

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the Second Quarter 2016

You Did It unto Me

Published by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Reform Movement

625 West Avenue / Cedartown, GA 30125
Telephone 770-748-0077 / Fax 770-748-0095
Email: info@sda1844.org / Internet: www.sda1844.org

Author: Antonino Di Franca

Review and editing of content
by the General Conference Ministerial Department

Translation, editing, and design
by the General Conference Publishing Department

CONTENTS

Second Quarter: You Did It unto Me

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| 1. You Are Brothers | 7 |
| 2. Where Is Your Brother? | 11 |
| 3. Am I My Brother's Keeper? | 15 |
| 4. Looking for His Brothers | 19 |
| 5. Two Noble Widows | 23 |
| <i>Missionary Report from The Good Samaritan Department.</i> | 28 |
| 6. True Friendship | 31 |
| 7. Brotherly Love, Part 1 | 35 |
| 8. Brotherly Love, Part 2 | 39 |
| 9. Brotherly Love, Part 3 | 42 |
| 10. Friends, Fire, and Faith | 46 |
| 11. How Pleasant It Is | 50 |
| 12. If Your Brother Sins | 56 |
| 13. You Did It unto Me | 60 |
| <i>Missionary Report from Bangalore, India.</i> | 65 |

INTRODUCTION

Speaking to a relative while seeking a solution to some problems, a patriarch said: “... We be brethren.” Genesis 13:8. This is a very great truth. We have come into existence because God, the Father of us all, has given us the precious gift of life. At birth, we all receive the same spirit; this should be enough to convince us that we derive our existence from the same source and thus all belong to one family. Although the circumstances of life separate us from one other, although we live in different cities, countries, and continents, and although we come from different races—generally with few possibilities to meet and know each other—we are still brothers, for we have the same original parents, the same Father in heaven, and the same Redeemer.

The concept of brotherhood is present in the family, in the church, and in society. Typically the word “brothers” is used to indicate individuals who have the same parents. We also speak of brothers in the Spirit, since we share the same faith. But how differently we understand what it means to be brothers! How differently we deal with each other! And, many times, how little harmony exists within the walls of the family where we live together for many years! For various reasons, in some cases we forget about others, focus our time and interest on ourselves, and deal with others as if they were perfect strangers, rather than seeing them as brothers!

Serious problems developed with the very first brothers in this world. And ever since that time, many difficulties have arisen to threaten such relationships. Nevertheless this doesn’t change the fundamental reality that we need to rediscover the deep meaning that “we are brethren”! The Lord had this in mind when He said, “... All ye are all brethren.” Matthew 23:8. He knows that differences of character, interest, culture, education, and opinion make it difficult to achieve understanding and harmony between individuals. For that very reason, He reaffirmed the second great commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” and concluded: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:39, 40. Jesus’ words are clear, and He gave an example of what He meant: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John 13:34.

In the lessons for this quarter, it is our desire to rediscover the sacred value of brotherly love. With this goal in mind, we will consider the Bible’s teaching, examples, and promises, keeping in mind that our credibility in the world depends not just on our faith, but also on our brotherly love. “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:35. The Lord even clarified that whatever we do is not done simply to poor mortals but to Him: “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:40.

Citing a Bible verse, the Spirit of prophecy emphasizes: “We are to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 474. This is true not only in financial matters but also in love, service, and ministry. How is this possible? The inspired answer is: “We are in this world to be a help and a blessing to one another, uniting with Christ in the effort to restore the image of God in man. In order to do this work, we must learn of Jesus. ‘Take My yoke upon you,’ He says, ‘and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.’ In this promise there are no ‘ifs.’ Those who have experience in wearing Christ’s yoke of restraint and obedience know that it means to have rest and peace in Him. In obedience there is joy and consolation. Holy angels hover round about the obedient to keep them in paths of peace.” –*Atlantic Union Gleaner*, September 9, 1903.

“Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

“Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

As we study these lessons, let us come closer to Jesus, while we see the lessons not just as a doctrine to be understood and accepted but also as an experience to be made in our daily life. Then, one day, as promised, we will not only be greeted but also welcomed: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For ... as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:34, 35, 40.

–*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

You Are Brothers

“Love of self, pride and self-sufficiency lie at the foundation of the greatest trials and discords that have ever existed in the religious world.... ‘Press together, press together, be of one mind, of one judgment.’ Christ is the Leader, and you are brethren; follow Him. Walk in the light as He is in the light. Those who walk in the footsteps of Christ shall not walk in darkness, but those who draw apart in unsanctified independence cannot have God’s presence and blessing in the work....” –*Christian Leadership*, p. 11.

COUNSEL TO THOSE IN CONFLICT

1. Although Moses had access to the kingly court and was recognized as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, whom did he regard as his brothers?

ACTS 7:23 *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.*

EXODUS 2:11 *And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.*

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.’ Hebrews 11:24-26.... Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, ‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’...

“He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch’s crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer. This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 245, 246.

2. What did he witness when he visited his brothers in slavery? What did he say to the one who was in the wrong? How earnestly did he speak to both men?

EXODUS 2:13 *And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?*

ACTS 7:26 *And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?*

"Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. But if we watch carefully, and take counsel with our brethren, we shall be given an understanding of the Lord's will; for the promise is, 'The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.' Psalm 25:9." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 279.

3. What was his motive in speaking to them in this manner? What did he hope to accomplish in telling them, "Ye are brethren"? Do we understand brotherhood as Moses did?

ACTS 7:25 *For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

EPHESIANS 4:31, 32 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

"Moses supposed that his education in the wisdom of Egypt had fully qualified him to lead Israel from bondage.... He felt that he was able to deliver them. He first set about his work by trying to gain the favor of his own people by redressing their wrongs." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 342.

WE ARE BROTHERS

4. When Lot and Abram's herdsmen got into conflict, what did Abram say to his nephew? What should not take place among brethren?

GENESIS 13:7, 8 *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. ⁸And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*

COLOSSIANS 3:12, 13 *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

"Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! 'Let there be no strife between me and thee,' said Abraham, 'for we be brethren;' not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them. 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another' (Romans 12:10), is the teaching of our Saviour. The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own. Such will heed the divine injunction, 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' Philippians 2:4." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 132, 133.

BRETHREN, ACCUSERS, AND FORGIVENESS

- 5. When challenged, how did the deacon Stephen appeal to his hearers, who become his accusers? What divine principle did Jesus give, showing how one should act under such circumstances?**

ACTS 7:2 *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.*

LUKE 6:28 *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

“The Saviour of the world would have His co-laborers represent Him; and the more closely a man walks with God, the more faultless will be his manner of address, his deportment, his attitude, and his gestures. Coarse and uncouth manners were never seen in our Pattern, Christ Jesus. He was a representative of heaven, and His followers must be like Him.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 91.

