, the faithful, who are alive and remain, will be translated. They will be removed from a sinful and corrupt world to the pure joys of heaven.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 122.

3. COMMISSIONED TO PREPARE THE WAY

- a. Who is to proclaim the final gospel messages? 2 Timothy 4:2; Revelation 14:6, 7; Malachi 3:1.
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“[Revelation 14:6, 7 quoted.] This message is declared to be a part of ‘the everlasting gospel.’ The work of preaching the gospel has not been committed to angels but has been entrusted to men. Holy angels have been employed in directing this work, they have in charge the great movements for the salvation of men; but the actual proclamation of the gospel is performed by the servants of Christ upon the earth.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 312.

- b. What shows that we are to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent, as John the Baptist did for His first advent? Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23; Hebrews 12:13.
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“The work of John the Baptist represents the work for these times. His work and the work of those who go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to arouse the people from their apathy are the same in many respects. Christ is to come the second time to judge the world in righteousness. The messengers of God who bear the last message of warning to be given to the world are to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent as John prepared the way for His first advent.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 17, 1900.

- c. Why is preparation required? Hebrews 12:14; Luke 12:39.
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“Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. . . . God calls for a revival and a reformation.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 626.

“God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared, they must all meet it; and those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard will stand firm at that time of test and trial.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 431, 432.

4. TURNING THE HEART OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN

- a. **What is the special work parents are called to do?** Luke 1:13–17; Proverbs 22:6.
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“An angel from heaven came to instruct Zacharias and Elizabeth as to how they should train and educate their child, so as to work in harmony with God in preparing a messenger to announce the coming of Christ. As parents they were to faithfully cooperate with God in forming such a character in John as would fit him to perform the part God had assigned him as a competent worker. John was the son of their old age, he was a child of miracle, and the parents might have reasoned that he had a special work to do for the Lord and the Lord would take care of him. But the parents did not thus reason; they moved to a retired place in the country, where their son would not be exposed to the temptations of city life, or induced to depart from the counsel and instruction which they as parents would give him. They acted their part in developing a character in the child that would in every way meet the purpose for which God had designed his life. By no careless neglect on their part shall their son fail to become good and wise, [Luke 1:7–9 quoted].”
—*The Signs of the Times*, April 16, 1896.

- b. **What special personal work is each one called to do?** Malachi 4:4–6.
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“Fathers and mothers, turn your hearts to seek the Lord; for a great responsibility rests upon you to give your children a correct mold of character. Keep ever before you their eternal interests. Educate them to be refined, pure, noble, revealing the highest traits of character, and before the world and heaven to make known that they have chosen to serve God. . . .

“Great blessings and spiritual strength will come to the families who will determine to put away those things which are unessential and will resolutely take up the work of preparation for the coming of the Lord. God has entrusted parents with the work of helping their children to gain a Christlike experience. . . .

“Reveal in your own lives conformity to the image of Christ. Improve the talents you have; cultivate the powers of mind and body; increase your knowledge of the Word of God; improve the gift of speech; by the witness of a godly example uplift before others the power of the Word to transform the character.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 5, 1911.

5. A WORK FOR BOTH PARENT AND CHILD

- a. Why was it necessary for John's parents to bring him up with a strict diet? Luke 1:15; Matthew 3:4.
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"The child will be affected, for good or evil, by the habits of the mother. She must herself be controlled by principle and must practice temperance and self-denial, if she would seek the welfare of her child.

"God had an important work for the promised child of Zacharias to do; a work that required active thought and vigorous action. He must have a sound physical constitution, and mental and moral strength; and it was to secure for him these necessary qualifications that his habits were to be carefully regulated, even from infancy. . . . We urge that the principles of temperance be carried into all the details of home life; that the example of parents be a lesson of temperance; that self-denial and self-control be taught to the children and enforced upon them, so far as possible, even from babyhood."—*Historical Sketches*, pp. 208, 209.

- b. Why is it so important to focus so much of our effort on training our children? Proverbs 22:6; Psalm 127:3.
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"More than any natural endowment, the habits established in early years decide whether a man will be victorious or vanquished in the battle of life. Youth is the sowing time. It determines the character of the harvest, for this life and for the life to come."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 101.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If we love God supremely, how will this affect how we live our life?
2. How should a faithful watchman behave today?
3. How can we prepare for the coming crisis?
4. What is the special work God wants it done in families today?
5. How can we teach our children lessons in temperance, and what will this knowledge do for them later in life?

Where Reformation Begins

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

“Revivals brought deep heart searching and humility. They were characterized by solemn, earnest appeals to the sinner, by yearning compassion for the purchase of the blood of Christ. Men and women prayed and wrestled with God for the salvation of souls.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 462.

Suggested Reading: *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 15–27.

Sunday

February 7

1. SELF-EXAMINATION

- a. Where must be our first work when beginning a spiritual reformation? 2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 8:10.
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“True reformation begins with soul cleansing. Our work for the fallen will achieve real success only as the grace of Christ reshapes the character and the soul is brought into living connection with God.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180.

- b. What is inward working power is essential to accomplish an outward reformation? Titus 3:5; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.
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“It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 169.

“The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed and always will fail. God’s plan with you is to begin at the very seat of all difficulties, the heart, and then from out of the heart will issue the principles of righteousness; the reformation will be outward as well as inward.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 35.

2. BEHOLDING CHRIST

- a. **What do we see in Christ's example?** Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21–23.
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“The law condemns all sin and requires all virtue. It demands of man an outward respect, and it requires purity of soul. ‘Behold,’ writes the psalmist, ‘thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom’ (Psalm 51:6). The law was exemplified in the life of Christ. He is a pattern for all humanity. He lived the law. His purity and beneficence, His devotion to the truth, and His zeal for God’s glory reveal the perfection of the law. His every act was a revelation of the glory of the Father. He was all that the law required Him to be.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 26, 1901.

“Christ lived a life of perfect obedience to God’s law, and in this He set an example for every human being. The life that He lived in this world we are to live through His power and under His instruction.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180.

