



The Character of the Wise

Lessons From the Writings of Solomon

Sabbath Bible Lessons

Senior Division

April–June 2002

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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

During the second quarter of 2002, the attention of Sabbath school students around the world will focus on *The Character of the Wise*, as revealed through lessons from the writings of Solomon. Many of us are aware of Solomon's history—of his faith, failures, and repentance. Ellen White wrote: "I have been instructed by the Lord to call the attention of our people to the history of Solomon. From the record of his reign we may learn many lessons helpful in avoiding the paths that led to Israel's downfall" (*The Review and Herald*, Aug. 17, 1905).

"Solomon, in his youth, made David's choice his own. Pure and noble in character, he was named Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord. . . . The Lord imparted to Solomon the wisdom that he desired above earthly riches, honor, or long life. His petition for a quick mind, a large heart, and a tender spirit, was granted. He became the wisest of earthly monarchs, because God gave him superior wisdom and an understanding heart."—*Ibid.*, October 19, 1905.

Here we will not be examining the specific details of Solomon's actual life. Instead, our aim will be to study the heaven-sent inspiration which gave him such wisdom. The biblical writings of Solomon provide a wealth of insight to fortify our minds in developing the type of character and integrity we all need in order to stand amid the perils of the last days. The books penned by Solomon especially provide us with strong guidance on how to avoid the serious mistakes he made—errors to which we, too, are dangerously prone in our day.

"Solomon was endowed with wonderful wisdom; but the world drew him away from God. We need to guard our souls with all diligence, lest the cares and the attractions of the world absorb the time that should be given to eternal things. God warned Solomon of his danger, and today He warns us not to imperil our souls by affinity with the world."—*Ibid.*, February 1, 1906.

May the Lord help us to take these lessons from Solomon's writings to heart and benefit from their instruction!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for Pakistan



Pakistan is an Islamic Republic in the western part of the Indian subcontinent. The name “Pakistan” is derived from the Urdu words “Pak” (meaning pure) and “stan” (meaning country).

The work of Reformation reached Pakistan in the mid-eighties. But even though the souls were ready, religious restrictions hindered the organization of the work there until the end of the millennium. With great difficulty the work has been established in three areas covering the northern (Islamabad), central (Gujrat), and southern (Karachi) districts of the country.

Pakistan is today one of the fastest growing missions in the world. Its membership has grown rapidly since its inception. Many souls are waiting for baptism, but there are great difficulties which they face. Conversion is illegal, and can be punished by death if the authorities wish. It is very difficult to hold meetings, and almost impossible to hold public baptisms.

But even with these restrictions the work continues to grow. The Pakistan Mission owns a church property in the central city of Gujrat. The building is over 160 years old, one of the oldest we possess in the Movement, having been built in 1842.

The offering collected today will be used by the Mission to complete ongoing mission projects including the refurbishing of the Gujrat church, the building of a center in Islamabad, and the printing of new pamphlets and tracts for missionary distribution.

On April 6, please remember these needs and pray for the continued providence of the Lord for the work in Pakistan.

VITAL STATISTICS

- **Area:** 803,940 sq km (310,400 sq mi)
- **Population:** 141,553,775 (2000 est.)
- **Capital:** Islamabad (pop. 201,000)
- **Literacy Rate:** 35%
- **Languages:** Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Pashto, Urdu (official), Balochi, Hindko, Brahui, English, Burushaski, and others
- **Religions:** Islam 97%, Others (Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Parsi) 3%

PROJECT 00J

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

The Garden of the Heart

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

“The soil of the heart, like that of a garden, will produce weeds and brambles unless the seeds of precious flowers are planted there and receive care and cultivation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 202, 203.

Suggested Readings: *This Day With God*, p. 73.
In Heavenly Places, p. 162.

Sunday

March 31

1. BUILDING STRENGTH OF SOUL

a. **What foundation understood by Solomon should we ever bear in mind? 1 Chronicles 28:9.**

“God is represented as weighing all men, their words, their deeds, their motives, that which determines character. . . . There is not a thought or motive in the heart that God is not acquainted with. He sees all as clearly as if it stood out registered in living characters, and He weighs individual motives and actions.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 438.

b. **What should we consider in seeking to build upon this basic truth? Proverbs 23:7 (first part), 12.**

“Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day; and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded; for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the man is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual pulse is quickened, and the power for doing good is increased. And as one drop of rain prepares the way for another in moistening the earth, so one good thought prepares the way for another.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 144.

2. A GARDEN TO WEED

- a. **What lessons from nature reveal how our spiritual life can flourish? Proverbs 27:18; 16:24.**

“The garden of the heart must be cultivated. The soil must be broken up by repentance. The evil growths that choke the good grain must be uprooted. As soil once overgrown with thorns can be reclaimed only by diligent labor, so the evil tendencies of the heart can be overcome only by earnest effort in the name and strength of Christ.”—*Education*, p. 111.

“Silence the evil word, put away the unholy thought; for the True Witness weighs every word, sets a value on every action, and declares, ‘I know thy works.’ Then let love, truth, kindness, and forbearance be the precious plants that you shall cultivate in the garden of the heart.”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 14, 1892.

- b. **What must we understand about the human heart? Proverbs 16:2; Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Corinthians 13:5, 6.**

“It is for the eternal interest of everyone to search his own heart, and to improve every God-given faculty. . . . Let all remember that there is not a motive in the heart of any man that the Lord does not clearly see. The motives of each one are weighed as carefully as if the destiny of the human agent depended upon this one result. We need a connection with divine power, that we may have an increase of clear light and an understanding of how to reason from cause to effect. We need to have the powers of the understanding cultivated, by our being partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Let each one consider carefully the solemn truth, God in heaven is true, and there is not a design however intricate, not a motive however carefully hidden, that He does not clearly understand. He reads the secret devising of every heart. Men may plan out crooked actions for the future, thinking that God does not understand; but in that great day when the books are opened, and every man is judged by the things written in the books, those actions will appear as they are.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 53.

3. NURTURING THE GARDEN

- a. **How can we fortify our life in Christ? Proverbs 10:8, 9.**

“The very first step in the path of life is to keep the mind stayed on God, to have His fear continually before the eyes. A single departure from moral integrity blunts the conscience, and opens the door to the next temptation. [Proverbs 10:9 quoted.] We are commanded to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves; but the daily experience of life shows that this law is disregarded. Uprightness in deal and moral integrity will secure the favor of God, and make a man a blessing to himself and to society; but amid the varied temptations that assail one whichever way he may turn, it is impossible to keep a clear conscience and the approval of heaven without divine aid and a principle to love honesty for the sake of the right.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1158.

- b. **What type of attitude pleases God? Proverbs 23:15–17.**

“The heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand. In the fierce storms of temptation it will surely be overthrown. David’s prayer should be the petition of every soul: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ (Psalm 51:10). And having become partakers of the heavenly gift, we are to go on unto perfection, being ‘kept by the power of God through faith’ (1 Peter 1:5).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

- c. **What should be our constant focus? Proverbs 7:1–3.**

“Double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Keep God’s commandments, and live, and His law as the apple of your eye. Tax every moment to the utmost in laboring for your own eternal interest and for the salvation of souls around you.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 353.

4. PARTAKING OF DIVINITY

- a. **With what description does the apostle Peter confirm the relationship we are to have with Christ? 2 Peter 1:4. How does he explain it further? 1 Peter 1:13–16.**

“Let everyone who desires to be a partaker of the divine nature appreciate the fact that he must escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1145.

- b. **Why is our mind—as the governing center (or heart) of our soul—so important? Proverbs 4:23.**

“Diligent heart-keeping is essential to a healthy growth in grace. The heart in its natural state is a habitation for unholy thoughts and sinful passions. When brought into subjection to Christ, it must be cleansed by the Spirit from all defilement. This cannot be done without the consent of the individual.

“When the soul has been cleansed, it is the duty of the Christian to keep it undefiled. Many seem to think that the religion of Christ does not call for the abandonment of daily sins, the breaking loose from habits which have held the soul in bondage. They renounce some things condemned by the conscience, but they fail to represent Christ in the daily life. They do not bring Christlikeness into the home. They do not show a thoughtful care in their choice of words. Too often, fretful, impatient words are spoken, words which stir the worst passions of the human heart. Such ones need the abiding presence of Christ in the soul. Only in His strength can they keep guard over the words and actions.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1157.

5. LABORING WITH THE MASTER GARDENER

- a. **What comes as we cultivate the beauty of a Christlike character? Proverbs 22:11; 16:7; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 5:8.**

“The affections should center upon God. Contemplate His greatness, His mercy and excellences. Let His goodness and love and perfection of character captivate your heart.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 99.

“We are to make determined efforts to overcome as Christ overcame. From this warfare no one is excused. If for us the gates of the holy city swing ajar, if we behold the King in His beauty, we must now overcome as Christ overcame.”—*Ibid.*, p. 371.

“We have only a little while in which to prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have not a moment to lose. We need to begin at once to gain a preparation to enter the courts above. God will help all who will help themselves. But if you sit down under Satan’s shadow, and let him tempt you to look on the objectionable side, and to weaken the hands of those who are trying to carry forward the work of the Lord, how can you hope to gain the victory over temptation? You cannot be a joint heir with Christ unless you have His spirit, and are determined to gain heaven at any cost. Those who regardless of all else, place themselves in God’s hands, to be and do all that He would have them, will see the King in His beauty. They will behold His matchless charms, and, touching their golden harps, they will fill all heaven with rich music and with songs to the Lamb.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 15, 1905.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Why are our moment-by-moment thoughts so important?**
2. **What should we realize about the tendency of our mind?**
3. **How only can we maintain a connection with Christ?**
4. **What is the duty of everyone who professes Christ?**
5. **How is it possible to see the King in His beauty?**

A Vital Characteristic

“The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility” (Proverbs 15:33).

“Humility will be cultivated, because we shall feel our nothingness, and realize our dependence upon God.”—*The Youth's Instructor*, August 31, 1893.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 253, 254.
That I May Know Him, p. 65.

Sunday

April 7

1. A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

- a. **In contrast to the anguish of those who reject God's wisdom (Proverbs 1:20–32), what is promised to all who seek to maintain their heart in faithfulness? Proverbs 1:33.**

“In the work of heart-keeping we must be instant in prayer, unwearied in petitioning the throne of grace for assistance. Those who take the name of Christian should come to God in earnestness and humility, pleading for help. The Saviour has told us to pray without ceasing. The Christian cannot always be in the position of prayer, but his thoughts and desires can always be upward. Our self-confidence would vanish, did we talk less and pray more.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1157.

- b. **How do we become eligible to gain heavenly wisdom? Proverbs 3:34; 4:1; 11:2.**

“Obtain an experimental knowledge of God by wearing the yoke of Christ. He gives wisdom to the meek and lowly, enabling them to judge of what is truth, bringing to light the why and wherefore, pointing out the result of certain actions. The Holy Spirit teaches the student of the Scriptures to judge all things by the standard of righteousness and truth and justice. The divine revelation supplies him with the knowledge that he needs.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 371.

Monday

April 8

2. PREPARING FOR SERVICE

- a. **What is the key to life's happiness? Proverbs 3:5–8.**

“In our separation from God, in our pride and darkness, we are constantly seeking to elevate ourselves, and we forget that lowliness of mind is power. . . . Pride and self-importance, when compared with lowliness and humility, are indeed weakness. We are invited to learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart; then we shall experience that rest and peace so much to be desired.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 477.