- 6. Even when they became so angry that they prepared to execute him, what were Stephen’s final words before his life ended? Who ended His life in the same way with words of forgiveness for His persecutors?**

ACTS 7:60 *And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

LUKE 23:34 *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

“The Son of God is Himself the great Intercessor in the sinner’s behalf. He who has paid the price for its redemption knows the worth of the human soul. With an antagonism to evil such as can exist only in a nature spotlessly pure, Christ manifested toward the sinner a love which infinite goodness alone could conceive. In the agonies of the crucifixion, Himself burdened with the awful weight of the sins of the whole world, He prayed for His revilers and murderers, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ Luke 23:34.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140.

“Jesus is your best Friend. Live by daily faith on the Son of God. Let your course of action be such that God can approve. Then you will be a blessing to others.... Do not outgrow the simple faith and trust of your childhood. When sick, your first request was, ‘Father, Mother, pray that the Lord will heal me and forgive my sins.’ When prayer was offered in your behalf, you made your simple prayer and thanked the Lord He had heard and answered, and with perfect faith and confidence you said, ‘I shall get well. The Lord has blessed me.’ You slept in perfect peace, in confidence that holy angels would guard your bed.” –*This Day with God*, p. 310.

- 7. Should there be contention between brothers? If a problem arises, what should one remember? What spiritual lesson did the Lord give concerning the relationship between brothers?**

JAMES 3:14, 16 *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth....¹⁶For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:12, SECOND PART, 13 ... *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: ¹³Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

1 PETER 3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

“I hope that as Christians you will be awake to your ever-increasing responsibilities, and be prepared to act the part of faithful stewards, both of means and of talents. Will you lay aside all selfish interests, and all sectional feelings, and manifest your missionary zeal to work for the best interest of the cause of God? Will you put away all strife in the matter, and show that we are all one in Christ Jesus? God help us as a people to see how imperfect is our service to Him. May He help you to feel that you are brethren.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 459, 460.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What have I learned from this lesson?*
- *For me, is the word “brother” just a name or title like any other?*
- *What does it mean to have brothers?*
- *Should rifts exist among brethren?*
- *If we appreciate another person as our neighbor or brother, how will we act toward him?*
- *Why did the Lord give examples of how one should treat his brother?*

HOW TO “DESTROY” ONE’S ENEMIES

The story is told of a Chinese emperor who, when told that there was an uprising in one of the provinces of his empire, said to his government ministers and military leaders: “Come. Follow me. I will soon destroy my enemies.”

When the emperor and his troops arrived at the place where the rebels were, he treated them kindly; and out of gratitude, they submitted to him again. Everyone in the emperor’s company thought he would order the immediate execution of those who had revolted against him, so they were greatly surprised to see him treat the rebels humanely and even lovingly. Seeing this, the emperor’s prime minister asked angrily: “How does this fulfill your promise, your Excellency? You said we came to destroy your enemies, but you have forgiven them all and treated them fondly.”

With a kindly attitude, the emperor replied: “I promised to destroy my enemies, and you see that no one is my enemy. I have made all of them my friends!”

How good it would be if we, as members of the family of Christ, would act with such a kind, forgiving spirit toward our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. —Adapted from *Expositor Bíblico*, quoted in A. Lerín, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 10.

* * *

Where Is Your Brother?

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household?’ Can we answer? Am I the steward, faithful to the sacred trust which is committed to me? To every man is given an individual responsibility. The watchmen have their specific work to discern the approach of danger and sound the note of warning. The soldiers of the cross of Christ are to have ears keen to hear. In their position of responsibility they are to give the trumpet a certain sound, that everyone may gird on the armor for action.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 236.

1. What generated dark thoughts and anger in the mind and heart of Adam and Eve’s firstborn son?

GENESIS 4:3-5 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*

“Cain thought himself righteous, and he came to God with a thank offering only. He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only hope was the unmerited love of God. The Lord had respect to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He had not respect. The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Matthew 5:3.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 152.

2. What did the Lord do to help him come to reason? What kinds of thoughts open the door to Satan? What will happen to a person who permits satanic suggestions to enter and occupy his mind?

GENESIS 4:6, 7 *And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

JAMES 1:14, 15 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

“Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle, that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man. Every man is responsible to God, who has made provision for all to receive this blessing. But many do not receive it, although Christ has purchased it for them at infinite cost. They have not grasped the blessing within their reach, and

therefore they have retained their objectionable traits of character, and sin lieth at the door. While they profess piety, Satan has made them his agents to pull down and confuse where he thought best. They exert an influence deleterious to the souls of many who need an example that would help them heavenward." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 421, 422.

3. Was God's counsel to Cain accepted and followed? What terrible action followed the tolerance and cultivation of sinful, hateful feelings toward his brother Abel?

GENESIS 4:8 *And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

1 JOHN 2:11 *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

"The death of Abel was in consequence of Cain's refusing to accept God's plan in the school of obedience, to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, typified by the sacrificial offerings pointing to Christ. Cain refused the shedding of blood, which symbolized the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was prepared by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of its work as the schoolmaster to bring sinful human agents to a consideration of Christ." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1109.

WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER?

4. What question did the Lord ask the man who, following his fury, had reached the point of committing such a grave crime? What was God's reason for asking this question?

GENESIS 4:9, FIRST PART *And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?*

JOB 13:23, LAST PART *... How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.*

ROMANS 2:4 *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

"Cain the murderer was soon called to answer for his crime. 'The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?' Cain had gone so far in sin that he had lost a sense of the continual presence of God and of His greatness and omniscience. So he resorted to falsehood to conceal his guilt." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

"There is a work to be done for the wealthy. They need to be awakened to their responsibility as those entrusted with the gifts of heaven. They need to be reminded that they must give an account to Him who shall judge the living and the dead. The wealthy man needs your labor in the love and fear of God. Too often he trusts in his riches, and feels not his danger. The eyes of his mind need to be attracted to things of enduring value. He needs to recognize the authority of true goodness, which says, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.' Matthew 11:28-30." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 230.

WHERE ARE OUR BRETHREN?

5. What did the Lord say to make Cain—and all of us as well—sensitive to the value of and respect owed to our brother?

GENESIS 4:10 *And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

PSALM 40:12; 19:12 *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me....^{19:12}Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

"God had given Cain an opportunity to confess his sin. He had had time to reflect. He knew the enormity of the deed he had done, and of the falsehood he had uttered to conceal it; but he was rebellious still, and sentence was no longer deferred." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

"In that day the Master will demand of His professed people, 'What have you done to save the souls of your neighbors? There were many who were connected with you in worldly business, who lived close beside you, whom you might have warned. Why are they among the unsaved?'

"Brethren and sisters, what excuse can you render to God for this neglect of souls? I would present this matter to you as it has been presented to me; and in the light from the life of the Master, from the cross of Calvary, I urge you to arouse. I entreat you to take upon your own hearts the burden of your fellowmen." —*Review and Herald*, May 22, 1888.

6. What will the Lord say to all who knew and helped their brethren?

MATTHEW 25:34-40 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

"In that day Christ does not present before men the great work He has done for them in giving His life for their redemption. He presents the faithful work they have done for Him.... But those whom Christ commends know not that they have been ministering unto Him. To their perplexed inquiries He answers, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'...

"But not to any class is Christ's love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 637, 638.

7. What was Jesus' mission in coming to live among men? Where did He say He wants to take His disciples? Do we have the same desire for others' salvation from sin and death as He does?

