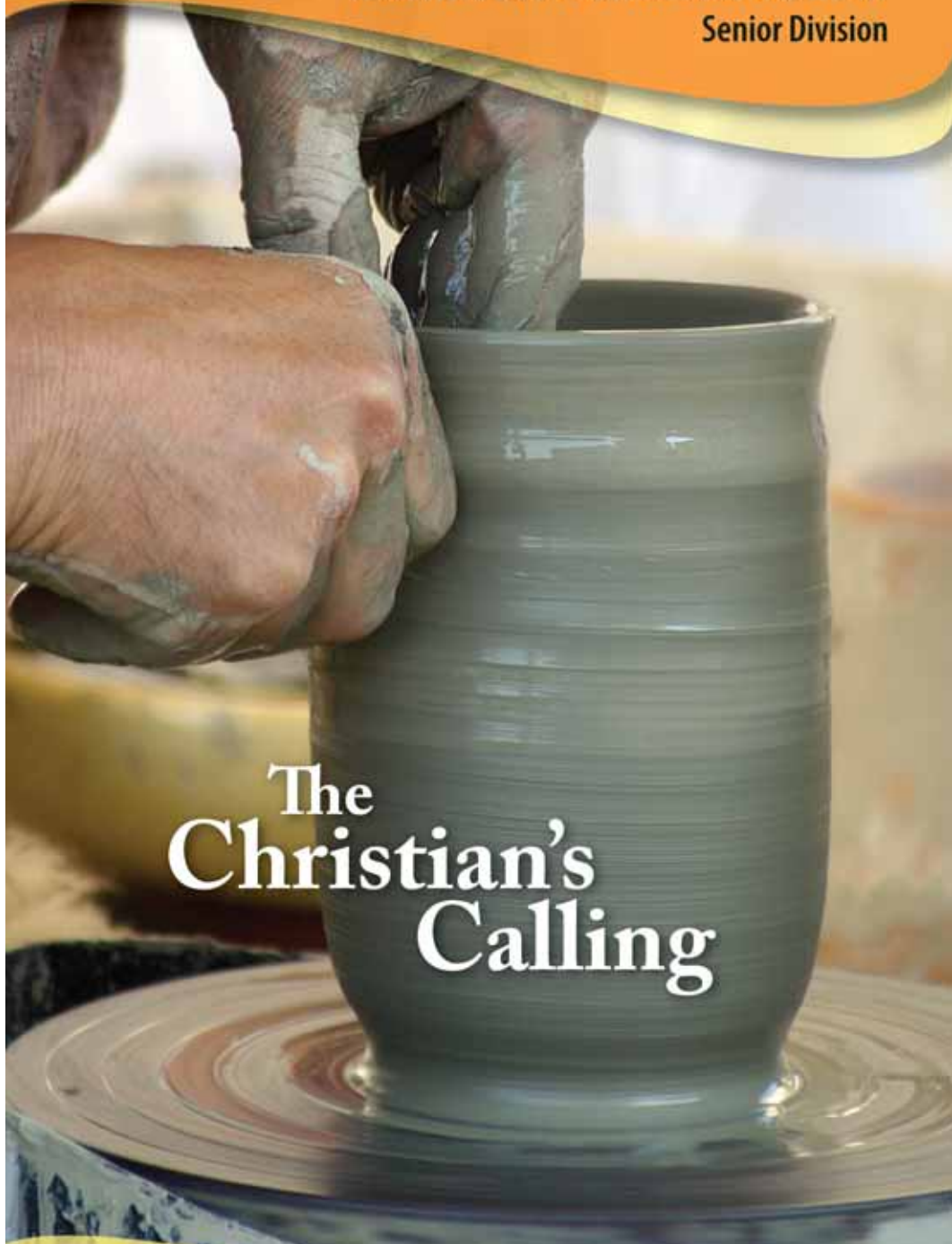


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



**The
Christian's
Calling**

Vol. 84, No.1
January–March 2008

Contents

- 5 A Solemn Call
- 10 God Puts Things in Writing
- 15 The Book of Nature
- 20 God's Spirit and Providence
- 26 Tested on Stewardship
- 31 Aiming High
- 36 Cultivating the Mind
- 41 "Ask, and It Shall Be Given You"
- 47 Molded by the Master
- 52 Brightening Our Surroundings
- 57 A Call to Self-Sacrifice
- 62 Facing Trials and Opposition
- 67 Stand Up for Jesus!

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.

Illustrations: Dreamtimes on front cover; Map-Resources on pp. 4, 25, 46, 72; PhotoDisc on back cover.

Sabbath Bible Lessons
(USPS 005-118), Vol. 84, No. 1,
January–March, 2008. Pub-
lished quarterly by the Seventh
Day Adventist Reform Move-
ment General Conference,
Sabbath School Department.
Copyright © 2008, printed and
distributed by Reformation
Herald Publishing Association,
5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke,
Virginia 24019–5048, USA.
Periodical postage paid at
Roanoke, Virginia 24022–9993.

• **USA AND CANADA**
Contact: Telephone 1-540-
366-9400 * Fax 1-540-366-2814 *
Website: www.sdarm.org * E-mail:
info@sdarm.org

**Annual subscriptions in
U.S.A. and Canada:** US \$14.95.
Other countries (airmail)
\$20.00. Single copies \$4.50.
Please send subscription re-
quests and payments (in U.S.
currency only) to the address
below. Prices subject to change
without notice.

POSTMASTER, please send
address changes to: **Sabbath
Bible Lessons**, P.O. Box 7240,
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240.

.....
• **AUSTRALIA**
Contact: Telephone 61-2-
9627-7553 * Fax 61-2-9627-7554
* Web site: www.sdarm.org.au *
E-mail: info@sdarm.org.au

**Annual subscriptions in
Australia:** AU \$20.50 (Individ-
ual copies \$6.00). Other coun-
tries, economy air \$26.00. Please
send subscription requests and
payments (in Australian curren-
cy) to the address below. Prices
subject to change without no-
tice.

POSTMASTER, please send
address changes to: **Sabbath
Bible Lessons**, P.O. Box 132,
Riverstone NSW 2765, Australia.

Foreword

Why are we here? Why did the Creator see fit to entrust us with the last message of mercy to be given to the world? Does this fact really give our life a deeper significance? It certainly should!

During this quarter, Sabbath schools all around the world will be studying *The Christian's Calling*. What is this special calling in these last days before the return of Christ, the Bridegroom?

"Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.

"The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

"The work of God is worthy of our best efforts. In fulfillment of the divine plan, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. He taught the erring and sinful ones whom He came to save, and wrestled in earnest prayer to His Father in their behalf; and we should engage in the same work. If it was not beneath the dignity of the Son of God, the Creator of worlds, should it be considered too humiliating or too self-sacrificing for His followers? No, indeed. However aspiring we may be, there is no calling that is higher, holier, and more ennobling than to be a colaborer with the Son of God."—*The Signs of the Times*, September 16, 1886.

"Behold, as the clay [is] in the potter's hand, so [are] ye in mine hand" (Jeremiah 18:6).

"We have a calling as much higher than common, selfish interests as the heavens are higher than the earth."—*Evangelism*, p. 550.

In fact, there is no greater calling, no higher calling, no more exalted privilege to be found on earth. It is so different, so distinct from what the world considers to be great and glorious that believers are awestruck when they realize it, and delighted when they taste it. Instead of being driven by the spirit of gain, the true people of God seek to give. Instead of coveting honor and praise, they humble their souls to consider others better and more worthy than themselves. How intriguing, how rare, how refreshing! That we may catch a glimpse of this heaven-born type of glory, and truly realize the fulfilling depths of this high calling, is the aim of

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering

for Cape Town, South Africa

Cape of Good Hope Mission is situated 30 km north of Cape Town city. Its population is around 5 million people representing almost all races, black, white, and Asian. In addition to these native residents, many people from neighboring previously-war-torn countries have come to stay here for better economic fortunes.

Cape Town receives thousands of tourists every month. It is famous for its natural peculiar features, such as the Table Mountain, the Cape Point, and the Robben Island which is now one of South Africa's tourist attractions.

The message of Reformation came to this city around 1996 through a missionary who moved from Johannesburg.

Subsequently a generous brother donated a property in a place called Kraaifontein, within Cape Town, to be a center for the Lord's work here. This has for years served as both office and church. For sometime the enemy of souls tried to destroy the work, but through God's power the work has since been revived and many interests have been aroused among some other Advent groups who have been studying our *Sabbath Bible Lessons* and *The Reformation Herald* for years now.

With these challenges before us and also the fact that we need to expand our missionary frontiers to reach the 5 million people and thousands of tourists frequenting this city, we planned to renovate the property which has deteriorated in some parts, as well as improve our missionary activities to reach souls in this tip of the African continent. We are also planning to extend our mission by building another place for worship in an additional area where members are far from our mission church.

Therefore we appeal to you brethren and sisters around the world to remember us when you give an offering on this Sabbath. God bless the givers. Thank you in advance.

Your brethren and sisters from Cape Town



A Solemn Call

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

“Christ is knocking at the door of the heart, seeking for entrance. Will you let Him in?”—*This Day With God*, p. 308.

Suggested Reading: *Our High Calling*, pp. 35, 287.

Sunday

December 30

1. TIME TO LISTEN!

- a. What is the first appeal our Creator makes to every one of us? Proverbs 7:24.

“We have unmistakable evidence of the voice of the True Shepherd, and He is calling upon us to follow Him. He says, ‘I have kept my Father’s commandments’ (John 15:10). He leads His sheep in the path of humble obedience to the law of God.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 314.

“He who would be a faithful servant of Christ must listen to the instruction of the greatest Teacher the world has ever known. His ideas and principles must be kept pure by the power of God. Every day he must learn to become more worthy of the trust committed to him. His mind must be quickened by divine power; his character uncontaminated by worldliness.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 24, 1896.

- b. Why should we be eager to listen to God’s voice? Jeremiah 29:11–13; Hosea 11:4 (first part).

“God gives us blessings; if we could look into His plan, we would clearly see that He knows what is best for us and that our prayers are answered. Nothing hurtful is given, but the blessing we need, in the place of something we asked for that would not be good for us, but to our hurt.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 121.

2. A GREAT PRIVILEGE

- a. Why should we stand in awe at the thought of speaking with the Master of the universe? Job 38:1–7; Isaiah 40:28.
-

- b. When Moses asked to see God's glory, what was he given to understand? Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:5–8. Why can we be encouraged by beholding this glory?
-

"Pray with Moses, 'Show me thy glory' (Exodus 33:18). What is this glory?—The character of God. This is what He proclaimed to Moses."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 417.

"In order to be a Christian it is not necessary for a man to have great talents. The human agent may have no voice in legislative councils, he may not be permitted to deliberate in senates or vote in parliaments, yet he has access to God. The King of kings bends low to listen to the prayer coming from one who desires to do the Master's will. An earnest prayer offered from a sincere, contrite heart is of more value in God's sight than is eloquence of speech. God hears every prayer offered with the incense of faith. His weakest child may exert an influence in harmony with the councils of heaven. It is in answer to prayer that God revives His work."—*The Review and Herald*, June 23, 1903.

- c. How does Jesus summarize the result of answering His call? Matthew 10:39.
-

"There can be no self-seeking in the life of him who follows the Saviour. The true Christian banishes all selfishness from his heart. How can he live for self as he thinks of Christ hanging on the cross, giving His life for the life of the world? In your behalf Jesus died a death of shame. Are you willing to consecrate yourself to His service? to hold yourself ready to be or to do anything He may require? Are you willing to put self aside, and speak a word of warning to the companion you see yielding to Satan's temptations? Are you willing to sacrifice some of your plans for the sake of trying to lead him in safe paths?"—*Our High Calling*, p. 287.

3. LESSONS FROM THE PAST

- a. What is promised to all who heed the voice of God? Proverbs 8:32.
-

- b. How did Jesus show the value of taking heed of His word? Matthew 7:24–27.
-

- c. What warning should we take from the way the educational system in Christ's day actually blocked the voice of God? Hosea 4:6; Jeremiah 2:13.
-

"In the days of Christ the town or city that did not provide for the religious instruction of the young was regarded as under the curse of God. Yet the teaching had become formal. Tradition had in a great degree supplanted the Scriptures. True education would lead the youth to 'seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him' (Acts 17:27). But the Jewish teachers gave their attention to matters of ceremony. The mind was crowded with material that was worthless to the learner, and that would not be recognized in the higher school of the courts above. The experience which is obtained through a personal acceptance of God's word had no place in the educational system. Absorbed in the round of externals, the students found no quiet hours to spend with God. They did not hear His voice speaking to the heart. In their search after knowledge, they turned away from the Source of wisdom. The great essentials of the service of God were neglected. The principles of the law were obscured."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 69.

- d. How can we be inspired by that superior knowledge which was cultivated by the psalmist? Psalms 12:6; 119:98–100.
-

"For those who . . . lay hold of the divine assurances of God's word, there are wonderful possibilities. Before them lie vast fields of truth, vast resources of power. Glorious things are to be revealed. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be made manifest."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 465.