- b. **In what way does beholding transform us?** 2 Corinthians 3:18; Psalm 119:11.
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“By beholding Christ we become changed. If the mind dwells upon temporal things constantly, these things become all-absorbing, affecting the character, so that God’s glory is lost sight of and forgotten. The opportunities that are within reach for them to become conversant with heavenly things, are overlooked. Spiritual life dies.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

“In order to give such a message as John gave, we must have a spiritual experience like his. The same work must be wrought in us. We must behold God, and in beholding Him, lose sight of self.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 55.

“The heart preoccupied with the word of God is fortified against Satan. Those who make Christ their daily companion and familiar friend will feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around them; and by looking unto Jesus they will become assimilated to His image. By beholding they become changed to the divine pattern; their character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 616.

3. PUTTING SELF ASIDE

- a. **When we see that a reform is necessary, what is the first step to take?** Mark 8:34; 2 Corinthians 10:5.
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“The teaching of John aroused in the hearts of many a great desire to have a part in the blessings that Christ was to bring, and they received the truth. . . . Nothing save a vehement desire, a determined will, a fixedness of purpose, could resist the moral darkness that covered the earth as the pall of death. In order to obtain the blessings that it was their privilege to have, they must work earnestly, they must deny self.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 17, 1900.

“When the Spirit of God, with its marvelous awakening power, touches the soul, it abases human pride. Worldly pleasure and position and power are seen to be worthless. . . . Then humility and self-sacrificing love, so little valued among men, are exalted as alone of worth. This is the work of the gospel, of which John’s message was a part.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 135.

- b. **How extensive is the work of self-renunciation?** Philippians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; John 3:30.
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“Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 56.

- c. **What should be the attitude of a true messenger of God?** Romans 14:7, 8; Galatians 2:20.
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“Those who are true to their calling as messengers of God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).”—*Ibid.*

4. TEMPERANCE AND COMMITMENT

- a. **How does diet help toward a more effective work? 1 Corinthians 9:25–27. When and where is this work to be applied? Philippians 2:5; 2 Peter 1:5–8.**
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“The great work of temperance reform, to be thoroughly successful, must begin in the home.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 23, 1877.

“The light of health reform is opened before the people of God at this day, that they may see the necessity of holding their appetites and passions under control of the higher powers of the mind. This is also necessary, that they may have mental strength and clearness to discern the sacred chain of truth and turn from the bewitching errors and pleasing fables that are flooding the world.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 44.

“The appetites and passions must be held in subjection to the higher powers of the mind. This self-discipline is essential to that mental strength and spiritual insight which will enable us to understand and to practice the sacred truths of God’s word. For this reason temperance finds its place in the work of preparation for Christ’s second coming.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 101.

- b. **How should we encourage the youth to control their thoughts? Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 1:13.**
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“We have each of us an individual work to do, to gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, to watch unto prayer. The mind must be firmly controlled to dwell upon subjects that will strengthen the moral powers. The youth should begin early to cultivate correct habits of thought. We should discipline the mind to think in a healthful channel and not permit it to dwell upon things that are evil. The psalmist exclaims, ‘Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer’ (Psalm 19:14). As God works upon the heart by His Holy Spirit, man must cooperate with Him. The thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul. The thoughts must be pure, the meditations of the heart must be clean, if the words of the mouth are to be words acceptable to heaven and helpful to your associates.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 12, 1888.

5. HUMILITY IN MINISTRY

- a. What do we need to understand in order to be successful in winning souls to Christ? Luke 14:8–11; John 3:30.
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“Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are perishing in their sins. He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

- b. What is needed in the church today? 1 Peter 5:5, 6.
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“The precious grace of humility is sadly wanting in the ministry and the church. Men who preach the truth think too highly of their own abilities. True humility will lead a man to exalt Christ and the truth, and to realize his utter dependence upon the God of truth. It is painful to learn lessons of humility, yet nothing is more beneficial in the end. The pain attendant upon learning lessons of humility is in consequence of our being elated by a false estimate of ourselves, so that we are unable to see our great need.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 378.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to have a change of heart, and how can we have this change?
2. How can we follow Jesus' example in living a life of perfect obedience to God's law?
3. When the Spirit of God touches the soul, what happens?
4. How can we control our thoughts, and how will this affect our words?
5. How does humility help us in our ministry for others?

Reformation in the Home

“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace” (Psalm 144:12).

“Children are what their parents make them by their instruction, discipline, and example. Hence the overwhelming importance of parental faithfulness in training the young for the service of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 37.

Suggested Reading: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 317–325.

Sunday

February 14

1. THE PLACE TO BEGIN

- a. Upon whom has God laid a grave responsibility to begin a work of reformation? Malachi 4:6; Psalm 78:5–7.
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“Could parents realize the great responsibility resting upon them when their children are innocent babes in the home, much sin and misery might be averted; temperance would then be taught at the fire-side and the table would afford practical lessons repeated every day. Line upon line, precept upon precept, children should be taught the necessity of self-control and self-denial; and then true reform would make rapid progress.”—*The Health Reformer*, May 1, 1877.

- b. Where is the source of the parents' wisdom? Ephesians 1:17; James 1:5.
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“Let parents take their Bibles and search that they may understand what are the requirements of God in regard to their children. Let them seek to understand what is included in parental duty. The word of God must be our rule in conducting our family affairs;”—*Christian Education*, pp. 230, 231.

“By prayer, by study of the Bible, and by earnest zeal on their part, [parents] may succeed nobly in this important duty and be repaid a hundredfold for all their time and care.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 64.

2. EXTENDING THE WORK OF REFORM

- a. **What does the Lord intend to happen with the faith of the parents? Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 1:5.**
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“As you faithfully do your duty in the home, the father as a priest of the household, the mother as a home missionary, you are multiplying agencies for doing good outside of the home. As you improve your own powers, you are becoming better fitted to labor in the church and in the neighborhood. By binding your children to yourselves and to God, fathers and mothers and children become laborers together with God.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 430.

- b. **What should you do if you have failed to make God first in your life and in your home? 1 John 1:9; James 5:16.**
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“If you [parents] have failed in your duty to your family, confess your sins before God. Gather your children about you and acknowledge your neglect. Tell them that you desire to bring about a reformation in the home and ask them to help you to make the home what it ought to be. Read to them the directions found in the Word of God. Pray with them; and ask God to spare their lives and to help them to prepare for a home in His kingdom. Thus you may begin and continue a work of true reform.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 21, 1904.