- b. **How can God use us most effectively? Proverbs 15:33; 16:3.**

“The Lord can use most effectually those who are most sensible of their own unworthiness and inefficiency. He will teach them to exercise the courage of faith. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 23, 1881.

- c. **What attitude are we to cultivate from our very youth? Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10; 12:1. How can we promote the grace of humility in the children and youth within our care?**

“One of the characteristics that should be especially cherished and cultivated in every child is that self-forgetfulness which imparts to the life such an unconscious grace. Of all excellences of character this is one of the most beautiful, and for every true lifework it is one of the qualifications most essential.

“Children need appreciation, sympathy, and encouragement, but care should be taken not to foster in them a love of praise. It is not wise to give them special notice, or to repeat before them their clever sayings. The parent or teacher who keeps in view the true ideal of character and the possibilities of achievement, cannot cherish or encourage self-sufficiency. He will not encourage in the youth the desire or effort to display their ability or proficiency. He who looks higher than himself will be humble; yet he will possess a dignity that is not abashed or disconcerted by outward display or human greatness.”—*Education*, p. 237.

3. A MEANS OF ACQUIRING STRENGTH

- a. **What is the secret of true strength? Proverbs 10:29; Isaiah 26:3, 4.**
-

“The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom.

“If they would cherish true humility, the Lord could do much more for His people; but there are few who can be trusted with any large measure of responsibility or success without becoming self-confident and forgetful of their dependence upon God. This is why, in choosing the instruments for His work, the Lord passes by those whom the world honors as great, talented, and brilliant. They are too often proud and self-sufficient. They feel competent to act without counsel from God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 553, 554.

- b. **What is the main difference between the proud, self-sufficient person and the teachable one? Proverbs 9:8, 9. How are those who are teachable blessed? Proverbs 9:10.**
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“The teachable and trusting ones, having a right purpose and a pure heart, need not wait for great occasions or for extraordinary abilities before they employ their powers. They should not stand irrelative, questioning, and fearing what the world will say or think of them. We are not to weary ourselves with anxious care, but to go on, quietly performing with faithfulness the work which God assigns us, and leaving the result wholly with Him.

“If they but preserve their sincerity, their meekness, and humility, the poorest, weakest, and humblest of Christ’s followers, working in love, may start waves of blessing that shall go on widening and deepening, to refresh and bless the world. In order that they may do this, Christ must shine forth in their character. Let the daily life be a reflection of the life of Christ, and the testimony thus borne to the world will have a powerful influence. Heaven alone will reveal the fruits of an unselfish, holy life.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 23, 1881.

4. A QUALITY OF GOD’S TRUE CHURCH

- a. **What thoughts should we keep in mind, especially during this present era of Laodicea—the antitypical day of atonement? Isaiah 53:3; Ecclesiastes 7:2–8; 1 Peter 5:5, 6.**
-

“[One] great need of the church is humility—the deep humility of Christ. Believers need to see the necessity of working as Christ worked. O for that devotion and humility of heart that will lead God’s people to do those things that Christ has commanded, and still in all humility and truth say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done only that which it was our duty to do! But many, many are swelling with pride and importance, who in God’s estimation are lukewarm. Self-gratification is revealed because of a few things accomplished. Where do we hear the testimony of hearts that are broken in repentance and confession before God? Where do we see professed believers wearing the yoke of Christ? How little time is given to fervent prayer, the result of which would be the possession of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 16, 1909.

- b. **Throughout history, what has caused both men and churches to either rise or fall? Proverbs 18:12. What must we realize in seeking to follow Jesus? Proverbs 29:23.**
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“There is too much of self and too little of Jesus in the ministry of all denominations. The Lord uses humble men to proclaim His messages. Had Christ come in the majesty of a king, with the pomp which attends the great men of earth, many would have accepted Him. But Jesus of Nazareth did not dazzle the senses with a display of outward glory and make this the foundation of their reverence. He came as a humble man to be the Teacher and Exemplar as well as the Redeemer of the race. Had He encouraged pomp, had He come followed by a retinue of the great men of earth, how could He have taught humility? how could He have presented such burning truths as in His Sermon upon the Mount? His example was such as He wished all His followers to imitate.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 253.

5. LEARNING TO LIVE GOD’S WAY

- a. How did Christ illustrate the life of God—and why was He so often misunderstood? Proverbs 13:9; 4:18, 19.

“Our Saviour was the light of the world, but the world knew Him not. He was constantly employed in works of mercy, shedding light upon the pathway of all; yet He did not call upon those with whom He mingled to behold His unexampled virtue, His self-denial, self-sacrifice, and benevolence. The Jews did not admire such a life. They considered His religion worthless, because it did not accord with their standard of piety. They decided that Christ was not religious in spirit or character; for their religion consisted in display, in praying publicly, and in doing works of charity for effect. They trumpeted their good deeds, as do those who claim sanctification. They would have all understand that they are without sin. But the whole life of Christ was in direct contrast to this. He sought neither gain nor honor. His wonderful acts of healing were performed in as quiet a manner as possible, although He could not restrain the enthusiasm of those who were the recipients of His great blessings. Humility and meekness characterized His life. And it was because of His lowly walk and unassuming manners, which were in such marked contrast to their own, that the Pharisees would not accept Him.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 14.

- b. How should Christ’s life affect us? Proverbs 4:10–13.

“If Christ had to make so great a sacrifice, if He had to endure such sufferings because of my sin, shall I not bow in humility, and regret that I have inflicted such grief upon His divine soul?”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 28, 1889.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name one essential key to diligent “heart-keeping.”
2. How can we improve the attitude of our children?
3. Why is a teachable spirit so desirable?
4. What is special about God’s true remnant in any age?
5. Why can the true believer expect to be misunderstood?

In the Heart and Home

“He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (Song of Solomon 2:4).

“[Christ’s] is a love that fails not nor forsakes.”—*Education*, p. 90.

Suggested Readings: *Education*, pp. 259–261.
The Ministry of Healing, pp. 356–362.

1. LOVE IN ACTION

- a. Name some interesting truths which inspired poetry declares about love. Proverbs 10:12; 15:17.

- b. What are we to understand about the source, power, and result of love? 1 John 4:7–19; Proverbs 7:2.

“By contemplation of God’s matchless love, we take upon us His nature. Christ was a representative before men and before angels, of the character of the God of heaven. He demonstrated the fact that when humanity depends wholly upon God, men may keep God’s commandments and live, and His law be as the apple of the eye.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 226.

- c. In view of this great love offered to us, what should be the cry of our soul? Song of Solomon 1:7; Psalms 42:1, 2; 63:1–4.

“My soul cries out after the living God. My very being longs after Him. Oh, for to reflect His lovely image perfectly! Oh, for to be wholly consecrated to Him! Oh, how hard it is for dear self to die. We can rejoice in a whole Saviour; one who saves us from all sin. We can be shut in with God where we can daily say, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’ ‘to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ ”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 350.

2. DELIGHTING IN GOD'S LOVE

- a. How does Inspiration describe the way our seasons of devotion should be? Song of Solomon 2:3, 4.

“We need to appreciate more fully the meaning of the words: ‘I sat down under His shadow with great delight’ (Song of Solomon 2:3). These words do not bring to our minds the picture of hasty transit, but of quiet rest. There are many professing Christians who are anxious and depressed, many who are so full of busy activity that they cannot find time to rest quietly in the promises of God, who act as if they could not afford to have peace and quietness. To all such Christ’s invitation is: ‘Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 69.

“Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work. . . .

“Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need. Happy will it be for the children of our homes and the students of our schools when parents and teachers shall learn in their own lives the precious experience pictured in these words from the Song of Songs: [Song of Solomon 2:3, 4 quoted].”—*Education*, pp. 260, 261.

- b. What are we to find through our prayerful study of the Bible? Song of Solomon 4:15; John 4:10.

“The word of God is ‘a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon’ (Song of Solomon 4:15). The heart that has once tasted the love of Christ, cries out continually for a deeper draft, and as you impart you will receive in richer and more abundant measure. Every revelation of God to the soul increases the capacity to know and to love. The continual cry of the heart is, ‘More of Thee,’ and ever the Spirit’s answer is, ‘Much more.’ ”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 20.

3. COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

- a. How are we admonished against the dating and courtship practices which commonly prevail today? Proverbs 6:23–29; 5:1–13.

“Courtship, as carried on in this age, is a scheme of deception and hypocrisy, with which the enemy of souls has far more to do than the Lord.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 105.

“The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage. They follow impulse and blind passion. The courtship is carried on in a spirit of flirtation. The parties frequently violate the rules of modesty and reserve, and are guilty of indiscretion, if they do not break the law of God. The high, noble, lofty design of God in the institution of marriage is not discerned; therefore the purest affections of the heart, the noblest traits of character, are not developed.

“Not one word should be spoken, not one action performed, that you would not be willing the holy angels should look upon and register in the books above.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 141.

- b. How does Inspiration reveal the beauty of God’s true plan for marriage? Proverbs 5:15–18; Song of Solomon 7:6.

“Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love, are neither unreasonable nor blind.

“The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward.

“True love is not a strong, fiery, impetuous passion. On the contrary, it is calm and deep in its nature. It looks beyond mere externals, and is attracted by qualities alone. It is wise and discriminating, and its devotion is real and abiding.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 255.

4. ENDURING LOVE FOR OUR SPOUSE

- a. How does Scripture intertwine the Gospel message with God's plan for marriage? Song of Solomon 2:16; 4:7; 6:3.

“In both the Old and the New Testament the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people, the redeemed ones whom He has purchased at the cost of Calvary. ‘Fear not,’ He says; ‘thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.’ ‘Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you’ (Isaiah 54:4, 5; Jeremiah 3:14).”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 64.

- b. How are married couples to reflect Christ's love in daily life? Song of Solomon 5:10, 16; Ephesians 5:22–33.

“By having a knowledge of Christ—His words, His habits, and His lessons of instruction—we borrow the virtues of the character we have so closely studied, and become imbued with the spirit we have so much admired. Jesus becomes to us ‘the chiefest among ten thousand,’ the One ‘altogether lovely’ (Song of Solomon 5:10, 16).”—*The Review and Herald*, March 15, 1887.

“Let each give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

“Though difficulties, perplexities, and discouragements may arise, let neither husband nor wife harbor the thought that their union is a mistake or a disappointment. Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven.”—*Ibid.*, p. 360.

5. THE FAMILY CIRCLE

- a. Why should we be especially thankful if blessed with the privilege of having a family? Ecclesiastes 4:8–12.

“That cannot be a happy home where love is not cultivated between husband and wife, between parents and children. If parents have been self-centered, and have trained their children in an atmosphere where love was not manifested in affectionate words and actions, then change the atmosphere of your home as quickly as possible. Let husbands love their wives, and let the wives see that they reverence their husbands. The plan of salvation was devised in order to transform the natural character, and fashion it after the divine image. When the grace of Christ is received in the heart, it will soften whatever is harsh, and subdue that which is coarse and unkind. Courtesy will be expressed in the affairs of home life.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 7, 1894.

“Hearts that are filled with the love of Christ can never get very far apart. Religion is love, and a Christian home is one where love reigns and finds expression in words and acts of thoughtful kindness and gentle courtesy.

“Our homes must be made a Bethel, our hearts a shrine. Wherever the love of God is cherished in the soul, there will be peace, there will be light and joy. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 255.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does love have to do with God?
2. Why do many fail to benefit much from Bible reading?
3. Why is such great suffering caused by lovesick romance today?
4. Name some ways to improve our marriages.
5. Describe God's plan for the family circle.