4. AWESOME INTERACTION

- a. What warm invitation does our Creator extend to each of us, and how do we too often hinder ourselves from accepting it fully? Revelation 3:20.

“Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the Word of God, or through His delegated messengers, is a knock at the door of the heart; it is the voice of Jesus, asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, your determination to open becomes weaker and weaker. If the voice of Jesus is not heeded at once, it becomes confused in the mind with a multitude of other voices, the world’s care and business engross the attention, and conviction dies away. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of time, and of the great eternity beyond.

“Many have so much rubbish piled up at the door of the heart that they cannot admit Jesus. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove; others have evil tempers, pride, covetousness; with others, love of the world bars the entrance. All this must be taken away, before they can open the door and welcome the Saviour in.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 352.

- b. How does the psalmist describe the beautiful communion we can be privileged to enjoy with God? Psalms 91:14–16; 119:103, 104; 143:8.

- c. How only can we hear the Lord’s voice properly? Psalm 46:10.

“Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10). Here alone can true rest be found. And this is the effectual preparation for all who labor for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life’s intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men’s hearts.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

5. A POINTED INQUIRY

- a. What should we learn from the surprising way God spoke to Elijah? 1 Kings 19:9–12.

- b. What startling question uttered by God to Elijah echoes down to us today? 1 Kings 19:13; Luke 9:23.

“The joy set before Christ, the joy that sustained Him through sacrifice and suffering, was the joy of seeing sinners saved. This should be the joy of every follower of His, the spur to his ambition. Those who realize, even in a limited degree, what redemption means to them and to their fellow men, will comprehend in some measure the vast needs of humanity. Their hearts will be moved to compassion as they see the moral and spiritual destitution of thousands who are under the shadow of a terrible doom, in comparison with which physical suffering fades into nothingness.

“Of families, as of individuals, the question is asked, ‘What doest thou here?’ In many churches there are families well instructed in the truths of God’s word, who might widen the sphere of their influence by moving to places in need of the ministry they are capable of giving. God calls for Christian families to go into the dark places of the earth and work wisely and perseveringly for those who are enshrouded in spiritual gloom. To answer this call requires self-sacrifice. While many are waiting to have every obstacle removed, souls are dying, without hope and without God. For the sake of worldly advantage, for the sake of acquiring scientific knowledge, men are willing to venture into pestilential regions and to endure hardship and privation. Where are those who are willing to do as much for the sake of telling others of the Saviour?”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 172, 173.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is the “call” in this lesson more powerful even than a judge’s subpoena?
2. What does it cost to answer the call of Christ?
3. How does the way we are educated affect our understanding of duty?
4. Why is silence a key aspect of genuine reverence and communion with God?
5. As the Lord spoke to Elijah, what may He be saying specifically to me?

God Puts Things in Writing

“The Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exodus 34:27).

“The operations of the Spirit are always in harmony with the written word.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 284.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 604–608.

Sunday

January 6

1. A MATTER OF RECORD

- a. What did the Lord direct Moses to do with the light He provided? Exodus 34:27. Why was such a step also important for families? Deuteronomy 6:6, 9.

“As the word of God is meditated upon and practiced, the whole man will be ennobled. In righteous and merciful dealing, the hands will reveal, as a signet, the principles of God’s law. They will be kept clean from bribes, and from all that is corrupt and deceptive. They will be active in works of love and compassion. The eyes, directed toward a noble purpose, will be clear and true. The expressive countenance, the speaking eye, will testify to the blameless character of him who loves and honors the word of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 612.

- b. Through what symbol does Christ show the importance of His written word? Matthew 4:4; John 6:56–58, 63.

“Many need to learn that it is one thing to assent to truth, and another thing to receive the truth as the bread of God, of which, if a man eat, he shall live forever. Day by day we must feed upon the Living Bread that we may receive spiritual sustenance, as we partake of temporal food to give us physical strength.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 34.

Monday

January 7

2. CREATIVE POWER

- a. How can God’s written word change our moral character? Hebrews 4:12.

“On every page of God’s word the injunction to obedience is plainly written.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 27, 1891.

“As the heart is opened to the entrance of the Word, light from the throne of God will shine into the soul. That Word, cherished in the heart, will yield to the student a treasure of knowledge that is priceless. Its ennobling principles will stamp the character with honesty and truthfulness, temperance and integrity.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 31.

- b. What reveals the power of God’s word to change a person into a new creature? 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:22–25.

“By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it means to live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4). This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 391.

- c. Why are we warned against failing to study what God has said? Proverbs 28:9, 14 (second part).

“All who neglect the word of God to study convenience and policy, that they may not be at variance with the world, will be left to receive damnable heresy for religious truth.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 523.

“And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 696.

3. SAVORING THE POWER

- a. What is the psalmist's plea in reference to God's word? Psalm 119:116, 133.

- b. How do David and Jeremiah describe their feelings about God's word? Psalm 119:16, 17, 140, 162; Jeremiah 15:16.

"It is not safe for us to turn from the Holy Scriptures, with only a casual reading of their sacred pages. . . . Rein the mind up to the high task that has been set before it, and study with determined interest, that you may understand divine truth. Those who do this, will be surprised to find to what the mind can attain."—*Our High Calling*, p. 35.

- c. How does Jeremiah describe the lack of appreciation which God's professed people have for Scripture? Jeremiah 2:13.

"In dealing with commonplace productions, and feeding on the writings of uninspired men, the mind becomes dwarfed and cheapened. . . . The understanding unconsciously accommodates itself to the comprehension of the things with which it is familiar, and in the consideration of these finite things, the understanding is weakened, its powers contracted, and after a time it becomes unable to expand."—*Our High Calling*, p. 35.

- d. Regarding God's word, what is to be our heart's longing? Psalm 119:18, 169.

"Why should not [the Bible]—this precious treasure—be exalted and esteemed as a valued friend? This is our chart across the stormy sea of life. It is our guidebook, showing us the way to the eternal mansions, and the character we must have to inhabit them. There is no book the perusal of which will so elevate and strengthen the mind as the study of the Bible. Here the intellect will find themes of the most elevated character to call out its powers. There is nothing that will so endow with vigor all our faculties as bringing them in contact with the stupendous truths of revelation. The effort to grasp and measure these great thoughts expands the mind. We may dig down deep into the mine of truth, and gather precious treasures with which to enrich the soul. Here we may learn the true way to live, the safe way to die."—*Our High Calling*, p. 31.

4. THE TEST OF GENUINENESS

- a. What is the surefire way to spot a religious counterfeit? Isaiah 8:20.

"The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, which will never fail to vanquish the adversary. It is the only true guide in all matters of faith and practice. The reason why Satan has so great control over the minds and hearts of men is that they have not made the Word of God the man of their counsel, and all their ways have not been tried by the true test. The Bible will show us what course we must pursue to become heirs of glory."—*Our High Calling*, p. 31.

- b. Describe God's method to help us understand the Scriptures. Isaiah 28:9, 10, 13.

"The knowledge of the way of life, peace, health, must be given line upon line, precept upon precept, that men and women may see the need of reform. They must be led to renounce the debasing customs and practices which existed in Sodom and in the antediluvian world."—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 26.

- c. How does the study of the Testimonies relate to the method described above?

"God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the *Testimonies*. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings. . . .

"The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 605.

5. LIVING EPISTLES

- a. Where is the most important place for God's word to be written? Proverbs 3:3; 7:2, 3.
- b. How does the above principle relate to the new covenant experience which we as Christians are to enjoy? Jeremiah 31:31–33; Hebrews 8:10, 11; 10:16, 17.

- c. What is the most powerful epistle that can ever be written? 2 Corinthians 3:3.

“It is no small matter for a family to stand as representatives of Jesus, keeping God's law in an unbelieving community. We are required to be living epistles known and read of all men. This position involves fearful responsibilities.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 31, 32.

- d. What comforting assurance does the Lord record in writing? Psalm 102:16–18.

- e. What glorious promise is given to victorious Christians who live by God's word? Revelation 3:12.

“All knowledge gained in this life of probation which will help us to form characters that will fit us to be companions of the saints in light is true education. It will bring blessings to ourselves and others in this life, and will secure to us the future, immortal life with its imperishable riches.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 35.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do the Scriptures compare to the most meticulous legal document?
2. Why can we be morally inspired by the creative power of God's word?
3. Name one quality shared by David and Jeremiah which is worthy of imitation.
4. Why has God given the Testimonies of the Spirit of Prophecy for today?
5. Mention some important matters which the Lord sees fit to put into writing.

The Book of Nature

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

“There are lessons to be learned in God's book of nature.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, p. 307.

Suggested Reading: *Child Guidance*, pp. 53–60.

1. AWE-INSPIRING THOUGHTS

- a. What was the prophet Nehemiah inspired to say about nature? Nehemiah 9:6.

“There is beauty in the valley's awful grandeur, in the solemn, massive, cleft rocks; there is majesty in the towering mountains that look as if they touched the heavens. There are the lofty trees with their delicately formed leaves; the spires of grass, the opening bud and blossoming flower, the forest trees, and every living thing. They all point the mind to the great and living God. Every faculty of our being testifies that there is a living God, and we may learn from the open book of nature the most precious lessons in regard to the Lord of heaven.

“In this study the mind expands, is elevated and uplifted, and becomes hungry to know more of God and His majesty. We have awakened in our hearts feelings not only of reverence and awe but of love, of faith, of trust and entire dependence upon One who is the giver of all good. And as I look at His marvelous works and see the evidences of His power I instinctively inquire, ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?’ (Psalm 8:4). . . .

“Why should we not converse more earnestly, and in a heavenly frame of mind, in regard to God's gifts in nature? He has made all these things, and designs that we shall see God in His created works. These things are to keep God in our remembrance and to lift our hearts from sensual things and bind them in bonds of love and gratitude to our Creator.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 250.

2. PONDERING THE PINNACLES

- a. With what thoughts should we let nature inspire us? Psalms 19:1–3; 143:5, 6.

“The great Architect has formed and fashioned the scenes of nature that they may have an important bearing upon man’s intellectual and moral character. These are to be God’s school to educate the mind and morals. Here the mind may have a vast field for study in the display of the majestic works of the Infinite One.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 252.

“We have looked upon the lofty, terraced mountains in their majestic beauty, with their rocky battlements resembling grand old castles. These mountains speak to us of the desolating wrath of God in vindication of His broken law; for they were heaved up by the stormy convulsions of the flood. They are like mighty waves that at the voice of God stood still—stiffened billows, arrested in their proudest swell. These towering mountains belong to God; He presides over their rocky fastnesses. The wealth of their mines is His also, and so are the deep places of the earth.

“If you would see the evidences that there is a God, look around you wherever your lot may be cast. He is speaking to your senses and impressing your soul through His created works. Let your heart receive these impressions, and nature will be to you an open book, and will teach you divine truth through familiar things. The lofty trees will not be regarded with indifference. Every opening flower, every leaf with its delicate veins, will testify of the infinite skill of the great Master Artist. The massive rocks and towering mountains that rise in the distance are not the result of chance. They speak in silent eloquence of One who sits upon the throne of the universe, high and lifted up. ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world’ (Acts 15:18). All His plans are perfect. What awe and reverence should His name inspire!”—*Ibid.*, p. 251.

- b. What message is written in every element of God’s creation? Psalm 121:1, 2.

“The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”—*Education*, p. 132.

3. BASIC YET SUBLIME

- a. Name two elements in nature which serve as object lessons of faith. 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 36:6; 125:1, 2.

“God is Himself the Rock of Ages, a refuge for His people, a covert from the storm, a shadow from the burning heat. He has given us His promises, which are more firm and immovable than the rocky heights, the everlasting hills. The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but His kindness shall not depart, nor His covenant of peace be removed from those who by faith make Him their trust. If we would look to God for help as steadfastly as these rocky, barren mountains point to the heavens above them, we should never be moved from our faith in Him and our allegiance to His holy law.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 251.

- b. What can we learn from the rocks?

“The rocks are among the precious things of earth, containing treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In the rocks and mountains are registered the fact that God did destroy the wicked from off the earth by a flood.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 252.

- c. What question posed to Job humbles even the most self-confident? Job 38:16–18. What should God’s creatures as well as the sights and sounds of nature make us realize? Job 12:7–10.

“From the solemn roll of the deep-toned thunder and old ocean’s ceaseless roar, to the glad songs that make the forests vocal with melody, nature’s ten thousand voices speak His praise. In earth and sea and sky, with their marvelous tint and color, varying in gorgeous contrast or blended in harmony, we behold His glory. The everlasting hills tell us of His power. The trees that wave their green banners in the sunlight, and the flowers in their delicate beauty, point to their Creator. The living green that carpets the brown earth tells of God’s care for the humblest of His creatures. The caves of the sea and the depths of the earth reveal His treasures. He who placed the pearls in the ocean and the amethyst and chrysolite among the rocks, is a lover of the beautiful. The sun rising in the heavens is a representative of Him who is the life and light of all that He has made. All the brightness and beauty that adorn the earth and light up the heavens, speak of God.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 411, 412.

4. THE PURPOSE OF MOUNTAINS

- a. When contemplating the grandeur of the mountains, what should we ever keep in mind? Psalms 65:5, 6; 90:2; Hebrews 11:3.