- c. **As we commit ourselves fully to God, what will be the result of our faithfulness? Psalm 51:9–13; Isaiah 60:2, 3; Acts 16:5.**
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“When the great light that God has given shines forth through human agencies, a great work will be done. In demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, the truth will be revealed in clear, distinct lines. But this work must begin in the home.

“As the right work is done in the home, parents will find their hearts subdued and melted. Strange prejudices that have been cherished by brethren and sisters in the church, prejudices that have borne evil fruit, will be overcome and will disappear. A spirit of candor will come in, a spirit after Christ’s likeness. God’s people will give up the tenacious desire to have their own way and to urge their own ideas; for they will realize that they are in the presence of God’s Son.”—*Ibid.*, July 15, 1902.

3. THE EFFECT UPON THE CHURCH

- a. **When reformation takes place in the home, how will this be reflected upon the church? Ephesians 5:27; Titus 2:14; Psalm 144:14 (second part), 15.**
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“In the home the foundation is laid for the prosperity of the church. The influences that rule in the home life are carried into the church life; therefore church duties should first begin in the home.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 318.

“[The Lord] desires that the work of reformation shall begin in the home, with the fathers and mothers, and then the church will realize the Holy Spirit’s working. The influence of this work will go through the church like leaven. Fathers and mothers need converting. They have not educated themselves to mold and fashion the characters of their children aright.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 18, 1902.

“God measures church members by what they are in the home. When Christ’s words are obeyed in the home, the influence extends to the church.”—*Ibid.*, July 21, 1903.

- b. **How does the influence of a man in his home affect his usefulness in the church? 1 Timothy 3:5. How does this affect his hope of eternal life? Matthew 25:21.**
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“He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in his family life. It is as essential that as a father he should improve the talents God has given him for the purpose of making the home a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry he should make use of his God-given powers to win souls for the church. As the priest in the home, and as the ambassador of Christ in the church, he should exemplify in his life the character of Christ. . . .

“He who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the home will surely fail of being a faithful shepherd to the flock of God in the church.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 179.

“The life on earth is the beginning of the life in heaven; education on earth is an initiation into the principles of heaven; the lifework here is a training for the lifework there. What we now are, in character and holy service is the sure foreshadowing of what we shall be.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 535.

“The great reformatory movement must begin in the home. Obedience to God’s law is the great incentive to industry, economy, truthfulness, and just dealing between man and man.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 489.

4. PREPARING TO WITNESS

- a. **When our heart is touched by the Spirit of God, how will we respond? Isaiah 6:8.**
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“When God would have a special work done for the advancement of the truth, He will impress men to work in the mines of truth with prayerful earnestness to discover the precious ore. These men will have Christlike perseverance. They will not fail or be discouraged. They will sink self out of sight in Jesus. Men will go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is their work to make crooked things straight. Some things must be torn down, some things must be built up. The old treasures must be reset in a framework of truth. They are to preach God’s Word; their testimony must not be molded by the opinions and ideas that have been regarded as sound, but by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. They are to lift up Christ and call sinners to repentance, . . . urging upon all their personal responsibility to be kind and courteous, to do good and to win souls to Jesus.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 169.

- b. **What will be the living proof of a renewed heart? 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:10; Matthew 5:16.**
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“If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. . . . A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 57, 58.

“The love of our heavenly Father in the gift of His only-begotten Son to the world is enough to inspire every soul, to melt every hard, loveless heart into contrition and tenderness; and yet shall heavenly intelligences see in those for whom Christ died, insensibility to His love, hardness of heart, and no response of gratitude and affection to the Giver of all good things? Shall affairs of minor importance absorb the whole power of the being, and the love of God meet no return? . . . We need an increase of faith. We must wait, we must watch, we must pray, we must work, pleading that the Holy Ghost may be poured out upon us abundantly, that we may be lights in the world.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 198, 199.

5. GOING TO ALL THE WORLD

- a. In view of Christ's soon coming, what is the message to be given today? Zephaniah 1:14; Amos 4:12.
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“As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a message to bear—‘Prepare to meet thy God’ (Amos 4:12).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 332.

- b. How extensive is the work of giving the gospel message? Isaiah 61:10, 11; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6.
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“The time has come when the message of Christ's soon coming is to sound throughout the world.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 24.

- c. How is this message to be given? Acts 4:29–31.
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“Today we need to speak the truth with holy boldness.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 52.

“The trumpet must give a certain sound, for we are in the great day of the Lord's preparation.”—*Evangelism*, p. 218.

“From these chosen men of God [who are His faithful ambassadors] the truth will shine forth. It will be heard from their lips, reflected in their countenances, and demonstrated in their lives. They will be marked by purity and uncorruptness. The grace of Christ has a refining, ennobling influence on the character.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 347.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can parents begin a work of reformation in their homes?
2. As you faithfully fulfill your duties at home, where else will you be able to labor more effectively?
3. How does God measure us?
4. How can we be lights in this world?
5. What is involved in communicating the truth to the world?

The Message to Laodicea

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18).

“Everyone needs now to seek the Lord. God’s people will not endure the test unless there is a revival and a reformation. The Lord will not admit into the mansions He is preparing for the righteous, one soul who is self-sufficient.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 285.

Suggested Reading: *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, pp. 961–967.

Sunday

February 21

1. THE LAODICEAN CONDITION

a. What attitude is prevalent in the professed Christian world today? Isaiah 4:1.

b. What is the dangerous condition of Christ’s church during the Laodicean period? Revelation 3:17.

“There are many who are priding themselves upon their spiritual riches, their knowledge of the truth, and are living in guilty self-deception. When the members of the church humble themselves before God by zealous, not half-hearted, lifeless action, the Lord will receive them.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890.

“Christ cannot take up the names of those who are satisfied in their own self-sufficiency. He cannot importune in behalf of a people who feel no need of His help, who claim to know and possess everything.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 964.

2. THE STRAIGHT TESTIMONY TO LAODICEA

- a. **What startling denunciation does Christ give to His professed people? Revelation 3:15, 16.**
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“The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 16, 1873.

- b. **What message designed to correct this condition was rejected at the 1888 General Conference held in Minneapolis? Revelation 3:18; 18:1.**
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“The message given us by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner is the message of God to the Laodicean church, and woe be unto anyone who professes to believe the truth and yet does not reflect to others the God-given rays.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 92.