Our Neighbor

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

“Many think that it is impossible to love our neighbor as ourselves, but it is the only genuine fruit of Christianity.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 49.

Suggested Readings: *Education*, pp. 84–96.
The Desire of Ages, pp. 637–641.

Sunday

April 21

1. TRUE FELLOWSHIP

- a. **What is to govern our fellowship among believers? Proverbs 17:17; 30:5; Galatians 6:10.**

“[Christ] should be presented as the Source of all true pleasure and satisfaction, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the Author of every blessing, the One in whom all our hopes of eternal life are centered. In every religious exercise let the love of God and the joy of the Christian experience appear in their true beauty.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 175.

- b. **What is God’s plan for our relationship with one another in church capacity? James 2:8; John 17:21; Proverbs 18:24.**

“He who is conformed to the image of Christ will possess His grace, and will help to strengthen every brother in the faith. No harsh or bitter words that discourage the soul will fall from his lips. ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.’ ‘Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.’ ‘Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. . . . Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:3; Hebrews 12:12–14).”—*The Review and Herald*, February 23, 1897.

Monday

April 22

2. TOUCHING OUR WORLD

- a. **What principle of service should we keep in mind regarding all our fellowmen? Proverbs 27:10 (first part).**

“Among the Jews the question, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ caused endless dispute. They had no doubt as to the heathen and the Samaritans. These were strangers and enemies. But where should the distinction be made among the people of their own nation and among the different classes of society? . . . This question Christ answered in the parable of the good Samaritan. He showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 376.

- b. **What can we learn from the way God’s infinite wisdom was manifested in the ministry of Jesus? Proverbs 11:30.**

“Jesus looked upon the world in its fallen state with infinite pity. He took humanity upon Himself that He might touch and elevate humanity. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He reached to the very depth of human misery and woe, to take man as He found him, a being tainted with corruption, degraded with vice, depraved by sin, and united with Satan in apostasy, and elevate him to a seat upon His throne. But it was written of Him that ‘He shall not fail nor be discouraged,’ and He went forth in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice, giving us an example that we should follow in His steps. We should work as did Jesus, departing from our own pleasure, turning away from Satan’s bribes, despising ease, and abhorring selfishness, that we may seek and save that which is lost, bringing souls from darkness into light, into the sunshine of God’s love. We have been commissioned to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 199.

3. A DUTY OFTEN NEGLECTED

- a. **What are we always to bear in mind regarding the poor? Proverbs 14:21; 19:17, 22. How did Jesus explain His perspective on this matter? Matthew 25:31–46.**

“To the rich, God has given wealth that they may relieve and comfort His suffering children; but too often they are indifferent to the wants of others. They feel themselves superior to their poor brethren. They do not put themselves in the poor man’s place. They do not understand the temptations and struggles of the poor, and mercy dies out of their hearts. In costly dwellings and splendid churches, the rich shut themselves away from the poor; the means that God has given to bless the needy is spent in pampering pride and selfishness. The poor are robbed daily of the education they should have concerning the tender mercies of God; for He has made ample provision that they should be comforted with the necessities of life. They are compelled to feel the poverty that narrows life, and are often tempted to become envious, jealous, and full of evil surmisings. Those who themselves have not endured the pressure of want too often treat the poor in a contemptuous way, and make them feel that they are looked upon as paupers.

“But Christ beholds it all, and He says, It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 639, 640.

“We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 195.

- b. **Describe an example of how the impartiality of our love may be tested. James 2:1–9.**
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4. LOVE FOR OTHERS IN NEED

- a. **What better future can we present to the discouraged? Proverbs 10:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.**
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“We are to bring to the lost the tidings that Christ can forgive sin, can renew the nature, can clothe the soul in the garments of His righteousness, bring the sinner to His right mind, and teach him and fit him up to be a laborer together with God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 199.

- b. **What should we remember about wealthy persons who know not God? Ecclesiastes 6:1, 2; Proverbs 11:4; 13:22.**
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“Riches and worldly honor cannot satisfy the soul. Many among the rich are longing for some divine assurance, some spiritual hope. Many long for something that will bring to an end the monotony of their aimless life. Many in official life feel their need of something which they have not. Few among them go to church, for they feel that they receive little benefit. The teaching they hear does not touch the heart. Shall we make no special appeal to them?

“God calls for earnest, humble workers, who will carry the gospel to the higher classes. It is by no casual, accidental touch that the wealthy, world-loving souls can be drawn to Christ. Decided personal effort must be put forth by men and women imbued with the missionary spirit, those who will not fail nor be discouraged.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 6, 1911.

- c. **How are we to consider those who hate and abuse us? Proverbs 24:17; 25:21. What was Jesus’ example?**
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“It was to bring the bread of life to His enemies that our Saviour left His home in heaven. Though calumny and persecution were heaped upon Him from the cradle to the grave, they called forth from Him only the expression of forgiving love.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 71.

5. A MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD

- a. How can we have safety from evil company? Proverbs 2:1-15. How did Enoch maintain his strength in service?

“It was by prayer and communion with God that Enoch was enabled to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are living in the perils of the last days, and we must receive our strength from the same Source. We must walk with God. A separation from the world is required of us, for we cannot remain free from its pollution unless we follow the example of the faithful Enoch.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 70.

“Enoch faithfully rehearsed to the people all that God had revealed to him by the spirit of prophecy. Some believed his words, and turned from their wickedness to fear and worship God. Such often sought Enoch in his places of retirement, and he instructed them, and prayed for them that God would give them a knowledge of His will. At length he chose certain periods for retirement, and would not suffer the people to find him, for they interrupted his holy meditation and communion with God. He did not exclude himself at all times from the society of those who loved him and listened to his words of wisdom; neither did he separate himself wholly from the corrupt. He met with the good and bad at stated times, and labored to turn the ungodly from their evil course, and instruct them in the knowledge and fear of God. He taught those who had the knowledge of God to serve Him more perfectly. He would remain with them as long as he could benefit them by his godly conversation and holy example, and then would withdraw himself from all society—from the just, the scoffing and idolatrous, to remain in solitude, hungering and thirsting for communion with God, and that divine knowledge which He alone could give him.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 62, 63.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is to characterize our Christian fellowship?
2. Name some ways in which we are to follow Jesus.
3. How can we improve our attitude toward the poor?
4. What do we often forget about the wealthy?
5. Describe the balanced life of Enoch.

First Sabbath Offering
for the Mission Work in Africa

The work of Reformation came early to the continent of Africa. By 1926 the work was already growing at a steady pace in such places as Southern and Northern Rhodesia. Besides the assistance of the General Conference, brethren from Germany, Brazil and Australia were most active in the furtherance of spreading the gospel in Africa in the latter half of the twentieth century.

“God has a great work to be accomplished in Africa, and no plans must be laid without the aid of His infinite wisdom. After your plans of labor have been talked over together, mingled with earnest prayer, work, work for Christ.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 293.

At the time of printing, the work of the Reform Movement in Africa is organized into 12 fields and missions. This offering will go to pay for mission expenses in this growing region. Among those missions that will be helped by this offering are Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Congo and Angola Missions. The offering will also assist the developing work in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

Please remember in your prayers the brethren and sisters in these missions as they give the final message of warning in their part of the world. Your gifts will bring the gospel to a people hungering and thirsting for the water of life.



S. Doss, African Regional Secretary

PROJECT 01E

Diligence

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

“We must labor as does the husbandman, with diligence and patience, that we may be partakers of the fruits.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 14, 1890.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 176–187.
Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 30–48.

Sunday

April 28

1. TOIL TO BE TREASURED

a. **What is causing many people today to be dissatisfied and discontented with life? Proverbs 13:4; 18:9; 11:24.**

b. **How does God teach us the value of diligent work? Proverbs 10:16; 13:11.**

“The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil. He was familiar with poverty, self-denial, and privation. This experience was a safeguard to Him. In His industrious life there were no idle moments to invite temptation. . . .

“Jesus lived in a peasant’s home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter’s shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

Monday

April 29

2. LESSONS FOR LIFE

a. **What are some important observations we can make by studying God’s tiny creatures? Proverbs 6:6–8; 30:25–28.**

“The wisest of men may learn useful lessons from the ways and habits of the little creatures of the earth. The industrious bee gives to men of intelligence an example that they would do well to imitate. These insects observe perfect order, and no idler is allowed in the hive. They execute their appointed work with an intelligence and activity that are beyond our comprehension. The ants, which we consider as only pests to be crushed under our feet, are in many respects superior to man; for he does not as wisely improve the gifts of God. The wise man calls our attention to the small things of the earth: [Proverbs 6:6–8; 30:25 quoted]. We may learn from these little teachers a lesson of faithfulness. Should we improve with the same diligence the faculties which an all-wise Creator has bestowed upon us, how greatly would our capacities for usefulness be increased. God’s eye is upon the smallest of His creatures; does He not, then, regard man formed in His image and require of him corresponding returns for all the advantages He has given him?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 455, 456.

“The habitations that the ants build for themselves show wonderful skill and perseverance. Only one little grain at a time can they handle, but by diligence and perseverance they accomplish wonders. Solomon points to their industry as a reproach to those who waste their hours in sinful idleness, or in practices that corrupt soul and body. The ant prepares for future seasons. Many who are gifted with reasoning powers entirely disregard this lesson, and fail entirely to prepare for the future life.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, September 14, 1899.

b. **Name some ways in which we may be slothful without realizing it. Proverbs 24:30–34.**

“Many waste hours of precious time in bed because it gratifies the natural inclination and to do otherwise requires an exertion. One hour wasted in the morning is lost never to be recovered.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 181.

3. A NOBLE WORK

- a. **What does the Bible teach on agriculture, and why is it so valuable today? Proverbs 27:18; Ecclesiastes 5:9; 3:1, 2.**

“No line of manual training is of more value than agriculture. A greater effort should be made to create and to encourage an interest in agricultural pursuits. Let the teacher call attention to what the Bible says about agriculture: that it was God’s plan for man to till the earth; that the first man, the ruler of the whole world, was given a garden to cultivate; and that many of the world’s greatest men, its real nobility, have been tillers of the soil. . . . He who earns his livelihood by agriculture escapes many temptations and enjoys unnumbered privileges and blessings denied to those whose work lies in the great cities. And in these days of mammoth trusts and business competition, there are few who enjoy so real an independence and so great certainty of fair return for their labor as does the tiller of the soil.

“In the study of agriculture, let pupils be given not only theory, but practice. While they learn what science can teach in regard to the nature and preparation of the soil, the value of different crops, and the best methods of production, let them put their knowledge to use.”—*Education*, p. 219.

“The time is not far distant when the laws against Sunday labor will be more stringent, and an effort should be made to secure grounds away from the cities, where fruits and vegetables can be raised. Agriculture will open resources for self-support, and various other trades also could be learned. This real, earnest work calls for strength of intellect as well as of muscle. Method and tact are required even to raise fruits and vegetables successfully. And habits of industry will be found an important aid to the youth in resisting temptation.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 322.

“Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 141.

- b. **What instruction is given regarding sharing the harvest? Leviticus 23:22.**
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4. DILIGENCE IN SOUL-SAVING

- a. **Besides reaping the fruits of the soil, in what other type of harvest are we to be engaging? John 4:34–38.**

“Christ sees a plentiful harvest waiting to be gathered in. Souls are hungering for the truth, thirsting for the water of life. Many are on the very verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.”—*Temperance*, p. 258.