“The varied scenery in the towering mountains and rocky heights, the deep mountain gorges with their rapid, noisy streams of water coming from the mountains above, the many cataracts that come tumbling down from the tops of the mountains, the waters breaking as they strike the rocks, and scattering into spray like a veil, render this scenery altogether one of surpassing beauty and grandeur.

“Mountains contain God’s blessings. I have seen men and women look upon the majesty of mountains as though they were really a deformity of nature. They would sigh and say, ‘How needless! Let me have the level plain, the broad prairies, and I should be happy.’ The mountains contain treasures of blessings which the Creator bestows upon the inhabitants of the earth. It is the diversity in the surface of the earth, in mountains, plains, and valleys, which reveals the wisdom and the power of the great Master Worker. And those who would banish from our earth the rocks and mountains, the wild gorges and the noisy, rushing streams, and the precipices, as unsightly deformities in nature, and would have a smooth level—their senses are too limited to comprehend the majesty of God. Their minds are bound about with narrow ideas.

“God, the great Architect, has built these lofty mountains, and their influence upon climate is a blessing to our world. They draw from the clouds enriching moisture. Mountain chains are God’s great reservoirs, to supply the ocean with its water. These are the sources of the springs, rills, and brooks, as well as the rivers. They receive in the form of rain and snow, the vapors with which the atmosphere is charged, and communicate them to the parched plains below. We should look upon the irregular mountains of the earth as God’s fountains of blessings from which flow forth the waters to supply all the living creatures. Every time I look upon the mountains I feel gratitude to God. My heart is lifted up in praise to Him who knows the wants and needs of man. If the earth had been a uniform level there would be stagnant marshes.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, pp. 306, 307.

- b. How can “mountains” of difficulties be removed? Matthew 17:20, 21.
-

5. MINDFUL OF THE DELICATE

- a. Just as the Lord bids us contemplate the majesty of the mountains and oceans, to what else does He point us? Matthew 6:28, 29.

“The great Master Artist calls our attention to the soulless flowers of the field, pointing out the beautiful tints and the wonderful variety of shades one flower may possess. . . .

“The Lord our Creator expends as much care, wisdom, and time upon the tiny flower as upon the great things He creates. In the tiniest flowers are seen a beauty and perfection that no human art can copy. The delicate tracery of the tinted rose, as well as the stars in the heavens, shows the penciling of the great Master Artist.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 254.

- b. What lesson can we learn from the variety of plants and flowers? Romans 12:4–6; 1 Corinthians 12:14–18, 22.

“From the endless variety of plants and flowers, we may learn an important lesson. All blossoms are not the same in form or color. Some possess healing virtues. Some are always fragrant. There are professing Christians who think it their duty to make every other Christian like themselves. This is man’s plan, not the plan of God. In the church of God there is room for characters as varied as are the flowers in a garden.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 254.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for our spirituality to spend much time outdoors?
2. What can we learn from the hills and mountains?
3. Name some interesting lessons we can learn from the rocks.
4. What environmental benefits stem from God’s design in making mountains?
5. What understanding does God want us to gain from the variety of flowers?

God's Spirit and Providence

"The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Isaiah 50:5).

"Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

Suggested Reading: *Historical Sketches of SDA Missions*, p. 189.

Sunday

January 20

1. WATCHING HOW GOD WORKS

- a. What does God intend us to realize through the varied circumstances of our daily life? Psalms 33:5; 107:43.

"God speaks to us through His providential workings and through the influence of His Spirit upon the heart. In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 87.

"God's providence is a continual school, in which He is ever leading men to see the true aims of life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 444.

- b. How does faith in Christ affect the way we see things? Titus 1:15; Matthew 13:13, 16.

"We are not to go through human wisdom, which is termed foolishness, to seek true wisdom. For men to learn science through man's interpretation, is to obtain a false education, but to learn of God and Jesus Christ is to learn the science of the Bible."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 414, 415.

"In that which seems to the worldling an inexplicable mystery, God's children see light and beauty.

"God speaks in His word, and fulfills this word in the world. We need now to seek to understand the movements of God's providence."—*The Review and Herald*, February 6, 1900.

Monday

January 21

2. A CALL TO PURITY

- a. What principle continually affects spiritual vision? Matthew 5:8.

"The first great lesson in all education is to know and understand the will of God. Take the knowledge of God with you through every day of life. Let it absorb the mind and the whole being. God gave Solomon wisdom, but this God-given wisdom was perverted when he turned from God to obtain wisdom from other sources. . . . The confusion in education has come because the wisdom and knowledge of God have not been honored and exalted by the religious world. The pure in heart see God in every providence, in every phase of true education. They vibrate to the first approach of light which radiates from the throne of God. Communications from heaven are made to those who will catch the first gleams of spiritual knowledge."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 414, 415.

"It is the pure in heart who shall see God in His true character, as a God of love. He who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart will reflect the purity and love which exist in Jehovah, and which Christ represented in our world. He who has the love of God in his heart has no enmity against the law of God, but renders willing obedience to all His commandments, and this constitutes Christianity."—*The Youth's Instructor*, July 26, 1894.

- b. In order to develop keener spiritual vision, what must we seek? 1 John 3:2, 3; Hebrews 9:14.

"The pure in heart shall see God. This seeing God in a clear, spiritual light is salvation to the soul of every believer. As soon as a soul decides to die to self, the new light begins and grows stronger and more decided until he is able to endure the sight of Him who is invisible. And as he sees God, he becomes fashioned in character after the divine similitude."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 369.

"When the Lord speaks to us, saying, 'Go forward,' it is not for us to stand and talk of difficulties, but promptly to obey, knowing that God understands the nature of every difficulty. If those in His service will stop talking unbelief and magnifying difficulties, and will move forward in humble obedience, God, in His providence, will cooperate with the finite efforts of man, and thus testify to the world of His omnipotence."—*The Review and Herald*, November 1, 1898.

3. RESPONDING TO PROVIDENCE

- a. In a parable about a rich farmer, what warning does Christ give us? Luke 12:14–21.

“[The rich man] did not think of God, from whom all his mercies had come. He did not realize that God had made him a steward of His goods that he might help the needy. He had a blessed opportunity of being God's almoner, but he thought only of ministering to his own comfort.

“The situation of the poor, the orphan, the widow, the suffering, the afflicted, was brought to this rich man's attention; there were many places in which to bestow his goods. He could easily have relieved himself of a portion of his abundance, and many homes would have been freed from want, many who were hungry would have been fed, many naked clothed, many hearts made glad, many prayers for bread and clothing answered, and a melody of praise would have ascended to heaven. The Lord had heard the prayers of the needy, and of His goodness He had prepared for the poor. (Psalm 68:10.) Abundant provision for the wants of many had been made in the blessings bestowed upon the rich man. But he closed his heart to the cry of the needy.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 256.

- b. What is often the hidden cause of apparently mysterious misfortunes, and why should we find in them a call to prayer? Malachi 3:8; Haggai 1:4–10.

“Those who are selfishly withholding their means need not be surprised if God's hand scatters. That which should have been devoted to the advancement of the work and cause of God, but which has been withheld, may be entrusted to a reckless son, and he may squander it. A fine horse, the pride of a vain heart, may be found dead in the stable. Occasionally a cow may die. Losses of fruit or other crops may come. God can scatter the means He has lent to His stewards, if they refuse to use it to His glory. Some, I saw, may have none of these losses to remind them of their remissness in duty, but their cases may be the more hopeless.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 661, 662.

- c. How do we too often hurt Christ—and our own selves—by resisting His voice? Malachi 3:9, 10; Proverbs 3:9, 10.

4. LIGHT POURING FROM HEAVEN

- a. What must God's children realize about vital, practical messages He is continually sending to us? Isaiah 30:21; Jeremiah 42:2, 3.

“The human family is the object of the special care of God and heavenly beings. Man is not left to become the sport of Satan's temptations. All heaven is actively engaged in the work of communicating light to the inhabitants of the world, that they may not be left in the darkness of midnight without spiritual guidance. An Eye that never slumbers or sleeps is guarding the camp of Israel. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels are ministering to the needs of the children of men. Voices inspired by God are crying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”—*My Life Today*, p. 88.

- b. How do we too often hurt ourselves by turning from God's voice? Isaiah 55:2; 59:1, 2.

“How few of those who claim to believe the truth carry it out practically in their characters. He who possesses the Christlike spirit will possess the childlike faith. God's blessing is on those who hear and those who recognize the light which He sends, who behold the traces of His footsteps and hear His voice.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 587.

- c. How should the servant of God respond to the voice of the Almighty? Isaiah 50:4, 5. How far did Christ's submission extend? Isaiah 50:6, 7; Matthew 26:67.

“Christ was continually receiving from the Father that He might communicate to us. . . . Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 139.

- d. When God speaks to our heart through difficult providences and frustrating disappointments, how should we respond—and why? Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 1:7.

“Through trial and persecution the glory—the character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 576.

5. THE CROSS IN THE PATH

- a. What warning should we heed from the bitter reaction of Judas when the ways of Christ crossed against his material lusts? Matthew 26:6–11, 14, 15.

“Genuine self-denial will be practiced by all who follow Christ. Judas undertook to follow Christ, and at the same time to carry out his selfish, covetous plans. He had the same privileges as had the other disciples. He had the same privileges of hearing the lessons of Christ, which plainly presented practical godliness; but he was not always pleased with the plain truth. It cut him, and instead of taking up personal labor with Judas Iscariot, he found fault with the words and works of Christ, and criticized His plain teachings. Instead of being transformed in character, he was cultivating self-love, self-esteem, and the love of money.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 287.

- b. What founding principles underlie the entire Christian experience? Luke 9:23.

“The believers in Christ, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. On earth they walk in narrow paths; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but thus they learn the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 576, 577.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- a. What are four ways through which God speaks to us?
- b. How can we clear the way for greater spiritual discernment?
- c. When God speaks either by a still, small voice or by His providence, how must we respond?
- d. How can we be sure that God is leading us even when circumstances are hard?
- e. Why does the scene of Calvary need to affect our everyday decisions?

First Sabbath Offering

for the Welfare Department



In the Word of God, we find specific instructions regarding the poor, especially in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Let us consider one of them:

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth” (Deuteronomy 15: 7, 8).

We are not asked to help any poor person indiscriminately, but we cannot neglect the “worthy poor.”

“‘These hands,’ [Paul] declared, ‘have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me’ (Acts 20:34). Amidst his arduous labors and extensive journeys for the cause of Christ, he was able, not only to supply his own wants, but to spare something for the support of his fellow laborers and the relief of the worthy poor. This he accomplished only by unremitting diligence and the closest economy. Well might he point to his own example as he said, ‘I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive’ (Verse 35).”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 395, 396.

It is not an easy task to identify the “worthy poor” among all those who come to us asking for help. Without doubt, we do have many worthy poor in our midst, and it is our duty to study each case which is brought before us and help those who are poor due to difficult circumstances, such as disease, unemployment, and natural disasters.

May the Lord give us a helping spirit when this First Sabbath Offering is collected in behalf of the “worthy poor” in our midst.

The General Conference Welfare Department

Tested on Stewardship

“How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship” (Luke 16:2).

“Every gift, every talent, every ray of light, is ours as a sacred trust, bestowed upon us that we may win souls to Christ.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 27, 1894.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 325–365.

Sunday

January 27

1. THE GIVER OF ALL GOOD

- a. **Why was God's greatest gift bestowed upon us—unworthy as we are—and how should we respond to it? John 3:16, 17; Romans 5:6–10.**

“The gift of Christ to the world was beyond computation, and no power could compete with God by giving a gift that would bear any comparison to the value of heaven's best treasure. The greatness of this gift was to furnish men with a theme of thanksgiving and praise that would last through time and through eternity. Having given His all in Christ, God lays claim to the heart, mind, soul, and strength of man. Looking upon the treasure which God has provided in the full and complete gift of Christ, we can exclaim: ‘Herein is love!’”—*Our High Calling*, p. 18.

- b. **What must we consider about our accountability toward the One who bestows every good gift and talent? Romans 14:10 (last part), 12; James 1:17.**

“If you are true disciples of Christ, you will consecrate every talent, and be able to reach out for the unconverted, by ways and methods that will be effective. You will be active, working agencies for Christ.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1893.

“Every human being will have to give an account to God for the way in which he has used his entrusted talents.”—*This Day With God*, p. 318.

Monday

January 28

2. AWAKENING TO OUR ACCOUNTABILITY

- a. **How does our standing in the hour of judgment involve all that we have ever received from God? Luke 16:1, 2.**

“To every man God has entrusted talents for wise improvement. If rightly used, these talents will reflect glory to the Giver. But the most precious gifts of God may be perverted, and thus become a curse rather than a blessing.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 218.

“We must train and improve our ability that we may not disappoint our Master, but reach the highest possible standard, and thus influence others to follow in the footsteps of our Example. We may say, ‘Neither society nor intimate companions must have their ideas of Christian character cheapened by my course of action.’”—*Ibid.*, p. 290.