MATTHEW 18:11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

LUKE 19:10 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

JOHN 14:3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

“The wisdom of God, His power and His love, are without a parallel. It is the divine guarantee that not one, even, of the straying sheep and lambs is overlooked and not one left unsuccored. A golden chain—the mercy and compassion of divine power—is passed around everyone of these imperiled souls. Then shall not the human agent cooperate with God? Shall he be sinful, failing, defective in character himself, regardless of the soul ready to perish? Christ has linked him to His eternal throne by offering His own life.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 274.

FOR REFLECTION

“Our life is worse than a failure if we go through life without leaving waymarks of love and compassion. God will not work with a harsh, stubborn, loveless man. Such a man spoils the pattern that Christ desires His workers to reveal to the world. God’s workers, in whatever line of service they are engaged, are to bring into their efforts the goodness and benevolence and love of Christ.” —*Evangelism*, p. 629.

Imagine the Lord meeting you today and asking:

- ***Where is your brother? Your sister? Your wife or husband?***
- ***What have you done for them? Do they have a place in your life and heart?***
- ***Do you feel responsible for them? Have you been a light and help to them?***

BY HELPING OTHERS WE HELP OURSELVES

One day a young man named Eddie, who had become tired of life, decided to end his life by jumping from a bridge into a turbulent river. Jim, a total stranger, saw Eddie being swept downstream and plunged into the water in an effort to save him. Eddie, a good swimmer, noticed the man floundering desperately in the strong current and knew that without his help he would drown. Something stirred within him. With all of his strength, Eddie swam over to the man and rescued him. Saving that stranger, who had attempted to save him, brought new hope and meaning to Eddie’s life.

Let us be aware and convinced of this—by helping others we will help ourselves. Let us not lose even one opportunity to practice God’s love, and we will be the first to be blessed. —Adapted from T. Huffman Harris, *Open the Door Wide to Happy Living* and from *Apibs* web page.

* * *

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

"It is not pleasing to God to see man looking only upon his own things, closing his eyes to the interests of others." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 137.

"By helping others they increase their own happiness and usefulness." –*The Adventist Home*, p. 485.

"It is in a life of service only that true happiness is found." –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 272.

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

1. **How did Cain answer the Lord's question as to where his brother was? Is this an uncommon thought, or is it a typical response? What does the Lord say of those who are unwilling to care for others?**

GENESIS 4:9 *And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

PSALM 10:13, 14 *Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. ¹⁴Thou hast seen it: for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*

JAMES 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

"They [some church members] do not seem to know or care whether such are saved or lost. That, they think, is not their business. With Cain they say: 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" –*The Adventist Home*, p. 168.

"At our very doors, all about us, on every side, there are souls to be saved, souls perishing—men and women dying without hope, without God—and yet we feel unconcerned, virtually saying by our actions, if not by our words, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" –(*Review and Herald*, August 14, 1888) *Christian Service*, p. 93.

2. **Should we care only about ourselves, or is it our duty and privilege to be our brother's keeper?**

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

ROMANS 15:1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

EZEKIEL 34:6 *My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*

“Brethren and sisters in the faith, does the question arise in your hearts, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ If you claim to be children of God, you are your brother’s keeper. The Lord holds the church responsible for the souls of those whom they might be the means of saving. (*Historical Sketches*, p. 291)....

“These men who lost their lives in trying to save others are eulogized by the world as heroes and martyrs. How should we who have the prospect of eternal life before us feel, if we do not make the little sacrifices that God requires of us, for the salvation of the souls of men?” —(*Review and Herald*, August 14, 1888) *Christian Service*, pp. 13, 93, 94.

IMPLICATIONS OF BROTHERHOOD

3. Although we are of different races, nations, tongues, and cultures, what is said about humankind? Therefore, what are we all by creation?

ACTS 17:26 *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*

MALACHI 2:10 *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

ACTS 7:26 *And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?*

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise.

“In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.

“Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered. Where bitterness of feeling exists because of difference in religion, much good may be done by personal service. Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 386.

4. What broad implications are contained in this great truth? What does it mean to be one’s brother’s keeper in the first place?

COLOSSIANS 3:14 *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

GALATIANS 5:14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

“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. He who has supreme love to God will reveal love to his fellow men, who belong to God both by creation and redemption.

Love is the fulfilling of the law; and it is the duty of every child of God to render obedience to His commandments....” –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 51.

LOVE AND THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

5. If our hearts are truly full of love for our brethren, what will be the first evidence?

PHILIPPIANS 1:14, 17 *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear....¹⁷But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.*

“God is calling for men who are willing to leave their farms, their business, if need be their families, to become missionaries for Him. And the call will be answered. In the past there have been men who, stirred by the love of Christ and the needs of the lost, have left the comforts of home and the society of friends, even that of wife and children, to go into foreign lands, among idolaters and savages, to proclaim the message of mercy. Many in the attempt have lost their lives, but others have been raised up to carry on the work. Thus step by step the cause of Christ has progressed, and the seed sown in sorrow has yielded a bountiful harvest. The knowledge of God has been widely extended and the banner of the cross planted in heathen lands....

“Paul’s heart burned with a love for sinners, and he put all his energies into the work of soul winning. There never lived a more self-denying, persevering worker. The blessings he received he prized as so many advantages to be used in blessing others. He lost no opportunity of speaking of the Saviour or of helping those in trouble. From place to place he went, preaching the gospel of Christ and establishing churches. Wherever he could find a hearing, he sought to counteract wrong, and to turn the feet of men and women into the path of righteousness.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 370, 367.

6. When we see our neighbor truly as a brother, what will we be willing to do?

TITUS 3:8 *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

GALATIANS 6:10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

1 JOHN 3:17 *But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

“We are commanded to ‘do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.’ Galatians 6:10. In our benevolent work special help should be given to those who, through the presentation of the truth, are convicted and converted. We must have a care for those who have the moral courage to accept the truth, who lose their situations in consequence, and are refused work by which to support their families. Provision should be made to aid the worthy poor and to furnish employment for those who love God and keep His commandments. They should not be left without help, to feel that they are forced to work on the Sabbath or starve.... It is of this class especially that the Lord speaks when He says: ‘Bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.’ Isaiah 58:7.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 85.

7. May we neglect or delay carrying out this holy principle? What is promised to all who love their brothers?

JAMES 2:15, 16 *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

MATTHEW 25:41, 45 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

ACTS 20:35 *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.*

“Any neglect on the part of those who claim to be followers of Christ, a failure to relieve the necessities of a brother or a sister who is bearing the yoke of poverty and oppression, is registered in the books of heaven as shown to Christ in the person of His saints. What a reckoning the Lord will have with many, very many, who present the words of Christ to others but fail to manifest tender sympathy and regard for a brother in the faith who is less fortunate and successful than themselves....” —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 210.

“It is in a life of service only that true happiness is found. He who lives a useless, selfish life is miserable. He is dissatisfied with himself and with everyone else.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 229.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Corinthians 10:24

Matthew 25:42-44

Isaiah 58:10-12; 20:35

“Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 124, 125 (1892); *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 644.