- b. **Along with the men, of what are women to be reminded with regard to sowing the seeds of truth? Galatians 3:28.**

“The Lord of the vineyard is saying to many women who are now doing nothing, ‘Why stand ye here all the day idle?’ They may be instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary who first preached a risen Jesus; and the refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth now. If there were twenty women where now there is one who would make the saving of souls their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. Zealous and continued diligence in the cause of God would be wholly successful, and would astonish them with its results. The work must be accomplished through patience and perseverance, and in this is manifested the real devotion to God. He calls for deeds, and not words only.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 16, 1886.

- c. **How will our heavenly Father be disappointed at us if we neglect this duty and privilege? Proverbs 10:5, 26.**
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- d. **What is the result of dwelling on obstacles and hindrances? Ecclesiastes 11:4. How are we encouraged to diligently persevere in our labors? Ecclesiastes 11:6; 7:8.**

“You may say, I have tried to save this one and that one, and they have only wounded me, and I am not going to try to help them any more. But do not become discouraged if they do not *at once* return to the fold. Reach out still for your fellow mortals around you. You shall reap if you faint not.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 178. [Author’s italics.]

5. PERSEVERING LOVE

- a. Describe the depth of God's persevering love even for the erring. Song of Solomon 8:6, 7. How was this shown in Christ's attitude toward Judas?

"The narrowing selfishness of Judas' life, Christ sought to heal through contact with His own self-sacrificing love. In His teaching He unfolded principles that struck at the root of the disciple's self-centered ambitions. Lesson after lesson was thus given, and many a time Judas realized that his character had been portrayed, and his sin pointed out; but he would not yield. . . .

"Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him' (John 6:64). Yet, knowing all, He had withheld no pleading of mercy or gift of love.

"Seeing the danger of Judas, He had brought him close to Himself, within the inner circle of His chosen and trusted disciples. Day after day, when the burden lay heaviest upon His own heart, He had borne the pain of continual contact with that stubborn, suspicious, brooding spirit; He had witnessed and labored to counteract among His disciples that continuous, secret, and subtle antagonism. And all this that no possible saving influence might be lacking to that imperiled soul! [Song of Solomon 8:7, 6 quoted.]

"So far as Judas himself was concerned, Christ's work of love had been without avail. But not so as regards his fellow disciples. To them it was a lesson of lifelong influence. Ever would its example of tenderness and long-suffering mold their intercourse with the tempted and the erring."—*Education*, pp. 92, 93.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What must we understand about common, everyday labor?
2. What can we learn from the bees and the ants?
3. Name some special advantages enjoyed by the farmer.
4. When our missionary efforts seem to be fruitless, what should we remember?
5. What was gained by Christ's treatment of Judas?

Temperance and Purity

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"There must be a warfare of the spirit against the flesh, and through the grace of Christ we may obtain the victory."—*The Review and Herald*, March 12, 1889.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 135–148.
Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 439–484.

1. SHUNNING THE MOCKER

- a. What does the Bible plainly declare about the use of intoxicating substances? Proverbs 20:1; 23:29–35.

"Satan tempts men to indulgence that will becloud reason and benumb the spiritual perceptions, but Christ teaches us to bring the lower nature into subjection. He never places before men that which would be a temptation. His whole life was an example of self-denial. It was to break the power of appetite that in the forty days' fast in the wilderness He suffered in our behalf the severest test that humanity could endure. It was Christ who directed that John the Baptist should drink neither wine nor strong drink. It was He who enjoined similar abstinence upon the wife of Manoah. Christ did not contradict His own teaching. The unfermented wine that He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. This is the wine that was used by our Saviour and His disciples in the first Communion. It is the wine that should always be used on the Communion table as a symbol of the Saviour's blood. The sacramental service is designed to be soul-refreshing and life-giving. There is to be connected with it nothing that could minister to evil."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 333, 334.

- b. Why is this warning especially important for men in positions of trust? Proverbs 31:4, 5; Ecclesiastes 10:17.

2. CARING FOR THE BODY AND MIND

- a. **How is intemperance a problem even among many who abstain from alcohol? Proverbs 23:1–3, 20, 21; 25:16, 27.**

“It is not necessary to drink alcoholic liquors in order to be intemperate. The sin of intemperate eating,—eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food,—destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 50.

“I frequently sit down to the tables of the brethren and sisters, and see that they use a great amount of milk and sugar. These clog the system, irritate the digestive organs, and affect the brain. Anything that hinders the active motion of the living machinery affects the brain very directly. And from the light given me, sugar, when largely used, is more injurious than meat.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 370.

- b. **What is true temperance, and how can it help us endure the trials of the last days? Proverbs 11:16; 24:10, 5; 1 Corinthians 9:25.**

“True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 562.

“Reform, continual reform, must be kept before the people, and by our example we must enforce our teaching. True religion and the laws of health go hand in hand. It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of breaking away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 137.

“[Children] should be disciplined carefully, and educated to take their position upon the side of right, of reform and abstinence. In every crisis they will then have moral independence to breast the storm of opposition sure to assail those who take their stand in favor of true reform.”—*Temperance*, p. 215.

3. PURITY

- a. **What warnings are given to protect us from temptations toward sexual immorality? Proverbs 2:11, 16–20; 5:3–13, 18, 21.**

“The religion of Jesus Christ is first pure, then peaceable, full of righteousness and good fruits. Many have fallen into the sad error which is so prevalent in this degenerate age, especially with females. They are too fond of the other sex. They love their society. Their attentions are to them flattering, and they encourage, or permit, a familiarity which does not always accord with the exhortation of the apostle, to ‘abstain from all appearance of evil’ (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Some mingle with their religion a romantic, love-sick sentimentalism, which does not elevate, but only lowers.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 12, 1872.

- b. **What ploy is Satan using with special intensity against God’s people in the last days? Proverbs 6:23–33.**

“Near the close of this earth’s history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations where-with he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the Land of Promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls and to take God’s professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness. He is not aiming especially at the lower and less important marks, but he makes use of his snares through those whom he can enlist as his agents to allure or attract men to take liberties which are condemned in the law of God.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 327.

- c. **How can we develop a barrier to temptation? Philippians 4:8.**

4. A DEADLY PATHWAY

- a. What happens to the conscience once the barriers of godly restraint are let down? Proverbs 30:20.

“When one commandment of the Decalogue is broken, the downward steps are almost certain. When once the barriers of female modesty are removed, the basest licentiousness does not appear exceeding sinful.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 58.

“Whatever have been the little sins indulged [they] will ruin the soul, unless they are overcome. The small sins will swell into the greater sins. Impure thoughts, private, impure actions, unrefined, low and sensual thoughts and actions in the marriage life, the giving loose reins to the baser passions under the marriage vow, will lead to every other sin, the transgression of all the commandments of God. Men that God has entrusted with noble talents will be, unless closely connected with God, guilty of great weakness, and not having the grace of Christ in the soul will become connected with greater crimes. . . . If not overcome, the weakness will become a tyrant, a conqueror, to overcome them, and the heavenly light will become beclouded and extinguished.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 24, 1887.

- b. What must we realize in order to escape the perils of licentiousness so rampant today? Proverbs 22:14; 1 Peter 1:13.

“We are now amid the perils of the last days. Satan has come down with great power to work his deceptions. He fastens the mind or imaginations upon impure, unlawful things. Christians become like Christ in character by dwelling upon the divine Model. That with which they come in contact has a molding influence upon life and character. I have read of a painter who would never look upon an imperfect painting for a single moment, lest it should have a deteriorating influence upon his own eye and conceptions. That which we allow ourselves to look upon oftenest, and think of most, transfers itself in a measure to us. The imagination trained to dwell upon God and His loveliness will not find delight in dwelling upon scenes that are created by the imagination that is excited by lust.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 24, 1887.

5. VICTORY IN HEART AND LIFE

- a. Explain how deep is the concept of moral purity. Proverbs 21:8; Matthew 5:27, 28.

“When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity, who indulges the evil thought, the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heartbreaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart. As a man ‘thinketh in his heart, so is he;’ for out of the heart ‘are the issues of life’ (Proverbs 23:7; 4:23).”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 60.

- b. How can we gain the victory over all unlawful appetites and passions which clamor for the mastery? Matthew 5:29, 30; Galatians 5:16–21; 1 Corinthians 15:57.

“Self-control can be complete only in the strength which comes from Jesus Christ, ever true to the rightful dominion of the higher powers and attributes having dominion over the lower.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 54.

“In the wilderness Christ achieved a victory in behalf of the race upon the point of appetite, making it possible for man in all future time in His name to overcome the strength of appetite on his own behalf.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1874.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do we know about the wine that Christ used?
2. How can we uplift the temperance standard among us?
3. Discuss the perils of much of today’s social behavior.
4. What bitter consequences result from impure thoughts?
5. How does Matthew 5:8 reveal the importance of victory?

Mercy and Truth

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart” (Proverbs 3:3).

“Life’s best things—simplicity, honesty, truthfulness, purity, integrity—cannot be bought or sold. They are as free to the ignorant as to the educated, to the humble laborer as to the honored statesman.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 198.

Suggested Readings: *The Review and Herald*, October 8, 1895.
Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 330–340.

Sunday

May 12

1. THE BROTHERHOOD OF MANKIND

- a. Name one principle which God would have us understand about all human beings. Proverbs 22:2.

“Caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character. In His sight the souls of all men are of equal value. . . . Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

- b. Name some examples of warnings that have been given against the spirit of envy. Proverbs 14:30; 23:4, 17, 18.

“So far as talk is concerned, A B is qualified to lead the meetings; but when moral fitness is weighed, he is found wanting. His heart is not right with God. When others are placed in a leading position, they have the opposing spirit of himself and his wife to meet. This unsanctified spirit is not manifested openly, but works secretly to hinder, perplex, and discourage those who are trying to do the very best they can. God sees this, and it will in due time receive its just reward.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 333.

Monday

May 13

2. SEVEN ABOMINATIONS

- a. By what attitudes do people often offend God? Proverbs 6:16–19. Why must we be more careful with our speech? Matthew 12:36, 37.

“Satan would be pleased to have anyone and everyone become his allies in the work of weakening the confidence of brother in brother, and sowing discord among those who profess to believe the truth.”—*Maranatha*, p. 63.

“No man who does not utter the real sentiment of his heart can be called a truthful man. Falsehood virtually consists in an intention to deceive; and this may be shown by a look or a word. Even facts may be so arranged and stated as to constitute falsehoods. Some are adepts at this business, and they will seek to justify themselves for departing from strict veracity. There are some who, in order to tear down or injure the reputation of another, will, from sheer malice, fabricate falsehoods concerning them. Lies of self-interest are uttered in buying and selling goods, cattle, or any kind of merchandise. Lies of vanity are uttered by men who love to appear what they are not. A story cannot pass through their hands without embellishment. Oh, how much is done in the world which the doers will one day wish to undo! But the record of words and deeds in the books of heaven will tell the sad story of falsehoods spoken and acted.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 335.

- b. How serious of a matter is lying? Leviticus 19:11; Acts 5:4.

“‘All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death’ (Revelation 21:8). God is a God of sincerity and truth. The word of God is a book of truth. Jesus is a faithful and true witness. The church is the witness and ground of the truth. All the precepts of the Most High are true and righteous altogether. How, then, must prevarication and any exaggeration or deception appear in His sight? For the falsehood he uttered because he coveted the gifts which the prophet refused, the servant of Elisha was struck with leprosy, which ended only with death.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 336.