“Why have you been so passive? Why have you done so little? . . . What have you gained by serving self at the sacrifice of the best interests of God's cause?”—*The Review and Herald*, December 5, 1907.

“The talents of God's people are to be employed in giving the last message of mercy to the world.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 494.

“If we do but one third of that which we have entrusted talents to do, the other two thirds are working against Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 439.

- b. **When we consider the abilities and talents God has given us—whether small or great—what is our continual duty? 2 Corinthians 13:5, 6.**

“Every energy, every endowment, is a talent that should contribute to God's glory by being used in His service. Our God-given capabilities should not be made to serve selfish ends. We should always be willing to impart, letting others know all that we know; and we should rejoice, if they in their work develop an energy and an intelligence superior to that which we possess.

“God's gifts are not to be used for the exaltation of self, but are to be put out to the exchangers, so that He shall receive His own with usury. Let not one attempt to secure greatness, happiness, or self-gratification by diverting from their proper use the powers with which he is endowed; for by so doing he dishonors the Giver, and fails of fulfilling the purpose for which he was created.”—*This Day With God*, p. 132.

“As a people we have had great light. Oh, that we were awake to the purposes of God and to our individual responsibility! Then would we use every gift, every talent, in the work of giving to the world the truth for this time.”—*Pacific Union Recorder*, August 28, 1902.

3. BETWEEN EACH SOUL AND GOD

- a. What did Christ say concerning Peter's curiosity about John? John 21:20–22.

"We have a personal work, an individual responsibility, a personal account to render, and it is our own salvation we must secure, for it is a matter of individual concern. . . . The piety and obedience of others will not save us or be doing our work. Their efforts will never be registered against our names as ours. . . .

"God has left to every one of us our work—not the temporal labor as planting, sowing, reaping, and gathering in the harvest, but to build up His kingdom, to bring souls to the knowledge of the truth, and to regard this as our first and highest duty. God has claims upon us. He has endowed us with capabilities and given us opportunities, if we will see them and improve them. These obligations to God none but ourselves, individually, can meet."—*Our High Calling*, p. 303.

- b. What should we consider when tempted to compare ourselves with others? 2 Corinthians 10:12.

"The delinquencies of others . . . will be no excuse for any one to follow their example, because Christ is lifted up as the only true Pattern—faultless, pure, uncorrupted."—*Our High Calling*, p. 303.

"What shall be said of those who, having had many years of experience in the truth, and many precious advantages for growth in grace, are yet inclined toward the world, and find pleasure in its amusements and display? Instead of going on from strength to strength, they are, little by little, departing from God, and losing their spiritual life. . . .

"Talent can never take the place of piety, nor can the applause of men recommend us to the favor of God."—*Ibid.*, p. 218.

"The knowledge of the truth is altogether too precious to be hoarded up, and bound about, and hid in the earth. Even the one talent entrusted by the Master is to be faithfully employed."—*Ibid.*, p. 290.

- c. In Christ's prayer to His Father, what task did He entrust to His followers? John 17:18.

"We are individually responsible. We ourselves should be our concern. Are we in all our words and actions building up the kingdom of Christ, or are we tearing down?"—*Our High Calling*, p. 303.

4. AVOID THE CURSE OF MEROZ

- a. What sobering thought comes to mind when we consider our talents during the times in which we are living? John 9:4; Judges 5:23

"Could the ledger of Heaven be opened before us, we would be greatly astonished at the large proportion of professing Christians who really contribute nothing toward the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom, who put forth no efforts for the salvation of souls. Such are slothful servants. Many who are satisfied not to do much good, flatter themselves that they are doing no harm so long as they do not oppose the earnest, active workers. But this class are doing much harm by their example. . . .

"The slothful servant was not condemned for what he had done, but for what he had not done. There is no more dangerous enemy to the cause of God than an indolent Christian. An open profaner does less harm, for he deceives no one; he appears what he is, a brier, a thorn. The do-nothings are the greatest hindrance."—*Our High Calling*, p. 302.

- b. In this busy age of constant struggle for economic survival, what should be foremost in the mind of all who profess to believe the present truth? Mark 8:36–38.

"The heavenly Guest is standing at your door, while you are piling up obstructions to bar His entrance. Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others. Will you permit your selfishness to triumph? Will you squander God's talents, and lose your soul through idolatrous love of the blessings He has given?"—*The Review and Herald*, November 2, 1886.

"We are living in a time when there should be deep thought and solemn consideration. What shall be the end of these things? What profit is there under the sun?"—*Ibid.*, March 6, 1894.

"What shall we say, what can we say, to arouse those who know the truth, both ministers and lay members, to a sense of their responsibility? How can they be led to feel the burden of imparting to others the truth God has imparted to them? O that they were awake to the purposes of God and to their individual responsibility! Then would they use every gift, every talent, in the work of giving to the world the truth for this time. The number of laborers would greatly increase, and the work would grow in influence and extent. God's people would be light bearers, shining amid the darkness of this degenerate age."—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902.

5. IN THE SHORTNESS OF TIME

- a. How do the signs of the times relate to our talents? Matthew 24:32, 33.

“Am I so familiar with the ‘sure word of prophecy’ that I can see in the events transpiring around me positive evidence that the coming King is even at the door? Do I sense the responsibility that rests upon me, in view of the light God has given? Am I using every talent entrusted to me as His steward, in well-directed effort to rescue the perishing? or am I lukewarm and indifferent, partly mixed up with a wicked world, using the means and ability God has given me, largely in self-gratification, caring more for my own ease and comfort than for the advancement of His cause?”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 1, 1897.

“If ever there was a time when men and women should have an assurance that they are copartners with Christ in the saving of the world, it is now.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 9, 1895.

- b. What inspired declaration should echo in each heart? Galatians 6:14.

“Call every talent into exercise to copy the Pattern. Christ died to save man, and He calls upon us to live as seeing Him who is invisible, that we may save souls. Then seek the Lord most earnestly. Eternal life at the right hand of God is worth a lifelong, persevering, untiring effort. Look to the cross of Calvary, and be no longer half-hearted. It is either life or death with every one of us; and when we surrender all, then Jesus will open ways that we may serve Him with every power of our being. The Lord would have us gather up the rays of light, and be witnesses for Christ.”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 28, 1892.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What example did God demonstrate in giving us His Son?
2. In what ways may I be misusing the talents God has given me?
3. Why is competition to have no place in the Christian experience?
4. Why does the mere struggle for economic survival fall short of God’s plan?
5. As we consider Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, what should we do with the talents entrusted to us?

Aiming High

“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14).

“Kneeling in faith at the cross, [the sinner] has reached the highest place to which man can attain.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 210.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 262–271.

1. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

- a. Why do we know that we each have an important part in God’s great plan? Mark 13:34. What responsibility does this imply? Mark 13:35–37.

“To His servants Christ commits ‘His goods’—something to be put to use for Him. He gives ‘to every man his work.’ Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in cooperation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 326, 327.

- b. What is true of every human being, whether we realize it or not? Job 37:7.

“God has not given talents to merely a chosen few, but to everyone He has committed some peculiar gift to be used in His service. Many to whom the Lord has given precious talents have refused to employ them for the advancement of the kingdom of God; nevertheless, they are under obligation to God for their use of His gifts. Everyone, whether serving God or pleasing himself, is a possessor of some trust, whose proper use will bring glory to God and whose perverted use will rob the Giver.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 289.

2. LIFE TO THE FULLEST

- a. As followers of Jesus, how are we to take up our cross every day? Matthew 10:38, 39; 16:25.

“We are to give God all there is of us; and in giving to God our all, are we to consider that we sustain a great loss?—No, for in giving to Him our talents, we are doubling them.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 18.

“The Lord has given man capacity for continual improvement, and has granted him all possible aid in the work. Through the provisions of divine grace, we may attain almost to the excellence of the angels.”—*Ibid.*, p. 218.

- b. How should we respond to the Giver of every good gift? Psalm 116:12–14.

“It is not the amount entrusted or the improvement made that brings to men the approbation of Heaven, but it is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service rendered, that brings the divine benediction, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord’ (Matthew 25:23). This reward of joy does not wait until our entrance into the city of God, but the faithful servant has a foretaste of it even in this life.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 289.

- c. What key principle should underlie our Christian experience? Philippians 2:4.

“God has given all something to do. Those who are willing to work in self-denial and self-sacrifice will find their place. But those who seek only a safe and easy place need to be converted. Until their hearts are renewed, their purposes changed, God has no use for them in His work. By an unreserved consecration we are to prepare ourselves for His service. Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular place as their special care. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object—the saving of souls.”—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902.

3. ONWARD AND UPWARD

- a. What plan should we adopt for the advancement of God’s work? John 9:4; Philippians 3:13, 14.

“God is waiting for men and women to awake to a sense of their responsibilities. He is waiting for them to link themselves with Him. Let them mark the signals for advance, and no longer be laggards in working out the will of the Lord.

“Do we realize how large a number in the world are watching our movements? From quarters where we least expect will come voices urging us forward in the work of giving to the world the last message of mercy. Ministers and people, wake up! Be quick to recognize and seize every opportunity and advantage offered in the turning of the wheel of providence.”—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902.

- b. What must we realize about the sacredness of our calling? Ephesians 5:8–13.

“There must be no pretense in the lives of those who have so sacred and solemn a message as we have been called to bear. The world is watching Seventh-day Adventists because it knows something of their profession of faith and of their high standard, and when it sees those who do not live up to their profession, it points at them with scorn.

“Those who love Jesus will bring all in their lives into harmony with His will. They have chosen to be on the Lord’s side, and their lives are to stand out in vivid contrast with the lives of worldlings. The tempter will come to them with his blandishments and bribes, saying: ‘All this will I give thee if thou wilt worship me.’ But they know that he has nothing worth receiving, and they refuse to yield to his temptations. Through the grace of God they are enabled to keep their purity of principle unsullied. Holy angels are close beside them, and Christ is revealed in their steadfast adherence to the truth. They are Christ’s minutemen, bearing, as true witnesses, a decided testimony in favor of the truth. They show that there is a spiritual power that can enable men and women not to swerve an inch from truth and justice for all the gifts that men can bestow. Such ones, wherever they may be, will be honored of heaven because they have conformed their lives to the will of God, caring not what sacrifices they are called upon to make.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 23, 24.

4. WHAT SHALL WE DO?

- a. What should be foremost in our mind when beginning or changing our lifework? 1 Corinthians 3:13; 10:24.

“We should carefully weigh the matters relative to the work we take up. Will this work be a blessing to souls? God has not given us work merely to keep us busy, but for His name’s glory. Many are busily engaged gathering wood, hay, stubble. But this will all be consumed. . . .

“By God’s appointment each man has his post of duty. The careful, prayerful inquiry is to be made, What duty is assigned us individually, as men and women under accountability to God? And whether our labor be wholly limited to spiritual things, or whether it is temporal and spiritual combined, we are to faithfully discharge our work. . . . Man is to remember that God has the ownership of all, and that his pursuits are invested with a sacredness that they did not possess before he enlisted in the army of the Lord. Every action is to be a consecrated action, for it occupies God’s entrusted talent of time.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 220.

- b. Whatever our occupation, what attitude does Christ teach? Matthew 20:27, 28; Luke 22:27.

“Many a man whose talents are adapted for some other calling, is ambitious to enter a profession; and he who might have been successful as a farmer, an artisan, or a nurse, fills inadequately the position of a minister, a lawyer, or a physician. There are others, again, who might have filled a responsible calling, but who, for want of energy, application, or perseverance, content themselves with an easier place.

“We need to follow more closely God’s plan of life. To do our best in the work that lies nearest, to commit our ways to God, and to watch for the indications of His providence—these are rules that ensure safe guidance in the choice of an occupation.

“He who came from heaven to be our example spent nearly thirty years of His life in common, mechanical labor; but during this time He was studying the word and the works of God, and helping, teaching, all whom His influence could reach. When His public ministry began, He went about healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, and preaching the gospel to the poor. This is the work of all His followers.”—*Education*, pp. 267, 268.

5. HELP FROM ABOVE

- a. What is expected of every soldier in the Lord’s army? 1 Peter 2:21–23; Colossians 2:10; 3:10.

“We are not to walk according to our own ideas, and present before others in our example a human standard which they will follow; but we are to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and make straight paths for our feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way. We are to keep the commandments and live.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 12, 1892.

“Through [Christ’s] sacrifice, human beings may reach the high ideal set before them, and hear at last the words, ‘Ye are complete in him’ (Colossians 2:10).”—*Our High Calling*, p. 364.

- b. What was the psalmist able to declare frankly regarding the wisdom he had gained, and why? Psalm 119:99. What kind of education did Paul emphasize? Ephesians 1:3–6.

“Man’s learning may be considered supreme, but it is not that higher education which he can take with him into the kingdom of heaven. The learned men of the world, notwithstanding all their intellectual studies, know not the truth as it is in Jesus. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul brings to view a kind of education which these supposed intellectual stars have not: [Ephesians 1:3–6 quoted.]