“But remember that happiness will not be found in shutting yourselves up to yourselves.... Seize upon every opportunity for contributing to the happiness of those around you. Remember that true joy can be found only in unselfish service.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 362.

WINNING SOULS

I met a Christian merchant who was visited by a broker who sold items from a catalog. One day the merchant said to himself, I have dealt with this broker for nine or ten years now, and we have met almost every day. He has brought me his merchandise, and I have paid for it; but I have never tried to do something good for him. This is not correct. Providence has placed him in my way, and I must at least ask if he loves Jesus.

Now, the next time the broker came, this good brother did not feel and believe it appropriate to start a religious conversation. The broker never returned. His son delivered the products. “What happened?” asked the merchant.

“Daddy died,” the boy replied.

That merchant, a close friend of mine, told me a little later: “I could never forgive myself. That day I could not stay at work. I felt responsible for the blood of that man. I had no thought of that before. How I can get rid of the guilt when I remember that my foolish shyness shut my mouth?”

Dear friends, we are responsible for our brothers, for their lives, for their future, for their salvation. Do not bring terrible remorse on yourself but speak and help them, give them the message; and it will be a blessing also for you. –Adapted from C.H. Spurgeon, quoted in A. Lerin, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 485.

* * *

4

Sabbath, April 23, 2016

Looking for His Brothers

“Jacob’s sons were shepherds, and fed their flocks where they could find the best pastures. In traveling from place to place with their cattle, they often wandered quite a distance from their father’s house, so that they did not see their father for several months at a time. In his anxiety for them, he sent Joseph to see if they were all well. With the true interest of a brother, Joseph searched for his brethren, where his father supposed he would find them, but they were not there. A certain man found him wandering in the field in search of his brethren, and directed him to Dothan. This was a long journey for Joseph. But he cheerfully performed it, because he loved his brethren, and also wished to relieve the anxiety of his father.” –*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 139, 140.

DIFFICULTIES AMONG BROTHERS

1. What was Joseph’s responsibility in his parents’ home? What is related about him and the behavior of his brothers?

GENESIS 37:2 *These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

“... Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his father’s instructions, and loved to obey God. The qualities that afterward distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life. His mother being dead, his affections clung the more closely to the father, and Jacob’s heart was bound up in this child of his old age.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

2. What is known about the brothers’ relationship with Joseph? Can we say that the latter was to blame for this situation?

GENESIS 37:3, 4 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. ⁴And when his brethren saw*

that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

“But even this affection was to become a cause of trouble and sorrow. Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons. As Joseph witnessed the evil conduct of his brothers, he was greatly troubled; he ventured gently to remonstrate with them, but only aroused still further their hatred and resentment. He could not endure to see them sinning against God, and he laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might lead them to reform.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

DIVINE DREAMS AND THEIR MEANING

3. Did Joseph’s brothers have a good understanding of the dream that he told them? What feelings did they have toward him? How did the situation become even worse after the second dream?

GENESIS 37:5-11 *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. ⁶And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. ⁸And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. ⁹And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. ¹⁰And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? ¹¹And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.*

ACTS 7:9, FIRST PART *And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt:...*

“Their malice was still further increased as the boy one day told them of a dream that he had had....

“‘Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?’ exclaimed his brothers in envious anger.

“Soon he had another dream, of similar import, which he also related: ‘Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.’ This dream was interpreted as readily as the first. The father, who was present, spoke reprovingly—‘What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?’ Notwithstanding the apparent severity of his words, Jacob believed that the Lord was revealing the future to Joseph.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 209, 210.

A LONG SEARCH FOR HIS BROTHERS

4. Although he had to travel alone for a very long distance, was Joseph willing to obey his father’s instructions to go and see how his brothers were doing? Knowing his brothers’ feelings, did he object to carrying out his father’s desire?

GENESIS 37:13, 14 *And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴And he*

said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

“With a joyful heart, Joseph parted from his father, neither the aged man nor the youth dreaming of what would happen before they should meet again. When, after his long and solitary journey, Joseph arrived at Shechem, his brothers and their flocks were not to be found.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

- 5. After walking at least fifty miles from the valley of Hebron to Shechem, did he find his brothers where he expected? As he was tired and wandering in the fields without result, what did a man ask him? What was his affectionate answer?**

GENESIS 37:15, 16 *And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.*

“Upon inquiring for them, he was directed to Dothan. He had already traveled more than fifty miles, and now an additional distance of fifteen lay before him, but he hastened on, forgetting his weariness in the thought of relieving the anxiety of his father, and meeting the brothers, whom, despite their unkindness, he still loved.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

- 6. Was he willing to go even further to find them in Dothan, or did he abandon the search? After such a long walk and his great joy at finding them, how was he received by his brothers?**

GENESIS 37:17, 18 *And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. ¹⁸And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.*

“His brothers saw him approaching; but no thought of the long journey he had made to meet them, of his weariness and hunger, of his claims upon their hospitality and brotherly love, softened the bitterness of their hatred. The sight of the coat, the token of their father’s love, filled them with frenzy. ‘Behold, this dreamer cometh,’ they cried in mockery. Envy and revenge, long secretly cherished, now controlled them.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 210, 211.

AN EXAMPLE WORTHY OF IMITATION

- 7. Similarly, who took a very dangerous journey to look for His brothers, knowing full well how He would be received? If we appreciate the character and searching love of Joseph and Jesus, what should we do in like manner?**

LUKE 19:10; 15:4-7 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost... ^{15:4}What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with*

me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. ⁷I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

“Joseph illustrates Christ. Jesus came to His own, but His own received Him not. He was rejected and despised, because His acts were righteous, and His consistent, self-denying life was a continual rebuke upon those who professed piety, but whose lives were corrupt. Joseph’s integrity and virtue were fiercely assailed, and she who would lead him astray could not prevail, therefore her hatred was strong against the virtue and integrity which she could not corrupt, and she testified falsely against him. The innocent suffered because of his righteousness. He was cast into prison because of his virtue. Joseph was sold to his enemies by his own brethren for a small sum of money. The Son of God was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His own disciples.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1096.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Ezekiel 34:11, 12

Isaiah 40:11

Jeremiah 23:3

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, pp. 138, 139

“But Joseph was faithful to God, and his fidelity was a constant testimony to the true faith. It was to quench this light that Satan worked through the envy of Joseph’s brothers to cause him to be sold as a slave in a heathen land. God overruled events, however, so that the knowledge of Himself should be given to the people of Egypt.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 332.

DID I DO MY BEST?

One morning, word came that a steamer was in distress on the lake. Students from the Bible college hurried down to the shore. There they saw the “Lady Elgin” not only in distress, but breaking to pieces under the power of the storm. Men and women were in danger of being lost. Among the rescue crew were two brothers from Iowa. One of them stripped off all his extra clothing, swam to the ship and brought one passenger to the shore. He went again and brought another, and then another, and another until there were eight or nine people standing on the shore of Lake Michigan whom he had rescued. He was severely affected by the cold.

As he stood there trembling in front of a log fire that had been kindled, he looked out over the lake and saw another man in peril. He said, “I must go again.”