3. THE POWER OF TRUTHFULNESS

- a. How much should we value real truth? Proverbs 3:3, 4.
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“Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood. By a word or a nod the martyrs might have denied the truth and saved their lives. By consenting to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol altar they might have been saved from the rack, the scaffold, or the cross. But they refused to be false in word or deed, though life was the boon they would receive by so doing. Imprisonment, torture, and death, with a clear conscience, were welcomed by them, rather than deliverance on condition of deception, falsehood, and apostasy. By fidelity and faith in Christ they earned spotless robes and jeweled crowns. Their lives were ennobled and elevated in the sight of God because they stood firmly for the truth under the most aggravated circumstances.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 336.

- b. How can we avoid much of the resentment and bitterness which result from careless talking among brethren or sisters? Ecclesiastes 7:21, 22.
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“What a world of gossip would be prevented if every man would remember that those who tell him the faults of others will as freely publish his faults at a favorable opportunity. We should endeavor to think well of all men, especially our brethren, until compelled to think otherwise. We should not hastily credit evil reports. These are often the result of envy or misunderstanding, or they may proceed from exaggeration or a partial disclosure of facts. Jealousy and suspicion, once allowed a place, will sow themselves broadcast, like this-tledown. Should a brother go astray, then is the time to show your real interest in him. Go to him kindly, pray with and for him, remembering the infinite price which Christ has paid for his redemption. In this way you may save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 58, 59.

- c. What happens in our hearts when we choose to follow truth? Proverbs 8:6–8.
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4. LOYALTY AMONG BELIEVERS

- a. For what type of wisdom did Solomon specifically pray? 1 Kings 3:9.
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- b. What should we remember when tempted by apostates to condemn and betray our brethren in the faith? Proverbs 12:22, 23.
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“Those who apostatize in time of trial will, to secure their own safety, bear false witness, and betray their brethren. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the unnatural, cruel course of those who reject the light.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 630.

“As in the days of Christ spies were on His track, so they are on ours now. If Satan can employ professed believers to act as accusers of the brethren, he is greatly pleased; for those who do this are just as truly serving him as was Judas when he betrayed Christ, although they may be doing it ignorantly.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1163.

“The world crucified Jesus Christ, and is at enmity with Christ and with those who love truth, because the truth condemns the children of this world in their sinful, Christless lives. The worldling will betray the children of God, will speak against them, and falsely accuse them. But let no one who claims to be a follower of Christ receive the accusations that spring from the envyings and jealousies of those who love not truth. If you listen to accusations and charges against the children of God who are striving to obey the truth, you thereby become seduced by the enemy, and he will use you as his agent. Those who live in daily communion with Christ will learn to place a proper estimate upon their brethren, and will respect and sympathize with those who are in harmony with the pure, the good, and the true, and will condemn the course of those who are vile, profligate, and unclean before God, and despisers of his truth and righteousness. They will not help the enemy in his work of condemning the righteous and clearing the guilty.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 11, 1894.

- c. What danger do we face under persecution? Matthew 24:10.
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5. WINNING QUALITIES

- a. How can our own standard of mercy and truth either win others to Christ or repel them from Him? Proverbs 16:6, 7.

“He who has the Spirit of Christ will have modesty of demeanor, and his words will reveal that the Holy Spirit is cherished. Christians will not be bold, rash, dictatorial, boastful, denunciatory, and revengeful, but will manifest an unassuming, gentle spirit, and will show that they discern and appreciate the virtues of others.

“They will give due respect to all saints, counting them members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They will speak kindly when in conversation, whether they are young or old, high or low, learned or unlearned. Their words will not be like piercing swords. They will not have a spirit to humble their brethren by accusing and condemning them for their faults or errors.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 182.

“Christians are to be indeed the representatives of Jesus Christ; they are not to be pretenders. Shall the world form its conceptions of God by the course of those who only take the name of Christ, and do not His works? Shall they point to those who claim to be believers, but who are not believers at heart, who betray sacred trusts, and work the works of the enemy, and say, ‘O these are Christians, and they will cheat and lie, and they cannot be trusted’? These are not the ones who truly represent God. But God will not leave the world to be deceived. The Lord has a peculiar people on the earth, and He is not ashamed to call them brethren; for they do the works of Christ. They make it manifest that they love God, because they keep His commandments. They bear the divine image. They are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 123.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does envy manifest itself even among capable men?
2. How does God view exaggerations against brethren?
3. What must we consider when an evil report comes to us?
4. Why is just discernment needed today?
5. What are people waiting to see in us?

A Teachable Spirit

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not” (Proverbs 8:33).

“The obedient ear will receive reproof with humility, patience, and teachableness.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 166.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 682–691.
Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 313–316.

1. A BASIC DUTY

- a. Name one of life’s first duties. Proverbs 1:8, 9.

“You must not walk independently of all counsel. It is your duty to counsel with your brethren. This may touch your pride, but the humility of a mind taught by the Holy Spirit will listen to counsel, and will banish all self-confidence. When counsel is given that conflicts with your personal wishes, you are not to think that your own wisdom is sufficient for you to give counsel to others, or that you can afford to neglect the counsel given.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 315.

- b. How does God regard the unteachable? Proverbs 12:15.

“Some who are imperfect in character are connected with solemn, sacred interests; and when chosen for a special work, they should not feel that their own wisdom is sufficient, that they need not be counseled, reproofed, and instructed. Brethren, if you feel thus, you will separate from the Source of your strength, and will be in peril. You may be left to your own supposed sufficiency, to do as Judas did—betray your Lord.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 414.

- c. How should we regard counsel? Proverbs 25:9–12.

“Those who are the most closely connected with God are the ones who know His voice when He speaks to them. Those who are spiritual discern spiritual things. Such will feel grateful that the Lord has pointed out their errors.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 134.

2. COUNSELING TOGETHER

- a. **How can a healthy church relationship foster the making of wise plans? Proverbs 11:14; 15:22.**

“The evils of self-esteem and an unsanctified independence, which most impair our usefulness and which will prove our ruin if not overcome, spring from selfishness. ‘Counsel together’ is the message which has been again and again repeated to me by the angel of God. By influencing one man’s judgment, Satan may endeavor to control matters to suit himself. He may succeed in misleading the minds of two persons; but, when several consult together, there is more safety. Every plan will be more closely criticized; every advance move more carefully studied. Hence there will be less danger of precipitate, ill-advised moves, which would bring confusion, perplexity, and defeat. In union there is strength. In division there is weakness and defeat.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 29, 30.

- b. **In what ways do we each benefit from the knowledge and experience of one another? Proverbs 15:31, 32; 20:5.**

“Let us cherish a spirit of confidence in the wisdom of our brethren. We must be willing to take advice and caution from our fellow laborers. . . .

“It is a mistake to withdraw from those who do not agree with our ideas. This will not inspire our brethren with confidence in our judgment. It is our duty to counsel with our brethren, and to heed their advice. We are to seek their counsel, and when they give it, we are not to cast it away, as if they were our enemies. Unless we humble our hearts before God, we shall not know His will.

“Let us be determined to be in unity with our brethren. This duty God has placed upon us. We shall make their hearts glad by following their counsel, and make ourselves strong through the influence that this will give us. Moreover, if we feel that we do not need the counsel of our brethren, we close the door of our usefulness as counselors to them.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 500.

3. FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- a. **What do we too often forget about godly counsel? Proverbs 13:1, 8, 10; 27:9.**

“There will be men and women who despise reproof and whose feelings will ever rise up against it. It is not pleasant to be told of our wrongs. In almost every case where reproof is necessary, there will be some who entirely overlook the fact that the Spirit of the Lord has been grieved and His cause reproached. These will pity those who deserved reproof, because personal feelings have been hurt. All this unsanctified sympathy places the sympathizers where they are sharers in the guilt of the one reproofed. In nine cases out of ten if the one reproofed had been left under a sense of his wrongs, he might have been helped to see them and thereby have been reformed. But meddling, unsanctified sympathizers place altogether a wrong construction upon the motives of the reprover and the nature of the reproof given, and by sympathizing with the one reproofed lead him to feel that he has been really abused; and his feelings rise up in rebellion against the one who has only done his duty. Those who faithfully discharge their unpleasant duties under a sense of their accountability to God will receive His blessing. God requires His servants to be always in earnest to do His will. In the apostle’s charge to Timothy he exhorts him to ‘preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine’ (2 Timothy 4:2).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 359, 360.

- b. **What balanced understanding is needed when seeking counsel from others? Jeremiah 17:5–7.**

“Some of our conferences are weak in Christian experience because their leading men—and the people have followed their example—have sought for the approval of man with far greater anxiety than for the approval of God. They have looked to man for help and counsel more than to God. They have made men their burden-bearers, and have accepted human wisdom just when and where they should have depended upon God. And too often those of whom they sought counsel needed help themselves; for their souls were not right with God.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 414.

4. COUNSEL FROM HEAVEN

- a. **How and why are we to avoid excessive or unnecessary burdening of others for counsel? Galatians 6:3-5.**

“There must be far more personal responsibility, far more thinking and planning, far more mental power brought into the labor put forth for the Master. This would enlarge the capacity of the mind, and give keener perceptions as to what to do and how.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 416.

- b. **How can we know God will answer as we counsel directly with Him? Proverbs 4:1, 2; 1 John 2:3-5; 5:13-15.**

- c. **Why do prayers sometimes seem to go unanswered? Proverbs 8:33; 19:20; 28:9; James 4:2.**

“Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 114.

“When we make request of [God], He may see that it is necessary for us to search our hearts and repent of sin. Therefore He takes us through test and trial, He brings us through humiliation, that we may see what hinders the working of His Holy Spirit through us.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 143.

- d. **What will come to those who reject God’s counsel as given through the Spirit of Prophecy? Proverbs 29:18.**

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. [Proverbs 29:18 quoted.] Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions, to mislead and mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions, as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 296.

5. CAUTIONS REGARDING COUNSEL

- a. **What type of counsel is increasing? Proverbs 19:27.**

“We are to treat with kindness and courtesy those who refuse to be loyal to God, but we are never, never to unite with them in counsel regarding the vital interests of His work.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 108.

“Teachers of falsehood will arise to draw you away from the narrow path and the strait gate. Beware of them; though concealed in sheep’s clothing, inwardly they are ravening wolves. . . .

“We are not bidden to prove them by their fair speeches and exalted professions. They are to be judged by the word of God. [Isaiah 8:20; Proverbs 19:27 quoted.] What message do these teachers bring? Does it lead you to reverence and fear God? Does it lead you to manifest your love for Him by loyalty to His commandments?”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 145.

- b. **How are we warned against the extreme of totally submitting our mind to another’s will? 1 Timothy 6:20, 21; Jeremiah 17:5.**

“Satan often finds a powerful agency for evil in the power which one human mind is capable of exerting on another human mind. This influence is so seductive that the person who is being molded by it is often unconscious of its power. God has bidden me speak warning against this evil.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 23.

“This entering in of Satan through the sciences is well devised. Through the channel of phrenology, psychology, and mesmerism, he comes more directly to the people of this generation, and works with that power which is to characterize his efforts near the close of probation.”—*Ibid.*, p. 19.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **How will the godly respond to difficult reproofs?**
2. **Why is there benefit in “a multitude of counsellors”?**
3. **Explain the problems which arise from false sympathy.**
4. **What should we realize about the Spirit of Prophecy?**
5. **When can counsel become dangerous?**

First Sabbath Offering for Poland

Poland was one of the original countries to be part of the Reform Movement. The members in this central European nation began spreading the message of the Third Angel shortly after WWI. Colporteurs began to travel door-to-door across the country spreading the glad tidings of a soon coming Saviour. But it was not easy work. The official state church of the time (Roman Catholic) and the government police worked hard to prevent the early progress of the work.