“These divine heights the true believer may reach. All who will may see the mystery of godliness. But it is only through a correct understanding of Christ’s mission and work that the possibility of being complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, is brought within our reach. His long human arm embraces the human family; His divine arm grasps the throne of the Infinite, that man may have the benefit of the infinite sacrifice made in his behalf.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 18, 1899.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Within our individual sphere, what work has been assigned to us?
2. Why is the world shocked to hear Christ’s idea of human potential?
3. Why hasn’t the world yet been enlightened by the three angels’ messages?
4. What guidelines are given to determine our place in God’s vineyard?
5. Describe the high ideal that is set before us.

Cultivating the Mind

“Gird up the loins of your mind” (1 Peter 1:13).

“Discipline and control the mental faculties.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 219.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 123–134.

Sunday

February 10

1. IMPARTING MENTAL VIGOR

- a. **In this day of professed intellectual enlightenment, what timeless admonition is sorely needed? 1 Timothy 6:20, 21.**

“Human science is not divine enlightenment. Divine science is the demonstration of the Spirit of God, inspiring implicit faith in Him. The men of the world suppose this faith to be beneath the notice of their great and intelligent minds, something too low to give attention to; but here they make a great mistake. It is altogether too high for their human intelligence to reach.

“The gospel message is far from being opposed to true knowledge and intellectual attainments. It is itself true science, true intellectual knowledge. True wisdom is infinitely above the comprehension of the worldly wise. The hidden wisdom, which is Christ formed within, the hope of glory, is a wisdom high as heaven.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 364.

- b. **How does the Bible provide greater blessing than most realize? Isaiah 55:1–3.**

“As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind thus brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite cannot but expand and strengthen.”—*Education*, p. 124.

Monday

February 11

2. WHAT ARE WE READING?

- a. **What keen observation should make the scholar ponder? Ecclesiastes 12:12.**

“The Christian should possess more intelligence and keener discernment than the worldling. The study of God’s word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths.

“The human mind becomes dwarfed and enfeebled when dealing with commonplace matters only, never rising above the level of the things of time and sense to grasp the mysteries of the unseen. The understanding is gradually brought to the level of the subjects with which it is constantly familiar. The mind will contract its powers and lose its ability if it is not exercised to acquire additional knowledge and put to the stretch to comprehend the revelations of divine power in nature and in the Sacred Word.

“But an acquaintance with facts and theories, however important they may be in themselves, is of little real value unless put to a practical use. There is danger that those who have obtained their education principally from books will fail to realize that they are novices so far as experimental knowledge is concerned.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 545, 546.

- b. **Where is the adequate source of knowledge in contrast with the inadequate source? Jeremiah 2:13.**

“It is acquaintance that awakens sympathy, and sympathy is the spring of effective ministry. To awaken in the children and youth sympathy and the spirit of sacrifice for the suffering millions in the ‘regions beyond’ (2 Corinthians 10:16), let them become acquainted with these lands and their peoples. In this line much might be accomplished in our schools. Instead of dwelling on the exploits of the Alexanders and Napoleons of history, let the pupils study the lives of such men as the apostle Paul and Martin Luther, as Moffat and Livingstone and Carey, and the present daily-unfolding history of missionary effort. Instead of burdening their memories with an array of names and theories that have no bearing upon their lives, and to which, once outside the schoolroom, they rarely give a thought, let them study all lands in the light of missionary effort and become acquainted with the peoples and their needs.”—*Education*, p. 269.

3. THE PURPOSE OF INTELLECT

- a. What makes the true Christian distinct in this world? 2 Corinthians 4:18.

“While the worldly wise is skimming along the surface, grasping the things of sight and sense, the one who fears and reveres God is reaching into eternity, penetrating the deepest recesses and gathering the knowledge and riches that are as enduring as eternity. . . .

“To walk the world a pure man of untarnished morals, bearing the sacred principles of truth in your heart, its influence seen in the acts of your life; to live uncorrupted by the baseness, falsity, and dishonesty of a world which must soon be purified of its moral corruption by the fires of God’s retributive justice, is to be a man whose record is immortalized in heaven, honored among the pure angels who weigh and appreciate moral worth. This is what it is to be a man of God.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 80.

- b. What plain command comes to every receiver of present truth? Ezekiel 33:7–9.

“So far as his opportunities extend, everyone who has received the light of truth is under the same responsibility as was the prophet of Israel to whom came the word. [Ezekiel 33:7–9 quoted.]

“Are we to wait until the fulfillment of the prophecies of the end before we say anything concerning them? Of what value will our words be then? Shall we wait until God’s judgments fall upon the transgressor before we tell him how to avoid them? Where is our faith in the word of God? Must we see things foretold come to pass before we will believe what He has said? In clear, distinct rays light has come to us, showing us that the great day of the Lord is near at hand, ‘even at the doors’ (Matthew 24:33). Let us read and understand before it is too late.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 19, 20.

“It is not only by preaching the truth, not only by distributing literature, that we are to witness for God. Let us remember that a Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity, and that a cheap Christian character works more harm in the world than the character of a worldling. Not all the books written can serve the purpose of a holy life. Men will believe, not what the minister preaches, but what the church lives.”—*Ibid.*, p. 21.

4. A MIND FOR A MISSION

- a. Following his experience in Athens, why did the highly-educated apostle Paul change his evangelistic approach? Acts 17:15–17; 18:1; 1 Corinthians 2:2.

“The apostle Paul had all the privileges of a Roman citizen. He was not behind in the Hebrew education, for he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel; but all this did not enable him to reach the highest standard. With all this scientific and literary education, he was, until Christ was revealed to him, in as complete darkness as are many at this time. Paul became fully conscious that to know Jesus Christ by an experimental knowledge was for his present and eternal good. He saw the necessity of reaching a high standard.

“It had been Paul’s custom to adopt an oratorical style in his preaching. He was a man fitted to speak before kings, before the great and learned men of Athens, and his intellectual acquirements were often of value to him in preparing the way for the gospel. He tried to do this in Athens, meeting eloquence with eloquence, philosophy with philosophy, and logic with logic; but he failed to meet with the success he had hoped for. His aftersight led him to understand that there was something needed above human wisdom. God taught him that something above the world’s wisdom must come to him. He must receive his power from a higher source. In order to convict and convert sinners, the Spirit of God must come into his work and sanctify every spiritual development. He must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 18, 1899.

- b. Like Paul, what is the main assignment given to each of us? 2 Timothy 2:1, 2.

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.

“The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is to be our work.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 19.

5. DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

- a. What should be the goal of all mental growth? 1 Peter 1:13–16; Ephesians 4:13.

“[God] wants you to have great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. . . .

“Is our earthly, temporal work done with a thoroughness, a fidelity, that will bear scrutiny? Are there those whom we have wronged who will testify against us in the day of God? If so, the record has passed up to heaven, and we shall meet it again. We are to work for the great Taskmaster’s eye, whether our painstaking efforts are seen and appreciated by men or not. No man, woman, nor child can acceptably serve God with neglectful, haphazard, sham work, whether it be secular or religious service. The true Christian will have an eye single to the glory of God in all things, encouraging his purposes and strengthening his principles with this thought, ‘I do this for Christ.’”—*Our High Calling*, p. 369.

- b. What is the highest level that the human mind can achieve? 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:5–8.

“Self-control is a power that all may possess. It is gained by placing the will wholly on the side of God, taking the will of God for your will.

“Christ . . . can and will, if we submit to Him, fill the chambers of the mind and the recesses of the soul with His Spirit. Then our will will be in perfect harmony with the Divine will. Our spirit and will may be so identified with His Spirit and will that in thought and aim we shall be one with Him.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 219.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does the human quest for progressive knowledge relate to the gospel?
2. Of what pitfalls do we need to beware in the “information age” of today?
3. What makes the true Christian peculiar in the sight of the world?
4. In what way is Paul’s growth in wisdom while in Corinth a lesson for us?
5. What is the highest education we can receive, and for what goal would it be?

“Ask, and It Shall Be Given You”

“Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

“Our prayers are not to be a selfish asking, merely for our own benefit. We are to ask that we may give.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 142.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 139–149.

1. LIVING THE LORD’S PRAYER

- a. Why is prayer so important? John 16:24; 1 Corinthians 10:12.

“It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 525.

“Prayer is both a duty and a privilege. We must have help which God alone can give, and that help will not come unasked. If we are too self-righteous to feel our need of help from God, we shall not have His help when we need it most. If we are too independent and self-sufficient to throw ourselves daily by earnest prayer upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, we shall be left subject to Satan’s temptations.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 129.

- b. What desire expressed by Christ’s disciples should also be ours? Luke 11:1. How did the Lord respond to the disciples’ request? Luke 11:2–4.

“The Saviour does not . . . restrict us to the use of these exact words [as found in the Lord’s prayer]. As one with humanity, He presents His own ideal of prayer. . . . We are taught to come to God with our tribute of thanksgiving, to make known our wants, to confess our sins, and to claim His mercy in accordance with His promise.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 103.

2. COMPLYING WITH THE CONDITIONS

- a. How only can we expect the Lord to stand behind His promises? John 15:7.

“Those who bring their petitions to God, claiming His promise while they do not comply with the conditions, insult Jehovah. They bring the name of Christ as their authority for the fulfillment of the promise, but they do not those things that would show faith in Christ and love for Him.

“Many are forfeiting the condition of acceptance with the Father. We need to examine closely the deed of trust wherewith we approach God. If we are disobedient, we bring to the Lord a note to be cashed when we have not fulfilled the conditions that would make it payable to us. We present to God His promises, and ask Him to fulfill them, when by so doing He would dishonor His own name.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 143.

“All His gifts are promised on condition of obedience. God has a heaven full of blessings for those who will cooperate with Him. All who obey Him may with confidence claim the fulfillment of His promises.”—*Ibid.*, p. 145.

- b. What is one reason why many prayers remain unanswered? Malachi 3:6–8.

“If we withhold from [God] that which is His own, how can we claim His blessing? If we are unfaithful stewards of earthly things, how can we expect Him to entrust us with the things of heaven? It may be that here is the secret of unanswered prayer.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 144.

- c. How does Jesus illustrate the importance of persistent prayer? Luke 18:1–7.

“Often [God] delays to answer us in order to try our faith or test the genuineness of our desire. Having asked according to His word, we should believe His promise and press our petitions with a determination that will not be denied.

“God does not say, Ask once, and you shall receive. He bids us ask. Unwearyingly persist in prayer. The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude, and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 145.

3. APPROACHING THE FATHER'S THRONE

- a. What is a key point regarding prayer, and why? Matthew 5:23, 24; 6:12.

“Are you estranged from your brother, because you think he has injured you? Are there no heart-burnings among you? Is there no bitterness in your hearts, no envy, no jealousy, no evil surmising, no misjudging of your brethren? Is there no emulation, no desire for special favor or honors, no wish to have the supremacy? These feelings should not exist among Christians.”—*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 429.

- b. After completing the Lord's prayer on the Sermon on the Mount, what essential thought did Jesus specifically reemphasize to aid us? Matthew 6:14, 15.

“He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God we are to pardon all who have done evil to us.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 113, 114.

- c. Why is a forgiving spirit especially important in these last days? James 5:9.

““He who is full of envy looks upon the one he envies with dislike and seeks to show himself superior to his rival; unless he sees and repents of his sin, he will grudge against the one he envies, and all love of Christ will die out of his heart.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 5, 1894.

“No resentment must come into our hearts. When reviled, we must not revile again. O jealousy and evil surmising, what mischief have ye wrought! how have ye turned friendship and love into bitterness and hatred! We must be less proud, less sensitive, have less self-love, and be dead to self-interest.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 566.

4. THE FRAGRANT INCENSE OF CHRIST

- a. How should the attitude of the psalmist be reflected in our prayer life, and especially in how we view others? Psalm 66:18–20; Luke 18:10–14; Romans 2:1–4.

“If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions. Our own merit will never commend us to the favor of God; it is the worthiness of Jesus that will save us, His blood that will cleanse us; yet we have a work to do in complying with the conditions of acceptance.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 95.

“How cruel it is to judge, condemn, and pass sentence upon your brother when he has not the slightest suspicion that you are not his friend. . . .

“Let us reverently inquire, What does the Lord require of me in my relation to my brother?”—*The Review and Herald*, August 16, 1892.

- b. What assurance comes as we seek a purer relationship with God and with others—including those who may have hurt us? Ephesians 2:13; 4:31, 32.

- c. What truth is to strengthen our prayer life? Luke 11:5–8, 13; 1 John 5:14, 15.

“Our prayers do not always seem to receive an immediate answer; but Christ teaches that we should not cease to pray. Prayer is not to work any change in God; it is to bring us into harmony with God. When we make request of Him, 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. Why are too many of our prayers offered in vain? James 4:2, 3.

“Our prayers are not to be a selfish asking, merely for our own benefit. We are to ask that we may give.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 142.

5. PURSUING OUR MASTER’S MISSION

- a. What serious, thought-provoking challenge comes to all who truly desire to pray according to Christ’s model? Matthew 6:10.