The people gathered around him, saying, “It does not mean rescue for him for you to go; it means loss of life to you.” But he broke through the crowd and plunged once more into the icy waters and brought a tenth, an eleventh, and a twelfth to shore. With serious risk to himself and a sincere interest for others’ lives, this was repeated until 17 people were rescued from death.

Later, as he stood exhausted in his room, he was still asking himself: Did I do my best? I am afraid I did not! He was thinking about those who were lost. Do we feel the same interest for others? Are we like Jesus and this young man—looking for our brother, longing for his salvation? Let us become conscious of the help that people need and that we are called to give. —Adapted from G.B. Thompson, *Soul Winning*, pp. 7-9.

* * *

Two Noble Widows

“The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 356, 357.

BEHIND THE LIFE STORY

- 1. What emergency caused Elimelech to move his family to Moab? Ten years later, having lost her husband and sons in death, what did his widow, Naomi, decide to do when she heard that the Lord had again given good harvests to His people?**

RUTH 1:1, 2, 6 *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ²And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.... ⁶Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.*

“The people of God will not be free from suffering.... While they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that ‘walketh righteously’ is the promise: ‘Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.’ Isaiah 33:15, 16. ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.’ Chapter 41:17.” —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 372.

- 2. After she began the homeward journey with her daughters-in-law, what counsel did Naomi give them? Describe the emotional farewell.**

RUTH 1:8, 9 *And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. ⁹The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.*

"I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible, we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren and who are less fortunate than ourselves." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 511.

DIFFERENT DECISIONS

3. Were the two young widows willing to go back to their families? How did Naomi try to convince them to change their minds about accompanying her? Who accepted her suggestion?

RUTH 1:10-14, FIRST PART *And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. ¹¹And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? ¹²Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; ¹³Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. ¹⁴And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law;...*

"Every member of the family should realize that a responsibility rests upon him individually to do his part in adding to the comfort, order, and regularity of the family. One should not work against another. All should unitedly engage in the good work of encouraging one another; they should exercise gentleness, forbearance, and patience; speak in low, calm tones, shunning confusion; and each doing his utmost to lighten the burdens of the mother....

"The family firm is a sacred, social society, in which each member is to act a part, each helping the other. The work of the household is to move smoothly, like the different parts of well-regulated machinery." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

4. In contrast to Orpah, what was Ruth's answer and firm decision? Do you know of another daughter-in-law with such great love and affection for her mother-in-law?

RUTH 1:14, LAST PART-16, FIRST PART *... But Ruth clave unto her. ¹⁵And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. ¹⁶And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:...*

"In ancient times, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses with his meekness and wisdom, and Joshua with his varied capabilities, were all enlisted in God's service. The music of Miriam, the courage and piety of Deborah, the filial affection of Ruth, the obedience and faithfulness of Samuel, the stern fidelity of Elijah, the softening, subduing influence of Elisha—all were needed. So now all upon whom God's blessing has been bestowed are to

respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom and the glory of His name.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 301.

FAITH AND DECISION

5. Was Ruth’s decision based only on kindness and love for her mother-in-law, or was it much more? What shows that she had experienced a conversion through faith in the true God? What city did the two widows reach together?

RUTH 1:16-18, 22 *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: ¹⁷Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. ¹⁸When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.... ²²So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*

“All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 290.

“The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Saviour. What blessed converse they have with these souls! ‘I was a sinner,’ it will be said, ‘without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope.’ ... Others will say, ‘I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home and came to teach me how to find Jesus and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. I am saved, eternally saved, ever to behold Him whom I love....’” –*My Life Today*, p. 353.

FROM GLEANER TO ANCESTOR OF THE MESSIAH

6. What hard life did Ruth find in Bethlehem? What did she do to obtain food for herself and her mother-in-law? In the meantime, what become known among Naomi’s relatives?

RUTH 2:2, 3, 11, 12 *And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. ³And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.... ¹¹And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. ¹²The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*

“A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver. It is unaffected by panics or failures, and in that day when earthly possessions shall be swept away, it will bring rich returns. Integrity, firmness, and perseverance are qualities that all should seek

earnestly to cultivate; for they clothe the possessor with a power which is irresistible—a power which makes him strong to do good, strong to resist evil, strong to bear adversity.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 161.

“The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. The aspirations are elevated. There is no room for sloth or selfishness. Those who exercise the Christian graces will grow. They will have spiritual sinew and muscle, and will be strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual perceptions, a steady, increasing faith, and prevailing power in prayer.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 607.

7. What wonderful plan did the Lord have for this faithful young woman? Who were some of her noble descendants? Would you like to have the same kindness and faith as Ruth?

RUTH 4:11-13, 17 *And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: ¹²And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman. ¹³So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.... ¹⁷And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

MATTHEW 1:5, 6, FIRST PART *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; ⁶And Jesse begat David the king;...*

“By faith we are to appropriate the promises of God, and to provide ourselves with the abundant blessings which have been secured for us through Christ Jesus. Hope has been set before us, even the hope of eternal life. Nothing short of this blessing for us will satisfy our Redeemer; but it is our part to lay hold upon this hope by faith in Him who has promised. We may expect to suffer; for it is those who are partakers with Him in His sufferings, who shall be partakers with Him in His glory. He has purchased forgiveness and immortality for the sinful, perishing souls of men; but it is our part to receive these gifts by faith. Believing in Him, we have this hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.” —*Review and Herald*, June 9, 1896.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 12:4; 17:17; 18:24

“Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His ‘little ones,’ dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

FOR REFLECTION

- ***After having lost their husbands, did Naomi or Ruth show any trace of bitterness?***
- ***What foundational choice did Ruth make in choosing to go with her mother-in-law?***

- *Where do you see the hand of God in these two women's lives?*
- *Did the Lord supply Ruth's need?*
- *In Canaan did the Lord provide only her daily food?*
- *What made Ruth such a noble person?*
- *Do you wish to have the same wonderful connection with the church as Ruth had with her mother-in-law?*
- *On what does that depend?*

WHEN CAN WE SAY THAT WE LOVE OTHERS?

How easily we love—from a distance! We consider the heroes of faith and all our acquaintances such wonderful people. The Lord should shut us up in Noah's ark with our relatives and acquaintances; a few days would be quite sufficient. Then we would know not just the Sabbath morning faces of our friends but also their less favorable sides, which they always try to hide as much as we do. Only then, if we still "love" them, will we really use this word correctly.

Both things are fatal—to surround oneself with a false halo, or to look at others through rose-colored glasses. Someone has said: "When, in people to whom we look up too much, we see things that contribute to our disillusionment with them, that is God's mercy, because we should not look to people but solely to Jesus."

Ruth and Naomi lived together for not just a few days but for years (Ruth 1:4); with the Lord's help, they passed this test. How many mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have achieved such wonderful harmony? How many brothers and sisters in the church love each other so much? Looking to Jesus, we may be completely transformed and be able to develop love, even under difficult circumstances, as was the case with them. —Adapted from Paul Dietenbeck, quoted in H. Schäfer, *In Bilder reden* (Speaking in Pictures), p. 256.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT

from The Good Samaritan Department

To be read on April 30, 2016

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, May 7, 2016*

Dear brothers and sisters in the whole world, Greetings with Isaiah 58:6-8: “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.” Isaiah 58:6-8.