With the fruits of this early labor a permanent work was soon developed, only to be forced underground by another war. The conclusion of WWII brought a new political system to Poland. The communist government removed all religious liberty, and as Reformers refused to violate the law of God, especially on the fourth and sixth commandments, many of them were sent to prison. Some were sent as far away as Siberia, where they paid with their lives in hard labor camps for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Today, by the grace of God, liberty has been restored to Poland. Now is the time for us to work. The brethren in Poland need your help to complete infrastructure projects, such as a chapel for the large southern city of Katowice, and new Field offices. With our limited means the brethren here have completed what we can, now we ask for your help. On June 1, please remember the work in Poland.



VITAL STATISTICS

- **Area:** 312,683 sq km (120,727 sq mi)
- **Population:** 38,646,023 (2000 est.)
- **Capital:** Warsaw (pop. 1,642,700)
- **Literacy Rate:** 98%
- **Languages:** Polish
- **Primary Religion:** Roman Catholic, 95% (about 75% practicing); Russian Orthodox, Protestant, and other, 5%

ECONOMY

- **Monetary Unit:** Zloty
- **GDP/PPP:** \$263 billion; \$6,800 per capita (1998 est.)
- **Inflation:** 11% (1998 est.)
- **Major Trading Partners:** Germany, Russia, Italy, Ukraine, Netherlands, France, UK, USA

PROJECT 00C

Your brethren from the Poland Field

Thought and Speech

“The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth” (Proverbs 10:20).

“If we are pure in heart, our words will be pure, our actions will be holy.” —*The Youth’s Instructor*, January 9, 1896.

Suggested Readings: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 335–339.
The Review and Herald, June 12, 1888.

Sunday

May 26

1. A POWERFUL INFLUENCE

a. **What do our habits of speech reveal about our true character? Proverbs 15:28; 18:21.**

b. **How may we be grieving the Holy Spirit and jeopardizing our faith by careless speech? Matthew 12:36, 37.**

“Closely connected with Christ’s warning in regard to the sin against the Holy Spirit is a warning against idle and evil words. The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. [Luke 6:45 quoted.] But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan’s instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 12:36, 37 quoted.]” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 323.

2. FALSE WITNESS

- a. What suffering comes from lies? Proverbs 12:20; 20:17.

“Parents and teachers, be true to God. Let your life be free from deceitful practices. Let no guile be found in your lips. However, disagreeable it may be to you at the time, let your ways, your words, and your works show uprightness in the sight of a holy God. Oh, the effect of the first lesson in deceit is terrible! Shall any who claim to be sons and daughters of God give themselves up to deceitful practices and lying?”

“Never let your children have the semblance of an excuse for saying, Mother does not tell the truth. Father does not tell the truth. When you are tried in the heavenly courts, shall the record be made against your name, A deceiver? Shall your offspring be perverted by the example of those who ought to guide them in the way of truth? Instead of this, shall not the converting power of God enter the hearts of mothers and fathers? Shall not the Holy Spirit of God be allowed to make its mark upon their children?”—*Child Guidance*, p. 150.

- b. What must we recognize about gossip? Proverbs 10:18; 11:12, 13; 20:3.

“Floating rumors are frequently the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offender for a word. Their motto seems to be, ‘Report, and we will report it.’ These talebearers are doing the devil’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God. If they would spend half the energy and zeal that is given to this unholy work in examining their own hearts, they would find so much to do to cleanse their souls from impurity that they would have no time or disposition to criticize their brethren, and they would not fall under the power of this temptation. The door of the mind should be closed against ‘They say,’ or ‘I have heard.’ Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them?”—*The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884.

3. ATTITUDES

- a. How do wrong attitudes tend to spread? Proverbs 17:20. What warnings are we given about this? Hebrews 12:14, 15.

“I beseech all who engage in the work of murmuring and complaining because something has been said or done that does not suit them, and that does not, as they think, give them due consideration, to remember that they are carrying on the very work begun in heaven by Satan. They are following in his track, sowing unbelief, discord, and disloyalty; for no one can entertain feelings of disaffection, and keep them to himself. He must tell others that he is not treated as he should be. Thus they are led to murmur and complain. This is the root of bitterness springing up, whereby many are defiled.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 14, 1897.

- b. What general guidance does the Bible give concerning speech? Proverbs 10:19; 17:27, 28; Ecclesiastes 5:2.

“Too often, fretful, impatient words are spoken, words which stir the worst passions of the human heart. Such ones need the abiding presence of Christ in the soul. Only in His strength can they keep guard over the words and actions.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 161.

“If we desire to see the King in His beauty we must here behave worthily. We must outgrow our childishness. When provocation comes let us be silent. There are times when silence is eloquence.”—*Maranatha*, p. 327.

“The Christian cannot always be in the position of prayer, but his thoughts and desires can always be upward. Our self-confidence would vanish, did we talk less and pray more.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, March 5, 1903.

- c. What makes our speech refreshing to others? Proverbs 16:24; 27:2.

“When we can associate together to help one another heavenward, when the conversation is upon divine and heavenly things, then it amounts to something to talk; but when the conversation centers upon self and upon earthly and unimportant matters, silence is golden.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 166.

4. THE SOURCE OF OUR WORDS

- a. What is the real source of our words? Luke 6:45.

“Our minds take the level of the things on which our thoughts dwell, and if we think upon earthly things, we shall fail to take the impress of that which is heavenly. We would be greatly benefited by contemplating the mercy, goodness, and love of God; but we sustain great loss by dwelling upon those things which are earthly and temporal.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 222.

- b. What is the key to improving our speech? Proverbs 10:20; 25:11, 12.

“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.

- c. How is moral backbone formed? Proverbs 12:5; 21:5; 20:11.

“Your thoughts must be brought into subjection to the will of God and your feelings under the control of reason and religion. Your imagination was not given you to be allowed to run riot and have its own way without any effort at restraint or discipline. If the thoughts are wrong the feelings will be wrong, and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 310.

“Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded; for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the man is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual pulse is quickened, and the power for doing good is increased. And as one drop of rain prepares the way for another in moistening the earth, so one good thought prepares the way for another.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 222.

5. MENTAL RESTRAINT AND COMMITMENT

- a. How do the apostles confirm the idea of tightening the reins of the mind for God? 1 Peter 1:13–16; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8.

“The noble powers of the mind have been given to us by the Lord, that we may employ them in contemplating heavenly things . . . [And yet] how often the mind is given to the contemplation of that which is earthly, sensual, and base! We give our time and thought to the trivial and commonplace things of the world, and neglect the great interests that pertain to eternal life. The noble powers of the mind are dwarfed and enfeebled by lack of exercise on themes that are worthy of their concentration. . . .

“Let every one who desires to be a partaker of the divine nature appreciate the fact that he must escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 12, 1888.

- b. How can we tone up our mental powers? Proverbs 16:1–3; Colossians 3:1–3.

“By beholding we are to become changed, and as we meditate upon the perfections of our divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. There will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to be made like Him whom we adore. The more our thoughts are upon Christ, the more we shall speak of Him to others, and represent Him to the world.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 12, 1888.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Where do words often leave their strongest influence?
2. What is our duty with regard to gossip?
3. How does a root of bitterness grow like a weed?
4. How can we better carry out the words of Romans 14:19?
5. What deep wisdom can we gain from Proverbs 16:1–3?

Little Things in Life

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes” (Song of Solomon 2:15).

“Great truth can be brought into little things; practical religion must be carried into the lowly duties of daily life.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 228.

Suggested Readings: *The Signs of the Times*, October 22, 1885.
Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 355–360.

Sunday

June 2

1. WATCHFULNESS

- a. In what ways are the smaller matters in life worthy of our attention? Proverbs 15:16; Song of Solomon 2:15.

“Faithful in little things, the Christian pays strict attention to the smallest matters, and thus forms a character that will lead him to be faithful in great matters. He possesses the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. God has made us His own by creation and redemption, and if we are willing to occupy a lowly position in this life, are content to be little and unknown, we shall have full recognition in the future life. Our Redeemer will say, ‘Child, come up higher.’ God has caused the sun to bless with its light not only the mountain heights, but the lowly valleys and plains, and He will cause the beams of the Sun of Righteousness to fill the souls of those who are humble and contrite, whose spirit is meek and lowly.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 8, 1895.

- b. What watchfulness is needed? Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 14:12.

“It is for the eternal interest of every one to search his own heart and to improve every God-given faculty. Let all remember that there is not a motive in the heart of any man that the Lord does not clearly see. The motives of each one are weighed as carefully as if the destiny of the human agent depended upon this one result.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 8, 1906.

Monday

June 3

2. SOME IMPORTANT—OTHERS NOT

- a. Of what types of small things should we cultivate keen discernment—and what other kinds are best ignored? Luke 6:41, 42.

“It does not behoove those from whom Jesus has so much to bear, in their failings and perversity, to be ever mindful of slights and real or imaginary offense. And yet there are those who are ever suspecting the motives of others about them. They see offense and slights where no such thing was intended. All this is Satan’s work in the human heart. The heart filled with that love which thinketh no evil will not be on the watch to notice discourtesies and grievances of which he may be the object. The will of God is that His love shall close the eyes, the ears and the heart to all such provocations and to all the suggestions with which Satan would fill them.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1160.

“Some will be ready to ask, ‘How can I get out of the worries in which I find myself involved? How shall I ever be understood and appreciated? I have no confidence in this one’s religion or honesty, and that one has done me wrong.’ Be careful how you sin against your brethren by misjudging them, and speaking evil of them. God has not given you permission to climb upon the judgment-seat, and pronounce one good because he praises, pets, and favors you, and denounce another because he is not your particular friend. This selfish, narrow, bigoted spirit does harm to those with whom you associate. It is not the spirit of Christ, but of him who has been from the beginning the accuser of the brethren. Instead of misjudging others, examine your own conduct. Place the most favorable construction on the words and actions of others, and you will thus be exercising the mercy that is becoming to those who are the holy and beloved of God, members of the royal family. Seek the meekness of Christ. He suffered wrong, and did not attempt to avenge Himself.”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 22, 1885.

- b. From what small beginning is sin conceived? James 2:13–16; Proverbs 4:27.

3. TESTS OF OUR CHARACTER

- a. **What factors concerning one's reputation are often not fully understood? Proverbs 18:19; Ecclesiastes 7:1, 8.**

“We must give others an example of not stopping at every trifling offense in order to vindicate our rights. We may expect that false reports will circulate about us; but if we follow a straight course, if we remain indifferent to these things, others will also be indifferent. Let us leave to God the care of our reputation. And thus, like sons and daughters of God, we shall show that we have self-control. We shall show that we are led by the Spirit of God, and that we are slow to anger. Slander can be lived down by our manner of living; it is not lived down by words of indignation. Let our great anxiety be to act in the fear of God, and show by our conduct that these reports are false. No one can injure our character as much as ourselves. It is the weak trees and the tottering houses that need to be constantly propped. When we show ourselves so anxious to protect our reputation against attacks from the outside, we give the impression that it is not blameless before God, and that it needs therefore to be continually bolstered up.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, pp. 1160, 1161.

- b. **How does the Bible illustrate the importance of controlling our temper? Proverbs 25:28; 16:32.**

“There is a noble majesty in the silence of the one exposed to evil-surmising or outrage. To be master of one's spirit is to be stronger than kings or conquerors. A Christian leads one to think of Christ. He will be affable, kind, patient, humble and yet courageous and firm in vindicating the truth and the name of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1160.