“The message and the messengers have not been received but despised. I longed that those who have greatly needed the message of divine love would hear Christ’s knock at the door of the heart, and let the heavenly guest enter. But at the hearts of some Jesus has knocked in vain. In rejecting the message given at Minneapolis, men committed sin. They have committed far greater sin by retaining for years the same hatred against God’s messengers, by rejecting the truth that the Holy Spirit has been urging home.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 913.

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.

“An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 234, 235.

3. KEEPING THE CANDLESTICK BURNING

- a. **What warning is given to us today? Revelation 2:5; Job 18:5, 6; Jeremiah 25:10.**
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“When we cease to fulfill our mission, when the candlestick refuses to reflect light, and the great truths committed to us individually in trust for the world are not given to them, then the candlestick will be removed.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 7, 1887.

“We have a message of warning to the church. God says to you, ‘Be zealous and repent.’ ‘I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent’ (Revelation 2:5). Precious time has been squandered in which you might have won souls to Christ—souls that through your love of ease are now lost. Every member of the church should awake to duty now. May God help you to take on the burden. Let the church members pray and fast and believe. Let the hearts of parents be turned to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents, ‘Lest I come,’ saith the Lord, ‘and smite the earth with a curse.’”—*Historical Sketches*, pp. 286, 287.

“The living Christian is one who has not left his first love, and his candlestick is not removed out of its place.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 1, 1892.

- b. **What should we do with the light that we have? Matthew 5:16; Luke 11:33. What do we need in order for our light to shine? Matthew 25:4.**
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“We are to look to Jesus, to catch His Spirit, to live in the light of His goodness and love, and to reflect His glory upon others.”—*My Life Today*, p. 200.

“Let the church arise and shine. Let every family practice self-denial, doing all they can to improve their own condition. Those who are truly on the Lord’s side will be self-denying and self-sacrificing. They will eat and drink to the glory of God, refusing to corrupt soul and body by intemperance. Then the condition of the church will testify that her light has not been removed. But if church members do not act the part God has assigned them, the movement of health reform will go on without them, and it will be seen that God has removed their candlestick out of its place. Those who refuse to receive and practice the light will be left in the background.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 339.

4. OIL IN OUR VESSELS

- a. **What is the similarity between the Laodicean condition and the state of the church represented by the five foolish virgins? Revelation 3:15, 18; Matthew 25:3, 8-10.**
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“In these sleeping disciples [Jesus] sees a representation of a sleeping church. When they should be watching, they are asleep.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1104.

“The state of the church represented by the foolish virgins is also spoken of as the Laodicean state.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890.

“Though the professed followers of Christ are in a deplorable condition, they are not yet in so desperate a strait as were the foolish virgins whose lamps were going out, and there was no time in which to replenish their vessels with oil. When the bridegroom came, those that were ready went in with him to the wedding; but when the foolish virgins came, the door was shut, and they were too late to obtain an entrance. But the counsel of the True Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm as in a hopeless case. There is yet a chance to remedy their state, and the Laodicean message is full of encouragement; for the backslidden church may yet buy the gold of faith and love, may yet have the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness need not appear.”—*Ibid.*, August 28, 1894.

- b. **What is needed by the slumbering, lukewarm church? Matthew 25:4, 7; Leviticus 24:2.**
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“God calls upon you to shine. With intense solicitude trim your lamps, take the oil of grace in your vessels, and keep your lamps trimmed and burning, that your light may shine bright and clear amid the moral darkness of this world. All who hold the truth should hold it in righteousness and appreciate its value and sacredness. They should ask wisdom of God, that they may send its rays into all the highways and byways of life. If we are sanctified by the truth, our souls will be pervaded by a deep and abiding sense of its importance, and it will be our meat and drink to obey the truth and pass along the precious light to others.”—*Ibid.*, February 7, 1893.

5. LIGHT BEARERS TO THE WORLD

- a. What is our work during the judgment period of Laodicea? Revelation 3:19–21; 14:6.
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“We have precious light to present before the people, and we rejoice that we have a message for this time which is present truth. The tidings that Christ is our righteousness has brought relief to many, many souls, and God says to His people, ‘Go forward.’”—*The Review and Herald*, July 23, 1889.

“It is the work of everyone to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men. Search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify of Him.

“If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.

- b. What condition within Christ’s remnant church will be a witness to the world? John 17:20, 21; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 3:8, 9.
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“It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. . . . While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 520.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the sad condition of the church during the Laodicean period?
2. What prevented God’s people from receiving the special power of the Holy Spirit more than 100 years ago?
3. How can we let our light shine?
4. What hope can we have as we consider the difference between Laodicea and the five foolish virgins?
5. What is God’s desire for us at this time?

First Sabbath Offering for a school in Colombia

“It is of the greatest importance that church schools shall be established, to which the children may be sent and still be under the watch care of their mothers and have opportunity to practice the lessons of helpfulness that it is God’s design they shall learn in the home.

. . . Much more can be done to save and educate the children. . . . This is a matter worthy of our best efforts.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 306.



The commission that Jesus Christ left to humanity at its heart involves a work of education. This work must be successfully carried by every soul who has accepted Christ as personal Saviour. Here in Colombia, we know from experience that one of the best ways to sow the gospel seed is through the education of children and young people in our own institutions that teach God’s-Word-based gospel principles.

Eleven years ago, we began a school that would preserve and teach our children those principles that are part of our faith. God greatly blessed the work, and others outside our church showed interest in sending their children to our institution. In response to this interest, we extended the call to all children who desired to be a part of our educational project, to enroll in our classes. As a result, many of these former students have sealed their covenant with the Lord through baptism.

At the present time, it is not easy supporting our institutions. Although we are approved by the Ministry of Education, we do not have the appropriate infrastructure for the harmonious development of the project. We now need to build our own facilities. We believe that educating to redeem is an investment worth making, since leaving our children and youth exposed to public schools where they receive an improper teaching, harms their spiritual and moral development.

For this reason we appeal to your generosity and ask that you give freely of your resources to this very important work of education. It is our prayer that God’s blessings be poured over every generous soul willing to help us reach this goal: “Educating to Redeem.”