It is now more than twenty years that the Good Samaritan Department has been working tirelessly to relieve the suffering of those who face particularly difficult situations—children, orphans, widows, and the elderly.

Disparity between rich and poor is a sad reality in every nation of this planet. As strange as it may seem, where one finds the poorest people is also where the richest are found. This is often the result of exploitation of the underprivileged classes by those in power.

Summarizing the situation that characterizes the world all through the centuries, Jesus said, “For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always.” Matthew 26:11. The fulfillment of Jesus’ words is a tangible reality. Today, even in “economically advanced” countries, there are poor people who are not able to satisfy all their needs.

Over the past ten years, the General Conference has invested a lot of effort to enter new countries with the eternal gospel. More than thirty countries have been reached with the heavenly message of hope. Most of the people in these countries live with incomes that are under the poverty line, with the consequence that the number of requests for help from the Good Samaritan Department is increasing every day.

In the news, we hear of huge waves of migrants coming from poor countries to richer ones with a dream that often vanishes like a soap bubble. Considering the poverty these people represent, we can be overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness; however, the Spirit of prophecy encourages us: “As we see the necessities of the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted, how often our hearts sink. We question, ‘What avail our feeble strength and slender resources to supply this terrible necessity? Shall we not wait for someone of greater ability to direct the work, or for some

organization to undertake it?’ Christ says, ‘Give ye them to eat.’ Use the means, the time, the ability, you have. Bring your barley loaves to Jesus.

“Though your resources may not be sufficient to feed thousands, they may suffice to feed one. In the hand of Christ they may feed many. Like the disciples, give what you have. Christ will multiply the gift. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. That which seemed but a meager supply will prove to be a rich feast.

“He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth with blessings *shall reap also with blessings....*” – *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 49, 50 (italics added).

Surely we cannot eliminate poverty from our planet, but we can relieve the suffering of some with this multiplying effect. With five loaves and two fish, thousands of people were nourished, thanks to Christ’s blessing. Today the same miracle can happen again. Let us put the little bread that we can at the disposal of those in need, and tomorrow we will realize how many received nourishment from our small humanitarian deed.

Many times God’s word teaches us that small everyday deeds can bring great blessings; remember the widow of Zarephath and the poor widow’s two mites, to mention a few examples of generosity blessed by our heavenly Father. In every church, no matter how small it may be, we always find a weak brother who needs the help of a stronger brother and those who will deny themselves to help their neighbor.

Self-denial is the key word. What am I willing to give up for my Lord? If I follow my selfish heart, I will not be able to give up anything; if I concentrate on my own real or supposed needs, I will continue to look for new ways to acquire things every day—that something extra that will gratify me.

Our Lord is our great example, including of self-denial. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But *made Himself of no reputation*, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:6-8 (italics added).

The Son of God gave up heaven and His very life to give to all of us the possibility of redemption. What are we willing to give up to offer something to our neighbors? The offering pleasing to God is that which proceeds from denying ourselves. The monetary value is irrelevant to our heavenly Father; what is most important is the heartfelt motive of the gesture. We are called to give to others not only that which is ours, but also that which we actually need.

Every one of us has his or her own list of priorities to satisfy. If we compare them, we will see differences that make us think and that will even give us the strength to give up something we may cling to.

I need new clothes, and the sales are on! Am I able to deny myself of that garment to offer it to someone who has a greater need than I? At this moment, this is

what we are asking of you—a deed of self-denial to help a brother, a friend, a stranger who, from thousands of miles away, is pleading for your help.

Recently several countries were struck by natural disasters, and many of our brothers and sisters lost everything but their lives. Offerings were collected and sent, but there are still needs, so, in the interest of those who were affected as well as many others who are suffering and needy, we feel moved to appeal to you to join us in helping them. On the occasion of this special offering for the Good Samaritan Department, let us show our strength and courage through a deed of self-denial!

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth:...” “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” Psalm 41:1, 2; Proverbs 19:17.

In the name of the Department, from the Good Samaritan team, and from all who have been given help, we thank you in anticipation of your offering and your self-denying deed!

Your brother and fellow servant in the Lord,

—Stefano La Corte
General Conference Good Samaritan Department Leader

Special Sabbath School Offering for
THE GOOD SAMARITAN DEPARTMENT

May the Lord of mercy and all bounties bless all who give and all who receive!

6

Sabbath, May 7, 2016

True Friendship

“Jonathan, by birth heir to the throne, yet knowing himself set aside by the divine decree; to his rival the most tender and faithful of friends, shielding David’s life at the peril of his own; steadfast at his father’s side through the dark days of his declining power, and at his side falling at the last—the name of Jonathan is treasured in heaven, and it stands on earth a witness to the existence and the power of unselfish love.”
—*Education*, p. 157.

DAVID AND JONATHAN’S FRIENDSHIP

- 1. After David’s victory over Goliath and his conversation with King Saul, what relationship was formed between Prince Jonathan and David? How far did their friendship extend?**

1 SAMUEL 18:1, 3 *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul....³Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.*

“After the slaying of Goliath, Saul kept David with him, and would not permit him to return to his father’s house. And it came to pass that ‘the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.’ Jonathan and David made a covenant to be united as brethren, and the king’s son ‘stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.’ David was entrusted with important responsibilities, yet he preserved his modesty, and won the affection of the people as well as the royal household.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 649.

- 2. As King Saul changed completely and became so jealous and suspicious of David that he tried many times to kill him, what was Jonathan’s opinion of David?**

1 SAMUEL 19:1, 2, FIRST PART *And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.²But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David:...*

“Saul, however, did not long remain friendly to David.... The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king. He was angry because David was exalted above himself in the

song of the women of Israel. In place of subduing these envious feelings, he displayed the weakness of his character, and exclaimed. 'They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?'

"One great defect in the character of Saul was his love of approbation. This trait had had a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts; everything was marked by his desire for praise and self-exaltation. His standard of right and wrong was the low standard of popular applause. No man is safe who lives that he may please men, and does not seek first for the approbation of God. It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the estimation of men; and when this song of praise was sung, a settled conviction entered the mind of the king that David would obtain the hearts of the people and reign in his stead." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 650.

INFORMING AND PROTECTING A FRIEND

3. What confidential information did Jonathan provide to protect the life of his friend? Knowing the risk of mortal danger, would we protect our brethren like this? How can one see God's providence in such complex circumstances?

1 SAMUEL 19:2 *But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself.*

"It was the providence of God that had connected David with Saul. David's position at court would give him a knowledge of affairs, in preparation for his future greatness. It would enable him to gain the confidence of the nation. The vicissitudes and hardships which befell him, through the enmity of Saul, would lead him to feel his dependence upon God, and to put his whole trust in Him. And the friendship of Jonathan for David was also of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel. In all these things God was working out His gracious purposes, both for David and for the people of Israel." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 649.