- c. **How does God view dishonest trade? Proverbs 11:1;16:11.**

“Fraud in any business transaction is a grievous sin in God's sight.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1160.
 “Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 356.

4. FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

- a. **What advice given through Solomon is applicable to the Laodicean condition? Proverbs 28:25, 26. How does it also encompass the apparently small matter of appetite?**

“Adam and Eve persuaded themselves that in so small a matter as eating of the forbidden fruit there could not result such terrible consequences as God had declared. But this small matter was the transgression of God's immutable and holy law, and it separated man from God and opened the floodgates of death and untold woe upon our world.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 33.

- b. **Explain one reason why God refrains from bringing more new souls to our midst. How can we remedy this situation? Luke 17:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 8:13.**

“Some have felt at liberty to criticize and question and find fault with health reform principles of which they knew little by experience. They should stand shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, with those who are working in right lines.

“The subject of health reform has been presented in the churches; but the light has not been heartily received. The selfish, health-destroying indulgences of men and women have counteracted the influence of the message that is to prepare a people for the great day of God. If the churches expect strength, they must live the truth which God has given them. If the members of our churches disregard the light on this subject, they will reap the sure result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy. And the influence of these older church members will leaven those newly come to the faith. The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?

“Let all examine their own practices to see if they are not indulging in that which is a positive injury to them. Let them dispense with every unhealthful gratification in eating and drinking.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 370, 371.

5. SMALL BUT BLESSED

- a. Upon what kinds of small gestures does Heaven smile? Matthew 10:42. How do such things reveal our heart? Proverbs 4:23.

“He who cherishes pride and selfish feelings will show that he is seeking self-exaltation in the little and larger things of life. Those who are really worthy of attention and preference will never be found putting themselves forward, but will leave the best and highest places for someone else, esteeming others better than themselves. Yet this very modesty and humility of character cannot be hid. The person who is willing to be little and unknown will be esteemed, for his life will be fragrant with unselfish actions. He will not be ostentatious, and seek to impress upon others in a lower position that he is vastly their superior.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 8, 1895.

- b. How can we reflect Christ more often than we may think? Proverbs 19:22; 16:1.

“Things will go wrong with every one; sadness and discouragement press every soul; then a personal presence, a friend who will comfort and impart strength, will turn back the darts of the enemy that are aimed to destroy. Christian friends are not half as plentiful as they should be. In hours of temptation, in a crisis, what a value is a true friend! Satan at such times sends along his agents to cause the trembling limbs to stumble; but the true friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul—oh, such help is worth more than precious pearls.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 161.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does God view the little and the lowly?
2. What is too often the real cause of church troubles?
3. In what ways might our character be tested?
4. How can our own habits hinder successful evangelism?
5. What kind of Christian would you like to see—and be?

Parenting

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

“Parents, for Christ’s sake do not blunder in your most important work, that of molding the characters of your children for time and for eternity.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 39.

Suggested Readings: *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 64–70.
Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 36–45.

1. GOD’S PATTERN FOR CHILDHOOD

- a. How is the childhood of Jesus our example? Luke 2:40.

“As Jesus worked in childhood and youth, mind and body were developed. He did not use His physical powers recklessly, but in such a way as to keep them in health, that He might do the best work in every line. He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life’s burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty. All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life. The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

2. THE YOUNG AT RISK

- a. **How does scripture illustrate the predicament of many busy parents today? Song of Solomon 1:6; Proverbs 29:15.**

“Those who feel that they have an imperative call to labor for the improvement of society, while their own children grow up undisciplined, should inquire if they have not mistaken their duty. Their own household is the first missionary field in which parents are required to labor. Those who leave the home garden to grow up to thorns and briars, while they manifest great interest in the cultivation of their neighbor’s plot of ground, are disregarding the word of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 66.

“Fathers and mothers should carefully and prayerfully study the characters of their children. They should seek to repress and restrain those traits that are too prominent, and to encourage others which may be deficient, thus securing harmonious development. This is no light matter. The father may not consider it a great sin to neglect the training of his children; but thus does God regard it. Christian parents need a thorough conversion upon this subject. Guilt is accumulating upon them, and the consequences of their actions reach down from their own children to children’s children. The ill-balanced mind, the hasty temper, the fretfulness, envy, or jealousy, bear witness to parental neglect.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.

- b. **In what peril could many of our youth find themselves—and why? Proverbs 15:19; 18:9; 21:25; 26:13–16.**

“Parents have neglected to train their sons and daughters to the faithful performance of domestic duties. Children are permitted to spend their hours in play, while father and mother toil on unceasingly. Few young persons feel that it is their duty to bear a part of the family burden. They are not taught that the indulgence of appetite, or the pursuit of ease or pleasure, is not the great aim of life.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 65.

3. BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

- a. **What is the first duty of parents? Proverbs 22:6.**

“Let the foundation of a strong constitution be laid in early life. Parents should be the only teachers of their children, until they are eight or ten years of age. . . . The fields and hills—nature’s audience chamber—should be the schoolroom for little children. Her treasures should be their textbook.”—*Fundamental Education*, p. 61.

“The school in the home should be a place where children are taught that the eye of God is upon them, observing all that they do. If this thought were deeply impressed upon the mind, the work of governing children would be made much easier. In the homeschool our boys and girls are being prepared to attend a churchschool when they reach a proper age to associate more intimately with other children.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 5.

- b. **What should parents teach their children in regard to appetite? Proverbs 23:1–3. Why is it so important to begin this instruction as early as possible?**

“Parents who have taught their children to eat unhealthful, stimulating food all their lives—until the taste is perverted, and they crave clay, slate pencils, burned coffee, tea grounds, cinnamon, cloves, and spices—cannot claim that the appetite demands what the system requires. The appetite has been falsely educated, until it is depraved. The fine organs of the stomach have been stimulated and burned, until they have lost their delicate sensitiveness. Simple, healthful food seems to them insipid. The abused stomach will not perform the work given it, unless urged to it by the most stimulating substances. If these children had been trained from their infancy to take only healthful food, prepared in the most simple manner, preserving its natural properties as much as possible, and avoiding flesh meats, grease, and all spices, the taste and appetite would be unimpaired. In its natural state, it might indicate, in a great degree, the food best adapted to the wants of the system.”—*Child Guidance*, pp. 381, 382.

4. EDUCATING FOR ETERNITY

- a. **What should we consider about many of the philosophies in the secular schools of today? Proverbs 6:28.**

“Can we . . . expect the youth to develop Christian character while their education is molded by the teaching of those who set at defiance the principles of the law of God?”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 443.

“In planning for the education of their children outside the home, parents should realize that it is no longer safe to send them to the public school, and should endeavor to send them to schools where they will obtain an education based on a Scriptural foundation.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 304.

- b. **Besides guarding their scholastic influences, of what else must we be watchful for our young? 1 Corinthians 15:33.**

“With what care parents should guard their children from careless, loose, demoralizing habits! Fathers and mothers, do you realize the importance of the responsibility resting on you? Do you allow your children to associate with other children without being present to know what kind of education they are receiving? Do not allow them to be alone with other children. Give them your special care. Every evening know where they are and what they are doing.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 114.

- c. **Name one problem plaguing many youth. Proverbs 7:6–27.**

“The young are bewitched with the mania for courtship and marriage. Lovesick sentimentalism prevails. Great vigilance and tact are needed to guard the youth from these wrong influences. Many parents are blind to the tendencies of their children. Some parents have stated to me, with great satisfaction, that their sons or daughters had no desire for the attentions of the opposite sex, when in fact these children were at the same time secretly giving or receiving such attentions, and the parents were so much absorbed in worldliness and gossip that they knew nothing about the matter.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 60.

5. A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

- a. **What should we keep in mind when our youth need to be corrected? Proverbs 3:11, 12; 12:25; 15:23, 24.**

“Children are what their parents make them by their instruction, discipline, and example.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 37.

“Parents must see that their own hearts and lives are controlled by the divine precepts, if they would bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are not authorized to fret and scold and ridicule. They should never taunt their children with perverse traits of character, which they themselves have transmitted to them. This mode of discipline will never cure the evil. Parents, bring the precepts of God’s word to admonish and reprove your wayward children. Show them a ‘thus saith the Lord’ for your requirements. A reproof which comes as the word of God is far more effective than one falling in harsh, angry tones from the lips of parents.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 67, 68.

- b. **What environment is most conducive to the happiness and industry of our families? Song of Solomon 6:11, 12; Isaiah 65:21.**

“Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation where they can have orchards and where they can raise vegetables and small fruits to take the place of fleshmeat, which is so corrupting to the lifeblood coursing through the veins. On such places the children will not be surrounded with the corrupting influences of city life. God will help His people to find such homes outside of the cities.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 310.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Where did Jesus go to school, and what did He learn?**
2. **Why do many parents need to change their priorities?**
3. **In what areas should we be living up to greater light?**
4. **What challenges may be overwhelming our youth today?**
5. **How can we improve our relationship with our youth?**

Life and Death

“As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death” (Proverbs 11:19).

“It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 466.

Suggested Readings: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 544–562.
Counsels on Health, pp. 627–630.

Sunday

June 16

1. LIFE TO ITS FULLEST

- a. **What does God identify as the key to abundant life? Proverbs 4:10–13, 20–22. How do faith and obedience promote our physical well-being? Proverbs 14:30; 19:23.**

“Godliness does not conflict with the laws of health, but is in harmony with them. Had men ever been obedient to the law of Ten Commandments, had they carried out in their lives the principles of these ten precepts, the curse of disease that now floods the world would not be.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 627.

- b. **Why does serving God actually make our life easier? Proverbs 13:14, 15; 14:27. What condition results from rebellion against His wisdom? Proverbs 8:32–36; 11:19.**

“God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is ‘alienated from the life of God.’ Christ says, ‘All they that hate Me love death’ (Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36). God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 764.

Monday

June 17

2. AVOIDING SELF-DECEPTION

- a. **How does Solomon summarize the major issues of life and death? Ecclesiastes 8:5–13.**

- b. **Even if we do not actively commit sin, how may we still be guilty before God?**

“In the great judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

- c. **What basic sign of humility before God and man can help to protect us from being deceived? Proverbs 28:13.**

“It is a close test upon the courage of men and women to be brought to face their own sins and to frankly acknowledge them. To say, ‘That mistake must be charged to my account,’ requires a strength of inward principle that the world possesses in but a limited degree. But he who has the courage to say this in sincerity gains a decided victory over self and effectually closes the door against the enemy.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 336, 337.

“[Proverbs 28:13 quoted.] If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would make haste to confess their sins and to put them away. Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee’ (2 Corinthians 12:9). ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light’ (Matthew 11:29, 30). Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

3. UNDERSTANDING DEATH

- a. **What must we know about the solemnity of death—both of ourselves and others? Hebrews 9:27; Proverbs 24:11, 12.**

“Among the manifold lessons that we may learn from Solomon’s life, none are more plainly taught than the power of influence for good or for ill. However contracted may be one’s sphere, he exerts an influence. That our influence should be a savor of death unto death, is a fearful thought, yet this is possible. One soul misled—forfeiting eternal bliss—who can estimate the loss! And yet one rash act, one thoughtless word, on our part, may exert so deep an influence on the life of another that it will prove the ruin of his soul! One blemish on the character may turn many away from Christ.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 15, 1906.