Your brothers and sisters from Colombia

Reviving Primitive Godliness

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

“It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 478.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 339–342;
Colporteur Ministry, pp. 72–75.

Sunday

February 28

1. THE GREATEST NEED OF THE REMNANT CHURCH

- a. What is the most vital and pressing of all the needs of the church?
Hosea 6:1, 2; Isaiah 57:14, 15.
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“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.

- b. What power is it that enables a genuine revival? Zechariah 4:6;
John 3:5, 6.
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“A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—*Ibid.*, February 25, 1902.

2. A WORK OF RESTORATION

- a. What is involved in our mission? Isaiah 58:12; Acts 3:20, 21.
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“Living power must attend the message of Christ’s second appearing. We must not rest until we see many souls converted to the blessed hope of the Lord’s return. In the days of the apostles the message that they bore wrought a real work, turning souls from idols to serve the living God. The work to be done today is just as real, and the truth is just as much truth; only we are to give the message with as much more earnestness as the coming of the Lord is nearer. The message for this time is positive, simple, and of the deepest importance. We must act like men and women who believe it. Waiting, watching, working, praying, warning the world—this is our work.”—*Evangelism*, p. 219.

- b. How did Nehemiah meet opposition when rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the captivity? Nehemiah 6:3. What can we learn from this experience?
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“The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth’s history. The remnant of Israel were a feeble people, exposed to the ravages of their enemies; but through them God purposed to preserve in the earth a knowledge of Himself and of His law. They were the guardians of the true worship, the keepers of the holy oracles. Varied were the experiences that came to them as they rebuilt the temple and the wall of Jerusalem; strong was the opposition that they had to meet. Heavy were the burdens borne by the leaders in this work; but these men moved forward in unwavering confidence, in humility of spirit, and in firm reliance upon God, believing that He would cause His truth to triumph. Like King Hezekiah, Nehemiah ‘clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments. . . . And the Lord was with him’ (2 Kings 18:6, 7).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 677.

“God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have.”—*Ibid.*, p 142.

3. SYMPATHIZING WITH SIN

- a. How does the Bible define sin? 1 John 3:4. How does God regard unwise sympathy for sin? Titus 3:10, 11; Ephesians 5:11.
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“In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who, like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of this work will not hold their peace when wrong is done, neither will they cover evil with a cloak of false charity. They will remember that God is no respecter of persons, and that severity to a few may prove mercy to many. They will remember also that in the one who rebukes evil the spirit of Christ should ever be revealed.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 675.

“There is a sympathy for sin and sinners that is dangerous to the prosperity of the church at the present day. You must have charity is the cry. But that sentiment that would excuse wrong and shield the guilty, is not the charity of the Bible.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1881.

- b. Should sin go unrebuked? Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2.
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“When will be heard once more in the church the voice of faithful rebuke, ‘Thou art the man’? [See 2 Samuel 12:7.] If these words were not so rare, we should see more of the power of God. The Lord’s messengers should not complain of their efforts’ being fruitless until they repent of their love of approbation, their desire to please men, which leads them to suppress the truth, and to cry, Peace, when God has not spoken peace.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 150.

“[John 20:23 quoted.] Christ here gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the sermon on the mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. . . .

“Deal faithfully with wrong-doing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. ‘They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5:21).”—*Ibid.*, p. 502.

4. EARNESTNESS TO DO RIGHT

- a. How earnest will God's messengers be for the right? Isaiah 58:1.
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"In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon His messengers to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for Christ's first advent, called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: 'Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come' (Revelation 14:7). With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1184.

"Our message must be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding that his life was imperiled, he did not hesitate to declare God's word. And our work in this age must be done as faithfully."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 55.

- b. How do we often react when called to engage in a work of reformation, and how does this affect others? Deuteronomy 20:8.
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- c. What can we remember at such times? Isaiah 35:4; Matthew 28:20 (last part).
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"Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. He should have met the threat of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the One who had commissioned him to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. He should have told the messenger that the God in whom he trusted would protect him against the hatred of the queen. Only a few hours had passed since he had witnessed a wonderful manifestation of divine power, and this should have given him assurance that he would not now be forsaken. Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 160.

5. THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

- a. How effective and far-reaching is the power of example? 1 Timothy 4:12; Isaiah 62:10.

“The people will seldom rise higher than their minister. A world-loving spirit in him has a tremendous influence upon others. The people make his deficiencies an excuse to cover their own world-loving spirit. . . .

“Ministers should be examples to the flock. They should manifest an undying love for souls and the same devotion to the cause which they desire to see in the people.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 645, 646.

- b. How can we all be self-deceived about our own condition? Matthew 23:25–28. What is the remedy? James 4:8.

“Reformers are not destroyers. They will never seek to ruin those who do not harmonize with their plans and assimilate to them. Reformers must advance, not retreat. They must be decided, firm, resolute, unflinching; but firmness must not degenerate into a domineering spirit. God desires to have all who serve Him firm as a rock where principle is concerned, but meek and lowly of heart, as was Christ. Then, abiding in Christ, they can do the work He would do were He in their place.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 151.

“The religion of Jesus softens whatever is hard and rough in the temper, and smooths whatever is rugged and sharp in the manners. It makes the words gentle and the demeanor winning. Let us learn from Christ how to combine a high sense of purity and integrity with sunniness of disposition. A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity.”—*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 73.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the greatest need of the church today?
2. How can we be involved in giving the message of Jesus' soon return?
3. What is the church's responsibility toward its members?
4. What should be our attitude as we undertake a work of reformation?
5. How can we follow Jesus' example in our manner of dealing with others?

Our Message

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

“God’s plan is not to send messengers who will please and flatter sinners; He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into carnal security. But he lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces his soul with sharp arrows of conviction.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 178.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 100–108.

Sunday

March 6

1. A WATERED-DOWN MESSAGE

a. **How is it possible to weaken, or make of none effect, God’s message? 1 Corinthians 1:17; Mark 7:13.**

b. **Instead of a faithful message, what is often told to the people? Jeremiah 6:14, 15; Ezekiel 13:10.**

“People venture to commit sins that are grievous in the sight of God and think that they are not to be called to task for them, because they say they are due to nervousness, to a peculiar temperament; but this is simply soothing the conscience, and crying, ‘Peace, peace, when there is no peace.’ Sin is sin, and it is the delusion of Satan to look upon it in any other light than that it is grievous.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 1, 1893.

c. **How does God regard flattery? Psalms 5:9; 12:3. What does flattery achieve? Proverbs 26:28; 29:5.**

“Praise, flattery, and indulgence have done more toward leading precious souls into false paths, than any other art that Satan has devised.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 304.