4. In conversation with his father, how did Jonathan openly defend David, presenting an objective and positive picture? Who in heaven performs a similar work of intercession for every guilty sinner?

1 SAMUEL 19:4, 5 *And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to theeward very good: ⁵For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?*

"Jonathan revealed the king's intention to David and bade him conceal himself while he would plead with his father to spare the life of the deliverer of Israel. He presented before the king what David had done to preserve the honor and even the life of the nation, and what terrible guilt would rest upon the murderer of the one whom God had used to scatter their enemies. The conscience of the king was touched, and his heart was softened. 'And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.' David was brought to Saul, and he ministered in his presence, as he had done in the past." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 652.

DEFENSE AGAINST UNJUST ACCUSATION

5. But as it became more and more dangerous for David every day, what earnest appeal did he make to his friend, Jonathan? What solemn pact did they make?

1 SAMUEL 20:1, 13-17, 23 *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?... ¹³The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. ¹⁴And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: ¹⁵But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. ¹⁶So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. ¹⁷And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.... ²³And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever.*

“His heart was wounded within him, and he longed to see his friend Jonathan once more. Conscious of his innocence, he sought the king's son and made a most touching appeal. ‘What have I done?’ he asked, ‘what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?’ Jonathan believed that his father had changed his purpose and no longer intended to take the life of David. And Jonathan said unto him, ‘God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so.’ After the remarkable exhibition of the power of God, Jonathan could not believe that his father would still harm David, since this would be manifest rebellion against God. But David was not convinced. With intense earnestness he declared to Jonathan, ‘As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.’ ” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 654.

6. What further noble defense did Jonathan make in favor of David? Have we done something similar when a brother or sister was unfairly accused? In a heart-rending farewell, how did these two close friends entrust their lives and their children to God forever?

1 SAMUEL 20:31, 32, 41, 42 *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. ³²And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?... ⁴²And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. ⁴²And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.*

“Jonathan again made intercession for his friend, pleading, ‘Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?’ This appeal to the king only made him more satanic in his fury, and the spear which he had intended for David he now hurled at his own son.

“The prince was grieved and indignant, and leaving the royal presence, he was no more a guest at the feast. His soul was bowed down with sorrow as he repaired at the

appointed time to the spot where David was to learn the king's intentions toward him. Each fell upon the other's neck, and they wept bitterly. The dark passion of the king cast its shadow upon the life of the young men, and their grief was too intense for expression. Jonathan's last words fell upon the ear of David as they separated to pursue their different paths, 'Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever.'"
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 655.

FRIENDSHIP OF TRUE BROTHERS IN CHRIST

7. As what did David consider Jonathan? What relationship should exist among brothers in Christ? In this sense, how can Jesus' followers be recognized?

2 SAMUEL 1:26 *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*

PROVERBS 18:24 *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

JOHN 15:15 *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

"The friendship of Jonathan for David was ... of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel." —*My Life Today*, p. 210.

"You have the Pattern, Christ Jesus; walk in His footsteps, and you will be qualified to fill any and every position that you may be called upon to occupy. You will be 'rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' You are not to feel that you are a bonds slave, but a son of God; that you are highly favored in that you have been regarded of so great value that God has made you His by paying an infinite ransom for your freedom. Jesus says, 'I call you not servants;... but I have called you friends.' When you appreciate His wondrous love, love and gratitude will be in your heart as a wellspring of joy." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 303, 304.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Samuel 23:16-18

2 Samuel 1:26; 9:1

Proverbs 17:17

FOR REFLECTION

- ***How would you define the relationship between David and Jonathan?***
- ***How can their example be a blessing in your experience?***
- ***What are the qualities of a true friend?***
- ***What other example of an ideal relationship is reported in the Bible?***
- ***Who wants to be our best Friend?***

THE HUT IN FLAMES

The only man to survive a shipwreck landed on the beach of a small, uninhabited island. He earnestly pleaded with the Lord to help him; but as he stared at the horizon day after day, it remained empty. Finally he decided to build a log cabin for protection from the rain and then placed all his possessions in it. One day, after wandering around the island in search of food, he returned to the hut and found it engulfed in flames, with smoke rising to heaven. The worst thing was that he had lost everything. He was astonished, sad, and angry. "God, how could You do this to me?" he lamented.

However, the next day he awoke to the sound of a ship approaching the island. The crew had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" the man asked them.

"We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to be discouraged when things go wrong, but God works in our lives despite the pain and suffering. David lost the esteem and love of Saul and nearly lost his life several times. But the Lord had a solution and gave him the friendship and love of Jonathan, a deep, sincere love that remains a wonderful example to this day. The next time you face a misunderstanding or conflict and your hut catches on fire, it may be a sign that the grace of God is coming to your help. —Adapted from the web page *Giorno per giorno col Signore* (Day by day with the Lord).

* * *

7

Sabbath, May 14, 2016

Brotherly Love, Part 1

"Christ had bidden the first disciples love one another as He had loved them...."

"It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most surely retards the progress of God's cause. There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising. On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church...." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 357.

DIVINE LOVE AND BROTHERLY LOVE

1. What is God's greatest attribute that draws people to Him?

1 JOHN 4:8, SECOND PART, 16 ... *God is love....¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

" 'God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers

in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 10.

“The first lesson that children are to be taught is that God is their Father. This lesson should be given them in their earliest years. Parents are to realize that they are responsible before God for making their children acquainted with their heavenly Father.... That God is love is to be taught by every lesson.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 487.

2. Toward whom has He especially manifested His great love?

1 JOHN 4:9, 10 *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

ROMANS 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

“In the love of God has been opened the most marvelous vein of precious truth, and the treasures of the grace of Christ are laid open before the church and the world. ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son....’ John 3:16. What love is this—what marvelous, unfathomable love—that would lead Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners! What a loss it is to the soul who understands the strong claims of the law, and who yet fails to understand the grace of Christ which doth much more abound! It is true that the law of God reveals the love of God when it is preached as the truth in Jesus; for the gift of Christ to this guilty world must be largely dwelt upon in every discourse.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 384.

3. Therefore, if we love God, whom else will we love? Are we conscious that true brotherly love depends on our love for the Lord?

1 JOHN 4:7, 21 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.... ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

“After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 241.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CREDIBILITY

4. According to Jesus’ words, what is the test of our credibility? What new commandment did He give?

JOHN 13:35, 34 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.... ³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

“The believers were ever to cherish the love that filled the hearts of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: ‘As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.’ John 13:34. So

closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified....

"The world is looking with gratification at the disunion amongst Christians. Infidelity is well pleased. God calls for a change among His people. Union with Christ and with one another is our only safety in these last days. Let us not make it possible for Satan to point to our church members, saying: 'Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another. We have nothing to fear from them while they spend more strength fighting one another than in warfare with my forces.'" –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 241, 240.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND BEHAVIOR

5. Instead of engaging in futile, disparaging conversation, what are we commanded to do when we meet with our brothers so we may strengthen them?