“Is your interest selfishly shut up in your own family or to your own church? God pity your narrowness! You should have that undying zeal, that far-reaching love, that encircles the world. There are hundreds of millions of men, women, and children who have never heard the truth, and multitudes are constantly going down to the grave without any sense of their accountability to God. How can you who repeat the Lord’s prayer, ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,’ sit at ease in your homes without helping to carry the torch of truth to others? How can you lift up your hands before God and ask His blessing upon yourselves and your families, when you are doing so little to help others?”—*Historical Sketches of SDA Missions*, pp. 287, 288.

- b. What may well be the greatest need for which we should pray? 1 John 4:16.

“The working out of the principle of love is true sanctification. Those who walk in the light will be the children of the light, and will diffuse light to those who are around them in kindness, in affection, in unmistakable love.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 8, 1894.

“Personal effort for others should be preceded by much secret prayer; for it requires great wisdom to understand the science of saving souls. Before communicating with men, commune with Christ.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 149.

“There are many who long to help others, but they feel that they have no spiritual strength or light to impart. Let them present their petitions at the throne of grace. Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made.”—*Ibid.*, p. 147.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What four elements should be included in our prayers?
2. What are some hindrances which prevent prayers from being answered?
3. Why does God consider deeply our attitude toward His other children?
4. For what purpose may the Lord be delaying the answer to our prayers?
5. What does the Spirit of Prophecy reveal as true sanctification?

First Sabbath Offering

for Erode Mission, India

Erode, a municipal city, is located at a distance of 100 km east of Coimbatore, on the bank of the Cauvery River. It is the fourth largest city of Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state of India. It is almost completely surrounded by hills, at an altitude of 1600 m above sea level. The root for the name of the city, Erode, may be due to the existence of two water courses.

People from different states of India are settled there. Hinduism is professed by most of the population of 5.5 million; those professing Islam form the second largest religious group.

Our work in Erode began with 12 members in 1998. Now we have a membership of 79. Due to the anti-Conversion Ordinance, it is very difficult to spread the Gospel here. Nevertheless, the Lord has blessed His work with the help of Brother K. I. Rajasekar, and the Erode Mission is growing.

We purchased a small property in the year 2000. The house was damaged by a cyclone. The chapel, the mission office, and the living quarters for the ministers need repairs. Your prayers and financial support will enable us to have a monument for the Lord in this city. May God bless you and your generosity!

Your brothers and sisters from the South India Union



Molded by the Master

“O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand” (Isaiah 64:8).

“Let the church arouse and go forth to do her appointed work. Every believer, educated or uneducated, can bear the message.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 26.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 19–26.

Sunday

February 24

1. YIELDING BY FAITH

- a. **What privilege is available to every soul in God’s family, and what is necessary in order to lay hold of it? Isaiah 64:8; Hebrews 13:6.**

“You are to be as clay in the hands of the potter, and if you submit yourself to Christ, He will fashion you into a vessel unto honor, fit for the Master’s use. The only thing that stands in the way of the soul who is not fashioned after the divine Pattern is that he does not become poor in spirit; for he who is poor in spirit will look to a higher Source than himself, that he may obtain the grace which will make him rich unto God. While he will feel that he cannot originate anything, he will say, ‘The Lord is my helper.’”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1892.

- b. **In facing difficulties, what understanding can comfort our heart? Job 23:10.**

“The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines. . . .

“As the clay is in the hands of the potter, so are we to be in His hands. We are not to try to do the work of the potter. Our part is to yield ourselves to be molded by the Master Worker.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 471, 472.

2. DIGNITY AMID DRUDGERY

- a. Whatever our task at hand may be, what must we consider? Ecclesiastes 9:10.

“Let us remember that while the work we have to do may not be our choice, it is to be accepted as God’s choice for us. Whether pleasing or unpleasing, we are to do the duty that lies nearest.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 472, 473.

- b. With what attitude should we brighten today’s toil? Colossians 3:23, 24.

“It is easy for us to entertain ideas that we know more than we really do, and when tried we stumble over little matters as though they were great difficulties. Do not aspire to do some great service, when the duty of today has not been done with fidelity. Take up the commonplace care, trade on the humble talent with a solemn sense of your responsibility for the right use of every power, every thought that God has given you. God asks no less of the lowliest, than of the most exalted; each must do his appointed work with cheerful alacrity, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The first thing to gain is a humble sense of your own weakness. Begin to see that you do not possess one tithe of the knowledge that you should possess. Begin to see how you have wasted your privileges, and how much you owe to the mercy of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 1, 1888.

- c. What lesson can we learn from the caged bird? What is the purpose of the shadows of affliction permitted by God? 1 Peter 4:12, 13.

“In the full light of day, and in hearing of the music of other voices, the caged bird will not sing the song that his master seeks to teach him. He learns a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. But the master covers the cage, and places it where the bird will listen to the one song he is to sing. In the dark, he tries and tries again to sing that song until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody. Then the bird is brought forth, and ever after he can sing that song in the light. Thus God deals with His children. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the shadows of affliction we can sing it ever afterward.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 472.

3. MYSTERIOUS METHODS OF PROVIDENCE

- a. Regardless of what others may do, what should we remember? Romans 14:12.

“Let none mourn that they have not larger talents to use for the Master. While you are dissatisfied and complaining, you are losing precious time and wasting valuable opportunities. Thank God for the ability you have, and pray that you may be enabled to meet the responsibilities that have been placed upon you. If you desire greater usefulness, go to work and acquire what you mourn for. Go to work with steady patience, and do your very best, irrespective of what others are doing. [Romans 14:12 quoted.] Let not your thought or your words be, ‘O that I had a larger work! O that I were in this or that position!’

“Do your duty where you are. Make the best investments possible with your entrusted gift in the very place where your work will count the most before God. Put away all murmuring and strife. Labor not for the supremacy. Be not envious of the talents of others; for that will not increase your ability to do a good or a great work. Use your gift in meekness.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 1, 1888.

- b. Why does the Lord allow us to be tempted and tested? Deuteronomy 8:2.

“God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them into positions which are calculated to reveal the motives of the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advance step the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If any find their hearts opposed to the straight work of God, it should convince them that they have a work to do in overcoming, or they will be finally rejected of the Lord.

“This world is the place in which to prepare to appear in God’s presence. Individuals will here show what power affects their hearts, and controls their actions. If it is the power of divine truth, it will lead them to good works, and make them noble-hearted and generous, like their divine Lord. But, on the other hand, selfishness, covetousness, and pride will manifest themselves as the sure result of yielding to evil impulses.

“All who become connected with the cause of God will have opportunity to know what is in their hearts.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 8, 1880.

“It is not purse power or brain power, but heart power we need.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 162.

4. HUMBLE VESSELS OF HONOR

- a. Why is the teaching of the gospel given to the humble? 1 Corinthians 1:18–31.

“The highest grade of schooling that any human being can attain to is the schooling given by the divine Teacher. This is the knowledge that in a special sense we shall greatly need as we draw near the close of this world’s history, and everyone will do well to obtain this kind of education. The Lord requires that men shall be under His training. There is a great work to be done. . . .

“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He received an education in the providence of God; but a large part of that education had to be unlearned, and accounted as foolishness. Its impression had to be blotted out by forty years of experience in caring for the sheep and the tender lambs. If many who are connected with the work of the Lord could be isolated as was Moses, and could be compelled by circumstances to follow some humble vocation until their hearts became tender, they would make much more faithful shepherds than they now do in dealing with God’s heritage. They would not be so prone to magnify their own abilities, or seek to demonstrate that the wisdom of an advanced education could take the place of a sound knowledge of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 360.

- b. How are we made polished vessels in the Potter’s hands? 2 Timothy 2:19–21.

“When self is woven into our labors, then the truth we bear to others does not sanctify, refine, and ennoble our own hearts; it will not testify that we are fit vessels for the Master’s use. It is only through fervent prayer that we may hold sweet fellowship with Jesus, and through this blessed communion the words and the spirit are made fragrant with the spirit of Christ. There is not a heart that will not bear watching. Jesus, the precious Saviour, enjoined watchfulness. The oversight of self must not be relaxed for a moment. The heart must be kept with diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 405.

“What kind of vessels are meet for the Master’s use?—Empty vessels. When we empty the soul of every defilement, we are ready for use. Are we emptied of self? Are we cured of selfish planning? Oh, for less self-occupation!”—*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 111.

5. VESSELS FOR VICTORY

- a. What activates and equips the vessels the Master is molding? 2 Corinthians 5:14.

“The true test of character is found in the willingness to bear burdens, to take the hard place, to do the work that needs to be done, though it bring no earthly recognition or reward.”—*Education*, p. 295.

“It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 146.

“In this closing work of the gospel there is a vast field to be occupied; and, more than ever before, the work is to enlist helpers from the common people. Both the youth and those older in years will be called from the field, from the vineyard, and from the workshop, and sent forth by the Master to give His message. Many of these have had little opportunity for education; but Christ sees in them qualifications that will enable them to fulfill His purpose. If they put their hearts into the work, and continue to be learners, He will fit them to labor for Him. . . .

“[Christ] will be present to help those whose hearts are susceptible to pity, though their hands may be rough and unskilled. He will work through those who can see mercy in misery, and gain in loss. When the Light of the world passes by, privilege will be discerned in hardship, order in confusion, success in apparent failure.”—*Education*, pp. 269, 270.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are the poor in spirit the only clay soft enough for molding?
2. What should we remember when faced with daily drudgery?
3. What current test is revealing the condition of my heart?
4. How was Moses remade into a more worthy vessel—and how can we be?
5. Why will Christ choose to work with vessels of such little apparent worth?

Brightening Our Surroundings

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth” (Isaiah 62:1).

“The light that God has given His people is not to be shut up within the churches that already know the truth. It is to be shed abroad into the dark places of the earth.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 24.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 26–29; vol. 6, pp. 421–439.

Sunday

March 2

1. THE CALL OF THE HOUR

- a. What is God’s urgent call to all who have been entrusted with the present truth? Isaiah 54:1, 2.

“The light that God has given His people is not to be shut up within the churches that already know the truth. It is to be shed abroad into the dark places of the earth. Those who walk in the light as Christ is in the light will cooperate with the Saviour by revealing to others what He has revealed to them. It is God’s purpose that the truth for this time shall be made known to every kindred and nation and tongue and people. In the world today men and women are absorbed in the search for worldly gain and worldly pleasure. There are thousands upon thousands who give no time or thought to the salvation of the soul. The time has come when the message of Christ’s soon coming is to sound throughout the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 24.

- b. Why are God’s people able to take decided action in expanding missionary efforts with holy boldness? Isaiah 54:3, 4.

“Unmistakable evidences point to the nearness of the end. The warning is to be given in certain tones.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 25.

Monday

March 3

2. EXPANDING OUR VISION

- a. Where should our main energies be refocused? Isaiah 56: 8; 62:1, 2.

“Time and energy and means are devoted to those who know the truth, instead of being used to enlighten the ignorant. Our churches are being tended as though they were sick lambs by those who should be seeking for the lost sheep. If our people would minister to other souls who need their help, they would themselves be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd, and thousands would be rejoicing in the fold who are now wandering in the desert. Instead of hovering over our people, let every soul go to work to seek and to save the lost. Let every soul labor, not in visiting among our churches, but in visiting the dark places of the earth where there are no churches.

“In places where the standard of truth has never been lifted, more souls will be converted as a result of the same amount of work than ever before.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 25, 1895.

“The way must be prepared for the coming of the Prince of Peace in the clouds of heaven. There is much to be done in the cities that have not yet heard the truth for this time. We are not to establish institutions to rival in size and splendor the institutions of the world; but in the name of the Lord, with the untiring perseverance and unflagging zeal that Christ brought into His labors, we are to carry forward the work of the Lord. As a people we greatly need to humble our hearts before God, pleading His forgiveness for our neglect to fulfill the gospel commission.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 25.

- b. What vision showed we have for languishing churches? Matthew 21:28; Mark 13:34.

“The best medicine you can give the church is not preaching or sermonizing, but planning work for them. If set to work, the despondent would soon forget their despondency, the weak would become strong, the ignorant intelligent, and all would be prepared to present the truth as it is in Jesus. They would find an unfailing helper in Him who has promised to save all who come unto Him.”—*Evangelism*, p. 356.

“Every agency is to be set in operation, not to work for the churches, but to work for those who are in the darkness of error.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 25, 1895.

3. REVIVAL!

- a. What should be the earnest prayer of every assembly of believers, and how only can this prayer be answered? Habakkuk 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:15.

“The work that is done for those who know the truth, and yet who do not feed on Christ, would be better devoted to carrying the truth to the cities of our world. Who is willing to go to these cities, and, clothed in the meekness of Christ, work for the Master? Will any one presume to lay hands upon those who are willing to engage in house-to-house labor, and say, ‘You must not go unless we send you’? God is calling for workers, and the end of all things is at hand. If one tithe of the labor that has been expended upon our churches had been devoted to those who are perishing in ignorance, living in sin, many would have repented long ago.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895.

“When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger. It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith. As the light shines into their hearts, let them diffuse its rays. Teach the newly converted that they are to enter into fellowship with Christ, to be his witnesses, and to make Him known unto the world.

“None should be forward to enter into controversy, but they should tell the simple story of the love of Jesus.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 355, 356.