- b. **How are we warned against a major form of deception, especially in the last days? Colossians 2:8, 18, 19.**

“I was directed to this scripture as especially applying to modern spiritualism. [Colossians 2:8 quoted.] Thousands . . . have been spoiled through the philosophy of phrenology and animal magnetism, and have been driven into infidelity. If the mind commences to run in this channel, it is almost sure to lose its balance and be controlled by a demon. ‘Vain deceit’ fills the minds of poor mortals. They think there is such power in themselves to accomplish great works, that they realize no necessity of a higher power. Their principles and faith are ‘after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.’ Jesus has not taught them this philosophy. Nothing of the kind can be found in His teachings. He did not direct the minds of poor mortals to themselves, to a power which they possessed. He was ever directing their minds to God, the Creator of the universe, as the source of their strength and wisdom. Special warning is given in verse 18. [Colossians 2:18 quoted.]”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 297.

4. A PERIL IN THE LAST DAYS

- a. **What has God declared through Solomon regarding the state of the dead? Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.**

“The teachers of spiritualism come in a pleasing, bewitching manner to deceive you, and if you listen to their fables you are beguiled by the enemy of righteousness and will surely lose your reward. When once the fascinating influence of the archdeceiver overcomes you, you are poisoned, and its deadly influence adulterates and destroys your faith in Christ’s being the Son of God, and you cease to rely on the merits of His blood. Those deceived by this philosophy are beguiled of their reward through the deceptions of Satan. They rely upon their own merits, exercise voluntary humility, are even willing to make sacrifices, and debase themselves, and yield their minds to the belief of supreme nonsense, receiving the most absurd ideas through those whom they believe to be their dead friends. Satan has so blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment that they perceive not the evil; and they follow out the instructions purporting to be from their dead friends now angels in a higher sphere.

“Satan has chosen most certain, fascinating delusion, one that is calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Evil angels assume the form of these loved ones and relate incidents connected with their lives and perform acts which their friends performed while living. In this way they deceive and lead the relatives of the dead to believe that their deceased friends are angels hovering about them and communing with them. These they regard with a certain idolatry, and what they may say has greater influence over them than the word of God. These evil angels, who assume to be dead friends, will either utterly reject God’s word as idle tales, or, if it suit their purpose best, will select the vital portions which testify of Christ and point out the way to heaven, and change the plain statements of the word of God to suit their own corrupt nature and ruin souls. With due attention to the word of God, all may be convinced if they will of this soul-destroying delusion. . . . [Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 quoted.]”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 297, 298.

5. SOLEMN BUT NOT DREADFUL

- a. How can we avoid destruction? Proverbs 21:15, 16.

“We cannot wait until the judgment before we consent to deny self and to lift the cross. We cannot then form characters for heaven. It is here in this life that we must take sides with the humble, self-denying Redeemer. It is here that we must overcome envy, strife, selfishness, love of money, and love of the world. It is here that we must enter the school of Christ, and learn of the Master the precious lessons of meekness and lowliness of mind. And here it must be our aim and earnest effort to be loyal and true to the God of heaven by obeying all of His commandments and thus be fitting up for the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for all who love God.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 192.

- b. What are some ways to promote true health and happiness in life? Proverbs 3:13–19; 1 Timothy 4:8.

“There are many amusements that excite the mind, but depression is sure to follow. Other modes of recreation are innocent and healthful; but useful labor that affords physical exercise will often have a more beneficial influence upon the mind, while at the same time it will strengthen the muscles, improve the circulation, and prove a powerful agent in the recovery of health.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 627.

“When the mind is free and happy from a sense of duty well done and the satisfaction of giving happiness to others, the cheering, uplifting influence brings new life to the whole being.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 257.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some temporal benefits gained from serving God.
2. What common form of self-deception may be plaguing us?
3. How do many underestimate the solemnity of death?
4. Why is it important to know the state of the dead?
5. How does abundant life involve bearing the cross?

Solomon's Testimony

“By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” (Proverbs 22:4).

“Even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like him who possesses the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, untouched by the tinsel and show of the world.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 18, 1906.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 565, 566.
Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 339–342.

1. VANITY AND VEXATION

- a. To what heights of worldly wealth and splendor did Solomon reach? Ecclesiastes 2:4–10. What did he finally see, and how can we learn from it? Ecclesiastes 2:11, 12.

“One sad feature of Solomon's experience was his supposition that massive buildings and magnificent furnishings give character to the work of God. He endeavored to pattern after, and to compete with, the world. He lost sight of the foundation principle underlying the influence that is ever to be exerted by the people of God—obedience to every precept of Holy Writ. The real power of God's people lies not in numbers, nor in the wealth and worldly prosperity that may be displayed, but in steadfast adherence to His Word.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 18, 1906.

- b. Why did Solomon become bitter? Ecclesiastes 1:14; 2:14–17. How is this a warning to us? Proverbs 25:26.

“Let no line of work, no institution, bear a name that would divert honor from God to any man or any set of men. Let us remember that the beautiful temple which was erected for the honor of ‘the name of the Lord God of Israel,’ came to be known, through the apostasy of the builder, as ‘Solomon's temple.’”—*The Review and Herald*, January 11, 1906.

2. DISCERNING TRUE WEALTH

a. How was Solomon deluded? Ecclesiastes 4:4; 5:10.

“As Solomon continued to conform to the customs of the world, his pride greatly increased. And the worldly prosperity that attended his apostasy, was regarded by him as a token of God’s favor. So fully had he yielded himself to evil influences, that his spiritual discernment was well-nigh destroyed. He could not see the terrible losses that were sustained by the nation spiritually because he brought into the kingdom an abundance of the gold of Ophir and the silver of Tarshish.

“Today there exists the same danger of mistaking prosperity for the favor of heaven. The prosperity that often for a time attends those who turn from a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to follow a way of their own choosing, is not an assurance of divine approval. Men may interpret it thus, but it is no sign that God’s prospering hand is with them. Let all learn a lesson from Solomon’s experience. Notwithstanding his violation of a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ riches and worldly honor poured in upon him, and seemingly he was greatly blessed. This is in harmony with Job’s declaration that the wicked spend their days in prosperity.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 18, 1906.

b. What better way does God offer? Proverbs 11:17; 14:22.

“How striking is the contrast between Solomon’s ambitious desire to exalt himself, and the life that the Son of God lived upon this earth! The Saviour of mankind was born of humble parentage in a sin-cursed, wicked world. He was brought up in obscurity at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee. He began His work in poverty and without worldly rank. He sought not the admiration or the applause of the world. He dwelt among the lowly. To all appearance he was merely a humble man, with few friends. Thus God introduced the gospel in a way altogether different from the way in which many deem it wise to proclaim the same gospel in this age. At the very beginning of the gospel dispensation he taught His church to rely, not on worldly rank and splendor, but on the power of faith and obedience.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 18, 1906.

3. SEEING OPPORTUNITIES

a. What had Solomon failed to realize? Ecclesiastes 3:17.

“Solomon lost sight of God’s high and holy purpose. He failed of improving the magnificent opportunities for enlightening the representatives of all nations who were continually passing through his territory and tarrying for rest at the principal cities. A selfish use was made of the strategic points along the well-traveled highways. Solomon sought to strengthen his position by building fortified cities at the gateways of commerce. . . .

“The missionary spirit that God had implanted in the heart of Solomon and in the hearts of many true Israelites, was rapidly supplanted by a spirit of commercialism. . . . Because of the cupidity and the short-sightedness of those to whom had been entrusted the oracles of God, the countless multitudes that thronged the thoroughfares of travel were allowed to remain in ignorance of the true God.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 25, 1906.

b. How can we redeem the time? Ecclesiastes 11:4–6.

“In these days of travel, the opportunities for coming in contact with men and women of all classes and of many nationalities, are much greater than in the days of Israel. . . .

“We are to give the last warning of God to men, and what should be our earnestness in studying the Bible, and our zeal in spreading the light! Let every soul who has received the divine illumination, seek to impart it. Let the workers go from house to house, opening the Bible to the people, circulating the publications, telling others of the light that has blessed their own souls. Let literature be distributed judiciously on the trains, in the street, on the great ships that ply the seas, and through the mails.

“Christians who are living in the great centers of commerce and travel have special opportunities. The believers in these cities can work for God in the neighborhood of their homes. They are to labor quietly and in humility, carrying with them wherever they go the atmosphere of heaven.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 25, 1906.

4. LEARNING FROM SOLOMON'S FALL

- a. **Why was Solomon's fall so tragic? Proverbs 25:26. How can we avoid his steps of decline? 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.**

“[2 Corinthians 6:14-18 quoted.] Never was there a time in earth's history when this warning was more appropriate than at the present time. Many professed Christians think, like Solomon, that they may unite with the ungodly, because their influence over those who are in the wrong will be beneficial; but too often they themselves, entrapped and overcome, yield their sacred faith, sacrifice principle, and separate themselves from God. One false step leads to another, till at last they place themselves where they can not hope to break the chains that bind them.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 1, 1906.

- b. **What are some important principles that Solomon had to relearn as a result of his apostasy? Proverbs 22:4, 8.**

“In his later years, turning wearied and thirsting from earth's broken cisterns, Solomon returned to drink at the fountain of life. The history of his wasted years, with their lessons of warning, he by the Spirit of inspiration recorded for after generations. And thus, although the seed of his sowing was reaped by his people in harvests of evil, the lifework of Solomon was not wholly lost. For him at last the discipline of suffering accomplished its work.”—*Education*, pp. 153, 154.

“Solomon's later writings reveal that he realized the wickedness of his course, and sought to warn those who were in danger of going astray.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 8, 1906.

- c. **In his bitter anguish of remorse over the influence he had cast, what was Solomon constrained to declare? Ecclesiastes 9:18; 10:1, 5, 6. How should this affect us?**

“Solomon's repentance was sincere, but the harm that his example of evil-doing had done the people, could not well be remedied.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 15, 1906.

5. A SAVORY INFLUENCE

- a. **How are we bidden to guard carefully the influence we exert upon others? Luke 14:34, 35; Colossians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.**

“Among the many lessons taught by Solomon's life, none is more strongly emphasized than the power of influence for good or for ill. However contracted may be our sphere, we still exert an influence for weal or woe. Beyond our knowledge or control, it tells upon others in blessing or cursing. It may be heavy with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of some cherished sin; or it may be charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. But potent for good or for ill it will surely be.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 85.

- b. **What is the final summary of the wisdom which God offers us through Solomon? Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Philippians 2:5-11.**

“We should ask ourselves, For what are we living and working? And what will be the outcome of it all? We need the religion of Jesus Christ daily; for everything we do or say comes under the notice of God. ‘We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.’ What we are at heart, we reveal in life. Our thoughts, our words, our actions, are the result of what we are; and our influence is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, according to whether we abide in Christ or not. In the judgment we shall be brought face to face with those whom we have had opportunity to help by directing them, through choice words of counsel, into right, safe paths. If we have a daily connection with God, we shall have a living, abiding interest in the saving of the souls of men, and our influence will be a savor of life unto life.”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1892.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What triggered the first steps in Solomon's apostasy?**
2. **How was Christ's life a sharp contrast to the king's?**
3. **What vital opportunities may we be overlooking today?**
4. **Explain the most tragic aspect of Solomon's fall.**
5. **What are the secrets to exerting a right influence?**

FIRST SABBATH OFFERINGS



APRIL 6
for Pakistan
(See p. 4)



MAY 4
for the work
in Africa (See p. 25)



JUNE 1
for Poland
(See p. 46.)