2. OUR LIFESTYLE

- a. **What was John's diet, and what was said of his character? Matthew 3:4; Luke 1:80. In what ways was his lifestyle a rebuke to the people of his time?**
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"In the time of John the Baptist, greed for riches, and the love of luxury and display had become widespread. Sensuous pleasures, feasting and drinking, were causing physical disease and degeneracy, numbing the spiritual perceptions, and lessening the sensibility to sin. John was to stand as a reformer. By his abstemious life and plain dress he was to rebuke the excesses of his time. Hence the directions given to the parents of John—a lesson of temperance by an angel from the throne of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 100, 101.

"For years the Lord has been calling the attention of His people to health reform. This is one of the great branches of the work of preparation for the coming of the Son of man. John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just. He was a representative of those living in these last days, to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. John was a reformer. The angel Gabriel, direct from heaven, gave a discourse upon health reform to the father and mother of John. He said that he should not drink wine or strong drink, and that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth."—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 70, 71.

- b. **Compare John's dress with that of Elijah's. Matthew 3:4; 2 Kings 1:8. What lesson does this have for us?**
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"John's singular appearance carried the minds of his hearers back to the ancient seers. In his manner and dress he resembled the prophet Elijah. With the spirit and power of Elijah he denounced the national corruption and rebuked the prevailing sins. His words were plain, pointed, and convincing. Many believed him to be one of the prophets risen from the dead. The whole nation was stirred. Multitudes flocked to the wilderness."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 104.

"Puritan plainness and simplicity should mark the dwellings and apparel of all who believe the solemn truths for this time."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 189.

3. PRIDE, VANITY, EXTRAVAGANCE HAVE NO PLACE

- a. **What should be our attitude toward worldly things? 1 John 2:15–17. What is the basic principle behind dress reform, and what is its purpose? 1 Timothy 2:9, 10; Numbers 15:38–40.**
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“The children of Israel, after they were brought out of Egypt, were commanded to have a simple ribbon of blue in the border of their garments to distinguish them from the nations around them, and to signify that they were God’s peculiar people. The people of God are not now required to have a special mark placed upon their garments. But in the New Testament we are often referred to ancient Israel as examples. If God gave such definite directions to His ancient people in regard to their dress, will not the dress of His people in this age come under His notice? Should there not be in their dress a distinction from that of the world? Should not the people of God, who are His peculiar treasure, seek even in their dress to glorify God? And should they not be examples in dress, and by their simple style rebuke the pride, vanity, and extravagance of worldly, pleasure-loving professors? —God requires this of His people. Pride is rebuked in His word.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 23, 1900.

- b. **What is often the case when God’s people forsake Him, and what is our responsibility toward these brethren and sisters? Proverbs 28:4; Romans 1:32.**
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“When those who are uniting with the world, yet claiming great purity, plead for union with those who have ever been the opposers of the cause of truth, we should fear and shun them as decidedly as did Nehemiah. Such counsel is prompted by the enemy of all good. It is the speech of timeservers, and should be resisted as resolutely today as then. Whatever influence would tend to unsettle the faith of God’s people in His guiding power, should be steadfastly withstood.”—*Prophecies and Kings*, p. 660.

“There are times when apostasy comes into the ranks, when piety is left out of the heart by those who should have kept step with their divine Leader. The people of God separate from the source of their strength, and pride, vanity, extravagance, and display follow. There are idols within and idols without; but God sends the Comforter as a reprover of sin, that His people may be warned of their apostasy and rebuked for their backsliding.”—*Christian Education*, p. 95.

4. UPHOLDING THE STANDARD

- a. How can we lift the standard of truth today? 2 Peter 1:10–12; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:9.
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“All who join the church should reveal a transformation of character which shows their reverence for holy things. Their whole life should be molded after the refinement of Christ Jesus. Those who join the church are to be humble enough to receive instruction on the points wherein they are remiss, and wherein they can and must change. They must exert a Christian influence. Those who make no change in words or deportment, in their dress or in their homes, are living unto themselves and not unto Christ. They have not been created anew in Christ Jesus, unto the purifying of the heart and the outward surroundings.”—*Testimonies to Southern Africa*, p. 87.

“I am charged to say that there is need of a reformation in every church, in every family. We have no time to devote to pleasure-loving, no means to invest in buying the pictures of human faces. Invest your means in the cause of God. Guard carefully your example. It is of the greatest consequence to every soul to love and fear God, to obey His commands. We all need to become better acquainted with the laws of God’s Kingdom, lest we lose our eternal life insurance policy [2 Peter 1:10–12] and fail to find entrance into the city of God.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 409.

- b. What are our standards to be based upon? Isaiah 59:19; 8:20; Ecclesiastes 12:13.
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“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

5. ADDING POWER TO THE MESSAGE

- a. **When can the Holy Spirit work to forward the final message of truth?** Acts 2:1, 4; Revelation 2:26.
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“When the reproach of indolence and slothfulness shall have been wiped away from the church, the Spirit of the Lord will be graciously manifested. Divine power will be revealed. The church will see the providential working of the Lord of hosts. The light of truth will shine forth in clear, strong rays, and, as in the time of the apostles, many souls will turn from error to truth. The earth will be lighted with the glory of the Lord.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 46.

- b. **When can we expect the power of God to be manifested in a marveled manner to heal the sick?** Matthew 17:19–21; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 9:27.
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“You may say, ‘Why not, then, take hold of the work, and heal the sick as Christ did?’ I answer, You are not ready. Some have believed; some have been healed; but there are many who make themselves sick by intemperate eating or by indulging in other wrong habits. When they get sick, shall we pray for them to be raised up, that they may carry on the very same work again? There must be a reformation throughout our ranks; the people must reach a higher standard before we can expect the power of God to be manifested in a marked manner for the healing of the sick.”—*Medical Ministry*, pp. 15, 16.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is flattery, and why should Christians not use it?
2. How did John rebuke the intemperance prevalent in his time? What does this imply for us?
3. What has happened to those who exhibit pride, vanity, and extravagance?
4. How do we reveal that we have been created anew in Christ?
5. In order for the message to go forward with power, how must we live?