- b. What attitude must we all cherish in witnessing for Jesus? 1 Peter 3:15.

“Even though a church may be composed of poor and uneducated and unknown persons, yet if they are believing, praying members, their influence will be felt for time and for eternity. If they go forth in simple faith, relying upon the promises of the Word of God, they may accomplish great good. If they let their light shine, Christ is glorified in them, and the interest of His kingdom are advanced. If they have a sense of their individual accountability to God, they will seek for opportunities to work, and will shine as lights in the world. They will be examples of sincerity and of zealous fervor in working out God’s plan for the salvation of souls. The poor, the unlearned, if they choose, may become students in the school of Christ, and He will teach them true wisdom. The life of meek, childlike trust, of true piety, true religion, will be effective in its influence upon others.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 265.

4. NOW IS THE TIME

- a. What happens if we refuse or neglect Christ’s commission? Matthew 6:23.

“Communicate the knowledge of the truth to others. This is God’s plan to enlighten the world. If you do not stand in your allotted place, if you do not let your light shine, you will become enshrouded in darkness.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 266.

- b. What assurance is ours, even when some reject our efforts? Ezekiel 33:7–9.

“There are those in all our cities who have not had the truth presented to them; who have not heard the warning message of the Lord’s soon coming; who have not heard that the end of all things is at hand. Unless messengers go to them in the Spirit of Christ, how shall these people hear the gospel invitation? How shall they know that their sins may be forgiven through the mercy of a crucified and risen Saviour? Aggressive warfare must be entered upon with a devoted, self-sacrificing spirit that many know nothing about. As opportunities offer, as doors open, and the word of life is brought to the people, opposition to the truth will start into operation. The door that is open to the missionary will also be open to the opposer of truth. But if the truth is presented as it is in Jesus, the hearers are responsible for its rejection.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 2, 1895.

- c. In view of the shortness of time, what must we keep in mind? John 9:4.

“What shall be done to meet our responsibilities? How shall we make proper use of the opportunities presented? There must be prayer, earnest, humble prayer; there must be determined wrestling with God for the endowment of His Holy Spirit.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 2, 1895.

“The opportune time for us to work is now, just now, while the day lasts. But there is no command for anyone to search the Scripture in order to ascertain, if possible, when probation will close. God has no such message for any mortal lips. He would have no mortal tongue declare that which He has hidden in His secret councils.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 192.

5. QUALIFIED BY YIELDING TO CHRIST

- a. Regardless of how incapable we may feel to be missionaries for Christ, what understanding should we quickly adopt? 2 Corinthians 3:5, 6; John 14:26.

“Many have willing hands and hearts, but they are discouraged from putting their energies into the work. They are criticized if they try to do anything, and finally allow their talents to lie dormant for fear of criticism, when if they were encouraged to use them, the work would be advanced. . . . Many more who ought to have an opportunity to develop into efficient workers for the Lord, are left in the shadow. . . .

“There are to be no secret societies in our churches. ‘All ye are brethren’ (Matthew 23:8). The minister’s work is the lay member’s work as well. Heart should be bound to heart. Let all press forward, shoulder to shoulder. Is not every true follower of Christ open to receive His teachings? And should not all have an opportunity to learn of Christ’s methods by practical experience? . . .

“Let church members awake. Let them take hold and help to stay up the hands of the ministers and the workers, pushing forward the interests of the cause. There must be no measuring of talent by comparison. If a man exercises faith, and walks humbly with his God, he may have little education, he may be accounted a weak man, yet he can fill his appointed place as well as the man who has the finest education. He who yields himself most unreservedly to the influence of the Holy Spirit is best qualified to do acceptable service for the Master. God will inspire men who do not occupy responsible positions to work for Him. . . . Let men have freedom to carry out that which the Holy Spirit indicates. Do not put the shackles upon humble men whom God would use.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is God’s purpose for His people at this very hour in history?
2. How can a sickly congregation be revived?
3. Of what simple, non-controversial topic can new converts witness?
4. Why will it become increasingly challenging to witness for Christ?
5. Regarding our brethren, how may we be in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit?

A Call to Self-Sacrifice

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself” (Romans 15:1–3).

“Suppose that Christ’s professed followers were representatives of Christ in our earth, would not worldlings see this and take knowledge of such that they had learned of Jesus? Will not such be a power?”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 96.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 31–42, 49–51; *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 445–453.

1. RUSHING, RUSHING—BUT WHERE?

- a. In our busy life, how may we be tempted to neglect our calling in connection with the threefold message? Luke 21:34, 35.

“We are to be busy, to be weighted with the last message of mercy to a perishing world. We are to have the truth planted in the heart, and teach it to others as it is in Jesus. The world is in a very solemn period; for souls are deciding what will be their eternal destiny. . . . Who are willing to be colaborers with Christ?”—*The Review and Herald*, October 9, 1894.

- b. What have been some hindrances that have prevented many of us from properly focusing on the fulfillment of Christ’s mission? Luke 12:15–21.

“The reason why more has not been done in the past is that men have held so firmly to themselves, and have thought that they were capable of doing some great thing. Satan tempted them because they were self-sufficient.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 9, 1894.

2. COURAGE TO STAND ALONE

- a. In the fast-paced society of today, on what—and where—is our chief business to be centered? Luke 2:49.

“How many towns and cities there are that are utterly neglected. Our people are injuring themselves by crowding into one place. When trees in a nursery are crowded thickly together, they cannot grow healthfully and sturdily. Transplant trees from your thickly planted nursery. God is not glorified in the centering of so many advantages in one place. Give room; put your plants in many places, where one will not lean for support upon another. Give them room to grow. This the Lord demands of you.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 147.

“It is not the purpose of God that His people should colonize or settle together in large communities. The disciples of Christ are His representatives upon the earth, and God designs that they shall be scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, as lights amidst the darkness of the world. They are to be missionaries for God, by their faith and works testifying to the near approach of the coming Saviour.

“The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. None should move into new places merely for the sake of worldly advantage; but where there is an opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. They should feel a love for souls, a burden of labor for them, and should make it a study how to bring them into the truth. They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 244, 245.

- b. As we seek to go forth in Christ’s vineyard, what aspect of the Saviour’s experience may also end up as ours? Isaiah 63:3 (first part); Psalm 102:7.

“Let the workers stand alone in God, weeping, praying, laboring for the salvation of their fellow men. . . . While so many love the praise of men more than the favor of God, let it be yours to labor in humility. Learn to exercise faith in presenting your neighbors before the throne of grace and pleading with God to touch their hearts.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 245.

3. IT’S NEVER CONVENIENT

- a. When we focus on missionary efforts in dark areas where God may perhaps impress us to relocate, what should we keep in mind? Luke 14:33.

“If families would locate in the dark places of the earth, places where the people are enshrouded in spiritual gloom, and let the light of Christ’s life shine out through them, a great work might be accomplished. Let them begin their work in a quiet, unobtrusive way, not drawing on the funds of the conference until the interest becomes so extensive that they cannot manage it without ministerial help.

“When [Bible seminar] institutes and similar meetings are held, let them not be held in connection with our large, established churches. Let them give character to the work and spread the knowledge of the truth in localities where it is little known. This may not be convenient; but I ask, Was it convenient for Christ to leave the royal courts? Was it convenient for Him to leave His honor, His glory, His high command, and humble Himself to become one with us? He did not go to unfallen beings, but to those who needed Him most. His example we, to whom He has entrusted His work, are to copy. . . .

“There is danger in delay. That soul whom you might have found, that soul to whom you might have opened the Scriptures, passes beyond your reach. Satan has prepared some net for his feet, and tomorrow he may be working out the plans of the archenemy of God. Why delay one day? Why not go to work at once?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 442, 443.

- b. What inspired vision should be deeply, prayerfully considered, especially by those who are young? Lamentations 3:27.

“I was shown that the young, especially young men, who profess the truth, have yet a lesson of self-denial to learn. If these made more sacrifice for the truth, they would esteem it more highly. It would affect their hearts, and purify their lives, and they would hold it more dear and sacred.

“The young do not take the burden of the cause of God, or feel any responsibility in regard to it. Is it because God has excused them? Oh, no; they excuse themselves! . . . Unless they possess the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice, they can never possess the immortal inheritance.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 177, 178.

4. CONTENTMENT IN SACRIFICE

- a. Why can we be encouraged and motivated by the self-denial of Paul? Acts 20:18, 20, 33–35.

“In many places self-supporting missionaries can work successfully. It was as a self-supporting missionary that the apostle Paul labored in spreading the knowledge of Christ throughout the world. . . .

“[Acts 20:18, 20, 33–35 quoted.] Many today, if imbued with the same spirit of self-sacrifice, could do a good work in a similar way. Let two or more start out together in evangelistic work. Let them visit the people, praying, singing, teaching, explaining the Scriptures, and ministering to the sick. Some can sustain themselves as canvassers; others, like the apostle, can labor at some handicraft or in other lines of effort. As they move forward in their work, realizing their helplessness, but humbly depending upon God, they gain a blessed experience.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 154, 155.

- b. Describe the great personal victory which Paul achieved.

Philippians 4:11, 12.

- c. As in the experience of Paul, how is our purpose in life to reflect clearly—in bright, shining rays—the mission of our Master? Romans 15:1–3; Acts 10:37, 38.

“There is a call for Christian families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, to go to foreign fields, to become acquainted with the needs of their fellow men, and to work for the cause of the Master. If such families would settle in the dark places of the earth, places where the people are enshrouded in spiritual gloom, and let the light of Christ’s life shine out through them, what a noble work might be accomplished.

“This work requires self-sacrifice. While many are waiting to have every obstacle removed, the work they might do is left undone, and multitudes are dying without hope and without God. Some for the sake of commercial advantage, or to acquire scientific knowledge, will venture into unsettled regions and cheerfully endure sacrifice and hardship; but how few for the sake of their fellow men are willing to move their families into regions that are in need of the gospel.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 155, 156.

5. OUR ENERGY AND OUR MEANS

- a. What is assured when we share present truth? Psalm 126:6; Isaiah 58:8.

“[Isaiah 58:8 quoted.] . . . Ye churches of the living God, study this promise, and consider how your lack of faith, of spirituality, of divine power, is hindering the coming of the kingdom of God. If you would go forth to do Christ’s work, angels of God would open the way before you, preparing hearts to receive the gospel. Were every one of you a living missionary, the message for this time would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to every people and nation and tongue. This is the work that must be done before Christ shall come in power and great glory. I call upon the church to pray earnestly that you may understand your responsibilities. Are you individually laborers together with God? If not, why not? When do you mean to do your heaven-appointed work?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 438.

“The Lord calls for volunteers who will be self-denying, who will endure hardness as good soldiers of the cross of Christ.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 21, 1899.

- b. Even if we may not consider ourselves wealthy, what should be our aim with regard to the material goods with which God has entrusted us? Luke 12:33–40.

“We are travelers, pilgrims and strangers, on earth. Let us not spend our means in gratifying desires that God bids us repress. Let us rather set a right example before our associates. Let us fitly represent our faith by restricting our wants. . . . If you do less than your duty in giving help to the perishing, remember that your indolence is incurring guilt.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 452.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Everyone is busy these days. What is really my primary focus?
2. How may attachments to friends and family be hindering our aims for God?
3. What should be impressed upon us all—as early in life as possible?
4. Why is Paul such an inspiring role model for us in this critical hour of history?
5. Even if we cannot move to darker areas, how can we nonetheless promote the truth there?

Facing Trials and Opposition

“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

“Great is the reward in heaven of those who are witnesses for Christ through persecution and reproach. While the people are looking for earthly good, Jesus points them to a heavenly reward. But He does not place it all in the future life; it begins here.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 34.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 43–48.

Sunday

March 16

1. CENTURIES OLD, TRIED, AND TRUE

- a. Today, we hear of new methods of labor to reach souls. Yet what is written for our generation as well? Ecclesiastes 1:9; Luke 10:1–3.

“From door to door [the Lord’s] servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. To every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the tidings of pardon through Christ are to be carried.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 16.

“In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God’s people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 126.

“The colporteur—who in many cases has been thrown out of employment by accepting the truth—is enabled to support himself, and the sales are a financial help to the office. In the days of the Reformation, monks who had left their convents, and who had no other means of support, traversed the country, selling Luther’s works, which were thus rapidly circulated throughout Europe. Colportage work was one of the most efficient means of spreading the light then, and so it will prove now.”—*Life Sketches*, p. 305.

Monday

March 17

2. AN INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

- a. Why must we heed the duty of our conscience? Psalm 62:12; Galatians 6:4.

“God has made you depositaries of truth, not that you may retain it, but that you may impart it to others. You should visit from house to house as faithful stewards of the grace of Christ. As you work, devise, and plan, new methods will continually present themselves to your mind, and by use the powers of your intellect will be increased. A lukewarm, slack performance of duty is an injury to the soul for whom Christ has died. If we would find the pearls buried in the debris of the cities, we should go forth ready to do the work required by the Master. Some may work quietly, creating an interest, while others speak in halls.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895.

- b. What protection do we need as we teach the truth, and why? Ephesians 6:10–13.