A Work of Restoration

“They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities” (Isaiah 61:4).

“Christ came to adjust truths that had been misplaced and made to serve the cause of error. He recalled them, repeated them, placed them in their proper position in the framework of truth, and bade them stand fast forever. Thus it was with the law of God, with the Sabbath, and with the marriage institution.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 21.

Suggested Reading: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 326–339.

Sunday

March 13

1. THE SABBATH—THE BREACH IN GOD’S LAW

- a. What significance is there in repairing the breach made in God’s Law? Isaiah 58:12; 1 Kings 18:30; Nehemiah 2:17.
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“In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man is to be repaired. God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

“The Sabbath commandment is placed in the midst of the Decalogue, and it was instituted in Eden at the same time that God instituted the marriage relation. God gave the Sabbath as a memorial of His creative power and works. . . . He made its observance obligatory upon man, in order that he might contemplate the works of God, dwell upon His goodness, His mercy and love, and through nature look up to nature’s God. If man had always observed the Sabbath, there would never have been an unbeliever, and infidel, or an atheist in the world.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1896.

2. MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY UNIT

- a. **What was the original design of God in regard to marriage? Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6.**
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“When the Pharisees . . . questioned Him concerning the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. ‘Because of the hardness of your hearts,’ He said, Moses ‘suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so’ (Matthew 19:8). He referred them to the blessed days of Eden when God pronounced all things ‘very good.’ Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall ‘leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one,’ He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time (Genesis 2:24). That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 340, 341.

“Marriage was from the creation, constituted by God, a divine ordinance. The marriage institution was made in Eden. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden, when the foundations of the world were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Then let this, God’s institution of marriage, stand before you as firm as the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, pp. 160, 161.

- b. **How will both the divine institution of marriage and the family relationship be restored in the last days? Malachi 4:5, 6; Matthew 17:11; Acts 3:20, 21.**
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“There were two institutions founded in Eden that were not lost in the Fall—the Sabbath and the marriage relation. These were carried by man beyond the gates of paradise. He who loves and observes the Sabbath, and maintains the purity of the marriage institution, thereby proves himself the friend of man and the friend of God. He who by precept or example lessens the obligation of these sacred institutions is the enemy of both God and man, and is using his influence and his God-given talents to bring in a state of confusion and moral corruption.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

3. PRACTICING ABSTEMIOUSNESS IN DIET

- a. What type of lifestyle should those preparing for Jesus' soon return maintain? 1 Corinthians 9:25; 10:31; Luke 4:2–4.
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“John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just. He was a representative of those living in the last days, to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. And the same principles of temperance which John practiced should be observed by those who in our day are to warn the world of the coming of the Son of man.”—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 39.

“As our first parents lost Eden through the indulgence of appetite, our only hope of regaining Eden is through the firm denial of appetite and passion. Abstemiousness in diet and control of all the passions will preserve the intellect and give mental and moral vigor, enabling men to bring all their propensities under the control of the higher powers and to discern between right and wrong, the sacred and the common.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 491.

- b. What kind of diet was originally given to Adam? Genesis 1:29; 3:18.
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“We must study God’s original plan for man’s diet. He who created man and who understands his needs appointed Adam his food. ‘Behold,’ He said, ‘I have given you every herb yielding seed, . . . and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food’ (Genesis 1:29, ARV). Upon leaving Eden to gain his livelihood by tilling the earth under the curse of sin, man received permission to eat also ‘the herb of the field’ (Genesis 3:18).

“Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of endurance, and a vigor of intellect that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 295, 296.

- c. What attitude in regard to diet is detrimental to the spiritual experience? Isaiah 22:13, 14.

4. A CHANGE OF HEART

- a. Before God can begin a work of restoration with each of us, what must first take place? Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9.
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“If we have sinned against the Lord, we shall never have peace and restoration to His favor without full confession and reformation in regard to the very things in which we have been remiss. Not until we have used every means in our power to repair the evil, can God approve and bless us. The path of confession is humiliating, but it is the only way by which we can receive strength to overcome. All the dropped stitches may never be picked up so that our work shall be as perfect and God-pleasing as it should have been; but every effort should be made to do this so far as it is possible to accomplish it.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 22, 1888.

- b. What has God promised to do with the hearts of those who desire to serve Him? Ezekiel 36:26.
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- c. How all-absorbing is the truth to the converted Christian? Romans 10:10; Mark 12:30. What will be the constant prayer? Psalm 139:23, 24.
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“Truth must become truth to the receiver, to all intents and purposes. It must be stamped on the heart. . . . The heart is the citadel of the being, and until that is wholly on the Lord’s side the enemy will gain constant victories over us through his subtle temptations.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 140.

“God looks at the heart; ‘all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do’ (Hebrews 4:13). Will He be satisfied with anything but truth in the inward parts? Every truly converted soul will carry the unmistakable marks that the carnal mind is subdued.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 163.

5. AN ENDURING MESSAGE

- a. How do the righteous regard the message of truth in contrast to the wicked? Proverbs 4:19, 18; 2 Peter 3:18.
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“The sanctified soul will not be content to remain in ignorance but will desire to walk in the light and to seek for greater light. As a miner digs for gold and silver, so the follower of Christ will seek for truth as for hidden treasures and will press from light to a greater light, ever increasing in knowledge. He will continually grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Self must be overcome. Every defect of character must be discerned in God’s great mirror.”—*Selected Messages*, bk 1, p. 317.

- b. How long will truth endure? Psalms 100:5; 117:2; Proverbs 12:19. How long will the work of reformation continue?
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“The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 353.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When was the Sabbath given to humanity, and what was its purpose?
2. What happens in society when people disregard God’s Sabbath and His design for marriage?
3. How does temperance or the lack of temperance affect our choices?
4. What should we realize about the condition of our heart if we are constantly failing when tempted?
5. If we are truly sanctified, what will be our attitude toward light, or knowledge?

The Call of the Church

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isaiah 62:10).

“Let it be written upon the conscience as with a pen of iron upon the rock, that real success, whether for this life or for the life to come, can be secured only by faithful adherence to the eternal principles of right.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 164.

Suggested Reading: *Evangelism*, pp. 217–221.

Sunday

March 20

1. A MESSAGE FOR US

- a. **Why is it important that we apply to ourselves the message of the True Witness to Laodicea? Revelation 3:14–17; 1 Corinthians 8:2; 10:12.**
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“The message to the Laodicean church comes home to those who do not apply it to themselves.”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 99.

- b. **What shows that the Laodicean condition is not hopeless? Revelation 3:18. What will we need to do to apply the remedy? 1 Peter 5:6; Psalm 147:11.**
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“But the counsel of the true Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm as in a hopeless case. There is yet a chance to remedy their state, and the Laodicean message is full of encouragement; for the backslidden church may yet buy the gold of faith and love, may yet have the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness need not appear. Purity of heart, purity of motive, may yet characterize those who are halfhearted and who are striving to serve God and mammon. They may yet wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 966.

2. A WAKE-UP CALL

- a. **What must we do so that we can have a part in carrying the final message to the world?** 1 Corinthians 15:34; Romans 13:11.
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“We are living in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing. We have no time—not a moment—to lose. Let us not be found sleeping on guard. Let no one say in his heart or by his works: ‘My Lord delayeth His coming.’ Let the message of Christ’s soon return sound forth in earnest words of warning. Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us. Let ministers and lay members go forth into the ripening fields to tell the unconcerned and indifferent to seek the Lord while He may be found. The workers will find their harvest wherever they proclaim the forgotten truths of the Bible. They will find those who will accept the truth and will devote their lives to winning souls to Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 252, 253.

- b. **What work is to be carried forward at this time?** Nehemiah 2:18; Psalm 94:16.
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“The Lord desires His people to arise and do their appointed work. The responsibility of warning the world rests not upon the ministry alone. The lay members of the church are to share in the work of soul saving. By means of missionary visits and by a wise distribution of our literature, many who have never been warned may be reached. Let companies be organized to search for souls. Let the church members visit their neighbors and open to them the Scriptures. Some may be set to work in the hedges, and thus, by wise planning, the truth may be preached in all districts. With perseverance in this work, increasing aptitude for it will come, and many will see fruit of their labors in the salvation of souls. These converted ones will, in turn, teach others. Thus the seed will be sown in many places, and the truth be proclaimed to all.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 25, 1912.

“We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do, but soon it will be more difficult than we imagine.”—*Evangelism*, p. 218.

3. REVIVING THE DRY BONES

- a. In the vision given to Ezekiel about the valley of the dry bones, what did God promise to do with the dry bones? Ezekiel 37:5, 6. What was the source of power which gave life to the bones? Verses 13, 14.
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“What power must we have from God that icy hearts, having only a legal religion, should see the better things provided for them—Christ and His righteousness! A life-giving message was needed to give life to the dry bones.”—*Selected Messages*, bk 3, p. 177.

“But not only does this simile of the dry bones apply to the world, but also to those who have been blessed with great light; for they also are like the skeletons of the valley. They have the form of men, the framework of the body; but they have not spiritual life. But the parable does not leave the dry bones merely knit together into the forms of men; for it is not enough that there is symmetry of limb and feature. The breath of life must vivify the bodies, that they may stand upright and spring into activity. These bones represent the house of Israel, the church of God, and the hope of the church is the vivifying influence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord must breathe upon the dry bones, that they may live.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, pp. 1165, 1166.

- b. What does the work of revival involve? Revelation 3:19, 20; 2 Timothy 4:2.
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“The angels of God are going from church to church, doing their duty; and Jesus Christ is knocking at the doors of your hearts for entrance. But the means that God has devised to awaken the church to a sense of their spiritual destitution have not been regarded. The voice of the True Witness has been heard in reproof but has not been obeyed. Men have chosen to follow their own way, instead of God’s way, because self was not crucified in them. Thus the light has had but little effect upon hearts and minds. ‘Be zealous, and repent.’”—*The Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888.

“Those who bear the message to the world should seek the Lord earnestly, that His Holy Spirit may be abundantly showered upon them. You have no time to lose. Pray for the power of God, that you may work with success for those nigh and afar off.”—*Selected Messages*, bk 1, pp. 92, 93.

4. LIFTING UP CHRIST

- a. What is the one thing which absorbs the attention of God’s revived messengers? Psalm 17:15; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2.**

“Deep, fervent piety at home, in the church, and in the neighborhood, will bring souls to behold wondrous things out of the law, and to see the glorious truth of Christ our righteousness. . . .

“Those who have the truth open before them for this time bear a solemn responsibility. They must proclaim repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. They must dwell upon the cross of Christ and call the attention of every soul to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity, His holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the theme that needs to be brought out in every discourse. I have been shown that there must be a great awakening among the people of God. Many are unconverted whose names are on the church books. Let these words be repeated by men who are consecrated to the work: [John 3:16 quoted].”—*The Review and Herald*, August 13, 1889.

“One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others, Christ our Righteousness.”—*The Paulson Collection*, p. 342.

- b. How will the revived servant of the Lord react, despite opposition to the message of warning? Joel 2:17; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18.**

“God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 452, 453.

5. LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

- a. What great privilege do we have in preparation for Christ's soon return? Luke 8:16; Isaiah 60:1.
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“It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.

- b. In view of the soon coming of Christ, how should we be living today? 2 Peter 3:11, 12; Titus 2:11–13.
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“Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Emmanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 419.

“The Lord is coming. Lift up your heads and rejoice. . . . This is the good, the joyful news which should electrify every soul, which should be repeated in our homes, and told to those whom we meet on the street. What more joyful news can be communicated!”—*Evangelism*, p. 218.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is the Laodicean message full of encouragement for us?
2. What are some practical ways that lay members can reach out to the souls around them?
3. How can the vision of the dry bones apply to those who have great light?
4. In what ways will God overrule the powers of darkness, as His people pray in faith?
5. In what way will God's people spread the message of joy for this time?

First Sabbath Offerings



JANUARY 2
for a church in Ghana
(See p. 4.)

FEBRUARY 6
for World Disaster
and Welfare
(See p. 30.)



MARCH 5
for Education in
Colombia
(See p. 51.)