“Satan will scheme in every possible way so as to benumb the senses, blind the eyes, and close the ears of men against the truth; but notwithstanding this, go to work. Labor from house to house, not neglecting the poor, who are usually passed by.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895.

“Those who will not accept the last solemn message of warning sent to our world, will pervert the Scriptures; they will attack the character, and make false statements in regard to the faith and doctrines of the advocates of Bible truth. Every possible means will be employed to divert the attention. Shows, games, horseraces, and various other kinds of amusement will be set in operation. An intense power from beneath will stir them up to oppose the message from heaven.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 280.

- c. What hope comes as we face the reality of our challenge? 2 Timothy 3:12–15.

“Wicked men, seducing teachers, will grow worse and worse, deceiving themselves and deceiving others. We may expect greater opposition than has yet been experienced.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 362.

3. DON'T BE SURPRISED

- a. **Serving God in a wicked world, what contrast do we need to see? Titus 2:12, 13.**

“Many speak of the life of the Christian taking away from us pleasures and worldly enjoyments. I say it takes away nothing worth saving. Is there perplexity, poverty, and distress endured by the Christian? Oh, yes, this is expected in this life. But is the sinner, of whom we speak as enjoying the pleasures of this world, free from these ills of life? Do we not often see them in deep perplexity and trouble? . . .

“Christians sometimes think they have a hard time and that it is a condescension in them to lay hold of unpopular truth and profess to be Christ’s followers, that the road seems hard and that they have many sacrifices to make, when in reality they make no sacrifice at all. If in reality they are adopted into the family of God, what sacrifice have they made? Their following Christ may have broken some friendship with their world-loving relatives, but look at the exchange—their names written in the Lamb’s book of life, elevated, yes, greatly exalted, to be partakers of salvation, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to an imperishable inheritance. Shall we call it a sacrifice on our part to yield error for truth, darkness for light, sin for righteousness, a perishable name and inheritance upon earth for honors that are lasting, and a treasure undefiled that fadeth not away?”—*Our High Calling*, p. 201.

- b. **How can obstacles actually serve to invigorate us? Romans 5:3, 4; Philippians 1:27–30.**

“Go to work in faith. Hold fast to every point of vantage-ground gained. However strong the opposition may be, there must be no weakening. Hold fast by faith. Work and pray, watch and wait, hope and trust, leave everything to God. He can thresh mountains with a worm.

“The church that would prove successful in the Master’s service must be an aggressive one. Its members must not allow their interest in the work to flag. Heavenly intelligences are ready to cooperate with the human agent to press forward the work. At whatever cost press the battle to the gates of the enemy, yea, storm the very citadel. Do not allow yourselves to fail nor to be discouraged. Christ’s authority is supreme, His power is invincible. Through the Holy Spirit the Lord works with the human agent.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 2, 1895.

4. POWER IN PERSEVERANCE

- a. **What must be our response to anyone who would attempt to distract us from laboring for God according to the dictates of our conscience? Nehemiah 6:3.**

“Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. Blinded by Satan, the parent will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will oppress the commandment-keeping servant. Affection will be alienated; children will be disinherited and driven from home. The words of Paul will be literally fulfilled: ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’ (2 Timothy 3:12). As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God’s fear and love are removed.

“As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

- b. **What example has our Master given us in the face of opposition? Isaiah 42:4.**

“We are to present the word of life to those whom we may judge to be as hopeless subjects as if they were in their graves. Though they may seem to be unwilling to hear or to receive the light of truth, without questioning or wavering we are to do our part.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 442.

5. BE THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM

- a. How may we ourselves be in danger of actually causing some of the tribulation faced by our own brethren and sisters in the faith? Malachi 2:10; Mark 3:25.

“This is no time to criticize. That which is needed now is genuine sympathy and decided help. We should individually consider the necessities of our brethren. Let every breath devoted to this matter be used in speaking words that shall encourage. Let every power be employed in actions that shall lift.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 455, 456.

- b. With trials before us, what should we remember? Psalm 138:7.

“The path to freedom from sin is through crucifixion of self, and conflict with the powers of darkness. Let none be discouraged in view of the severe trials to be met in the time of Jacob’s trouble, which is yet before them. They are to work earnestly, anxiously, not for that time, but for today. What we want is to have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ now, and a personal experience now. In these precious closing hours of probation, we have a deep and living experience to gain. We shall thus form characters that will ensure our deliverance in the time of trouble.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 321.

“Only those who are willing to sacrifice all for eternal life will have it, but it will be worth suffering for, worth crucifying self and sacrificing every idol for. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory will outweigh every earthly treasure and eclipse every earthly attraction.”—*Ibid.*, p. 189.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Where shall we begin taking part in fulfilling the visions of God’s messenger?
2. How should we view the things that will oppose our presentation of truth?
3. What is necessary in order for the church to do a successful work?
4. In what sense should we be inspired by the example of Nehemiah in his reforms?
5. What is the secret to having God’s protection in the time of trouble?

Stand Up for Jesus!

“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:14).

“God will do a great work in every part of the field, if with willing hearts His servants put self out of sight and labor for His glory.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 1, 1904.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 244–254.
Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 52–60.
The Great Controversy, p. 612.

1. HEAVENLY LEADING

- a. How is God’s method of labor so different from humans’? 1 Corinthians 1:26–31.

“Let each work in the line which God may indicate to him by His Holy Spirit. The soul is accountable to God alone. . . . He will use whom He will use. He will pass by men who have not followed His counsel, men who feel capable and sufficient to work in their own wisdom; and He will use others who are thought by these supposedly wise ones to be wholly incompetent.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 23, 1895.

- b. What careful balance must guide us? Psalm 19:7–11; Ephesians 5:1, 2.

“One act of disobedience against the law of God on the part of the responsible human agent, could not be outweighed by a recompense of all the honors and kingdoms of this world. Yet Satan will present his most alluring temptations, and use his most deceptive arguments in order to persuade men to make void the commandments of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 9, 1894.

2. HOW CAN WE REDEEM THE TIME?

- a. What key message to the Ephesians is urgently needed now? Ephesians 5:14–17.

“Paul exhorts his Ephesian brethren to redeem the time because the days are evil. This exhortation is very applicable to you. In one sense it is impossible to redeem the time; for once gone, it is gone forever. But you are called upon to reform, to be zealous of good works in the same degree that you have been negligent of duty. Turn square about. 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. By so doing you may save both yourself and those who are more or less controlled by your example. These are motives which should be duly considered.

“Wake up! wake up! You have work to do, and your sun is fast hastening to its setting. Your powers are becoming enfeebled; but all there is of you, every particle of your ability, belongs to God, and should be used earnestly and disinterestedly in His service. Work while the sun still lingers in the heavens; for the ‘night cometh, when no man can work’ (John 9:4).

“Come, my brother, come just as you are, sinful and polluted. Lay your burden of guilt on Jesus, and by faith claim His merits. Come now, while mercy lingers; come with confession, come with contrition of soul, and God will abundantly pardon. Do not dare to slight another opportunity. Listen to the voice of mercy that now pleads with you to arise from the dead that Christ may give you light. Every moment now seems to connect itself directly with the destinies of the unseen world. Then let not your pride and unbelief lead you to still further reject offered mercy. If you do you will be left to lament at the last: ‘The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved’ (Jeremiah 8:20).

“Wait in deep humiliation before God. From this hour resolve to be the Lord’s, doing your whole duty, trusting implicitly in the great atonement. Do this and you will have nothing to fear. The remainder of your life journey will be tranquil and happy, and you will secure to yourself that life which shall continue as long as God shall live.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 353, 354.

“Though you may be weak, erring, and sinful, the Lord holds out to you the offer of partnership with Himself. He invites you to come under divine instruction. Uniting with Christ, you may work the works of God.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 438.

3. TIME TO WAKE UP

- a. How does Paul’s solemn duty toward the Gentiles (the world) precisely reflect what is required of each one of us at this very hour? Ephesians 3:6–13.

“This is the message that I am commissioned to bear to you: You are to take the words addressed by Paul to the church at Ephesus as if addressed to you personally. By alienation, disunion, and diversity of opinion, Satan has hindered the work outlined in the words of the apostle. Had believers put self out of sight, had they refused to carry out the plans devised by Satan to hinder the work of God, how much farther advanced we might now be! For years messages have been sent pointing out the work to be done. But this work has not been accomplished. Believers have stood directly across the path of its accomplishment, blocking the way by envy, evil surmisings, and faultfinding. They have sought the highest place. Commercial business has absorbed the attention and consumed the means that ought to have been given to the proclamation of the message of salvation. Thank God, something has been done, but a thousand times more might have been done than has been done. The enemy has brought in a variety of things to occupy the minds of believers. Time is fast passing, the work is still undone, and the world is growing worse and worse. And yet in mercy the Spirit of God is still striving with souls. Brethren and sisters, I call upon you to put on the whole armor of God. Those who have never heard the reasons of our faith are now to be reached.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 10, 1906.

“When faith lays hold upon Christ, the truth will bring delight to the soul, and the services of religion will not be dull and uninteresting. Your social meetings, now tame and spiritless, will be vitalized by the Holy Spirit; daily you will have a rich experience as you practice the Christianity you profess. Sinners will be converted. They will be touched by the word of truth and will say, as did some who listened to Christ’s teaching: ‘We have seen and heard wonderful things today.’

“In view of what might be done if the church would meet its God-given responsibilities, will its members sleep on, or will they arouse to a sense of the honor conferred upon them through the merciful providence of God? Will they gather up their hereditary trusts, avail themselves of the present light, and feel the necessity of rising to meet the urgent emergency that now presents itself? Oh, that all may arouse and manifest to the world that theirs is a living faith, that a vital issue is before the world, that Jesus will soon come. Let men see that we believe that we are on the borders of the eternal world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 437.

4. PREPARE!

- a. What is the secret to enlightening the world? Psalm 25:9; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 5:7; Ephesians 6:10, 11, 14–18.

“It is not the most brilliant or the most talented whose work produces the greatest and most lasting results. Who are the most efficient laborers? Those who will respond to the invitation: ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart’ (Matthew 11:29). . . .

“[God] will take men who do not appear to be so richly endowed, who have not large self-confidence, and He will make the weak strong because they trust in God to do for them those things which they cannot do for themselves. God will accept the wholehearted service, and will Himself make up the deficiencies.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 443, 444.

- b. Before whom will many of us be called to witness for the truth? Psalm 119:46; Matthew 10:18.

“The time is not far off when the people of God will be called upon to give their testimony before the rulers of the earth. Not one in twenty has a realization of what rapid strides we are making toward the great crisis in our history. . . . There is no time for vanity, for trifling, for engaging the mind in unimportant matters.

“Kings, governors, and great men will hear of you through the reports of those who are at enmity with you, and your faith and character will be misrepresented before them. But those who are falsely accused will have an opportunity to appear in the presence of their accusers to answer for themselves. They will have the privilege of bringing the light before those who are called the great men of the earth. . . .

“You now have an opportunity to attain to the greatest intellectual power through the study of the Word of God. But if you are indolent, and fail to dig deep in the mines of truth, you will not be ready for the crisis that is soon to come upon us. . . .

“Let no one imagine that he has no need to study, because he is not to preach in the sacred desk. You know not what God may require of you.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 355.

5. SOON . . . AN AMAZING SCENE

- a. What preparation do we need before carrying out the great commission Christ has given us? 2 Corinthians 13:5, 6; 1 Peter 3:10, 11.

“Will you not be just as watchful and critical over your own spirits and temperaments and words as you are over those of others, lest God should be dishonored, and His truth misrepresented? Your discernment would be greatly improved if you would do this. The truth, the living word, would be as a fire shut up in your bones, which would shine forth in clear, unmistakable distinctness, representing Christ to the world.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 296.

- b. Describe the glorious experience which is the Christian’s calling in the closing work of the gospel. Jeremiah 20:9; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 2 Corinthians 5:14 (first part).

“God will move upon men of humble position in society, men who have not become insensible to the bright rays of light through so long contemplating the light of truth, and refusing to make any improvement or advancement therein. Many such will be seen hurrying hither and thither, constrained by the Spirit of God to bring the light to others. The truth, the word of God, is as a fire in their bones, filling them with a burning desire to enlighten those who sit in darkness. Many, even among the uneducated, now proclaim the words of the Lord. Children are impelled by the Spirit to go forth and declare the message from heaven. The Spirit is poured out upon all who will yield to its promptings.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 23, 1895.

“‘We want to push the triumphs of the cross. Our watchword is to be, Onward, ever onward. Our burden for the “regions beyond” can never be laid down until the whole earth shall be lightened with the glory of the Lord.’”—*Life Sketches*, p. 375.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What balance will be reflected in presenting God’s truth?
2. How shall we redeem the lost time taken from God?
3. How have we been distracted from the great commission?
4. Why should all believers constantly study the essential points of present truth?
5. Describe the amazing scene prophesied under the Holy Spirit’s power.

First Sabbath Offerings



JANUARY 5
for Cape Town,
South Africa
(See p. 4.)

FEBRUARY 2
for the Welfare
Department
(See p. 25.)



MARCH 1
for Erode Mission,
India (See p. 46.)