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

EPHESIANS 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

"Through the apostle Paul, Christ bids us, 'Let your speech be alway with grace.' 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29. In the light of these scriptures, the words of Christ upon the mount are seen to condemn jesting, trifling, and unchaste conversation. They require that our words should be not only truthful, but pure.

"Those who have learned of Christ will 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' Ephesians 5:11. In speech, as in life, they will be simple, straightforward, and true; for they are preparing for the fellowship of those holy ones in whose mouth 'was found no guile.' Revelation 14:5." –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 68, 69.

6. What will we always do for our brother, especially in case of sickness?

COLOSSIANS 1:9 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11 *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.*

JAMES 5:16, SECOND PART ... *Pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

"These words were clearly and forcibly spoken: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. Press together; press together, and love as brethren. Pray together.' The Lord has paid the price of His own blood for the salvation of the world. He suffered every indignity that men could devise and Satan could invent, in order to carry out the plan of salvation." –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 527.

"There is another work that should receive attention on the preparation day. On this day all differences between brethren, whether in the family or in the church, should be

put away. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be expelled from the soul. In a humble spirit, 'confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.' —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 34.

7. If we are truly connected with Christ, what will we be ready to do in every emergency?

GALATIANS 6:2; 5:13, LAST PART *Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ....^{5:13}But by love serve one another.*

ROMANS 15:1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

"By the terms of our stewardship we are placed under obligation, not only to God, but to man. To the infinite love of the Redeemer every human being is indebted for the gifts of life. Food and raiment and shelter, body and mind and soul—all are the purchase of His blood. And by the obligation of gratitude and service thus imposed, Christ has bound us to our fellow men. He bids us, 'By love serve one another.' Galatians 5:13. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' Matthew 25:40.

"'I am debtor, Paul declares, 'both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.' Romans 1:14. So also are we. By all that has blessed our life above others, we are placed under obligation to every human being whom we might benefit." —*Education*, p. 139.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 168, 169

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 505

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS AND BROTHERLY LOVE

Brotherly love has always been the special feature of Jesus' disciples. How could the great debate with paganism and the hostility and severe persecution be faced without this cohesion, without the strong bond of love? Not through the learning of its best thinkers but by the love of the simplest members the church achieved victory. In a book of defense, the old apologist Mark Minucius Felix had two friends arguing about Christianity, one of them being an idolater. In the interview, one of them comments: "The Christians love each other even before they are acquainted."

Another testimony about Christian brotherly love was given by the heathen scoffer Lucian of Samosata. Although, in his view, Christians were "fanatics and blind believers"—and he speaks of them with derision—he has to recognize that "Their Lawgiver has convinced them to love each other, and so they act according to His teaching." In reality, Christ's love wears the same clothing everywhere, and as brotherly love it is spreading all over the earth.

This is a wonderful testimony that was given many years ago. What can be said today? Can outsiders see us in the same way as the heathen saw the early Christians? Let us remember that the testimonies of our lives are the best that we can give. —Adapted from H. Schäfer, *Mach ein Fenster dran* (Close a Window), pp. 232, 233.

* * *

Brotherly Love, Part 2

“It is the greatest and most fatal deception to suppose that a man can have faith unto life eternal, without possessing Christlike love for his brethren. He who loves God and his neighbor is filled with light and love. God is in him and all around him. Christians love those around them as precious souls for whom Christ has died. There is no such thing as a loveless Christian; for ‘God is love,’ and ‘hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’...” —(MS 133, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1141.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND LIGHT

1. What is stated in God’s word about those who truly love one another?

1 JOHN 4:7; 3:10 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God...^{3:10}In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

“True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another.

“The qualities which it is essential for all to possess are those which marked the completeness of Christ’s character—His love, His patience, His unselfishness, and His goodness. These attributes are gained by doing kindly actions with a kindly heart....

“‘This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.’ This is the fruit that is to be given back to God.” —(MS 133, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1141.

2. If we dislike our fellow man, what condition are we still in? Having such feelings, what hope do we have of eternal life?

1 JOHN 2:9; 3:15 *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now....^{3:15}Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

“These natural brothers must be fully reconciled to each other before they can lift the reproach from the cause of God that their disunion has caused. ‘In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.’ ‘He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.’ Those who labor for God should be clean vessels, sanctified to the Master’s use. ‘Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.’ ‘If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 59, 60.

3. When we love our brother, what can be said about our walk? Is there any danger of walking in darkness and stumbling?

1 JOHN 2:10 *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

“The Lord is waiting to bestow rich blessing upon us if we will only comply with the conditions. We cannot glorify Him while we cherish doubt. We must believe that He will do just what He has said He would. Remember that we have a living Saviour. If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not dishonor God by talking of your feelings. Talk of the promises, talk of Jesus’ willingness to bless; and before you are aware of it, the cloud will lift, light will come into the soul, and you will find peace and rest in Jesus. Cherish love. ‘Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.’ Romans 12:10. Form a habit of speaking words of cheerful hope and courage, words of love and appreciation, that will bind hearts together. ‘If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ 1 John 1:7.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 437, 438 (1892).

IN WORD AND ACTION

4. Is it helpful to just say we love someone, without really showing it by our actions?

1 JOHN 3:18 *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

1 PETER 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

ROMANS 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

“Unbelievers are watching to see if the faith of professed Christians is exerting a sanctifying influence upon their lives; and they are quick to discern the defects in character, the inconsistencies in action.... Christians are all members of one family, all children of the same heavenly Father, with the same blessed hope of immortality. Very close and tender should be the tie that binds them together.... ‘Let us not love in word,’ the apostle writes, ‘but in deed and in truth.’ 1 John 3:18.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 357.

LOVE IS ACTIVE

5. What shows that we love the Lord and are in communion with Him?

JOHN 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

1 JOHN 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

“There are conditions to the fulfillment of God’s promises, and prayer can never take the place of duty. ‘If ye love Me,’ Christ says, ‘keep My commandments.’ ‘He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.’ John 14:15,

21. 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.

6. What is divine love willing to do in us whenever help is requested?

ROMANS 15:2 *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19 *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; ¹⁸That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

“The apostle Paul shows the only true use for riches, and bids Timothy charge the rich to do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; for in so doing they are laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come—referring to the close of time—that they may lay hold on eternal life. The teachings of Paul harmonize perfectly with the words of Christ: ‘Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.’ Godliness with contentment is great gain. Here is the true secret of happiness, and real prosperity of soul and body.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 542.

7. How will those who are full of God’s love respond to slander?

ROMANS 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

LUKE 6:27 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.*

“Do not retaliate. So far as you can do so, remove all cause for misapprehension. Avoid the appearance of evil. Do all that lies in your power, without the sacrifice of principle, to conciliate others. ‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ Matthew 5:23, 24.

“If impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit. Remember that ‘a soft answer turneth away wrath.’ Proverbs 15:1. And there is wonderful power in silence. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry sometimes serve only to exasperate. But anger met with silence, in a tender, forbearing spirit, quickly dies away.

“Under a storm of stinging, faultfinding words, keep the mind stayed upon the word of God. Let mind and heart be stored with God’s promises. If you are ill-treated or wrongfully accused, instead of returning an angry answer, repeat to yourself the precious promises:...” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 485, 486.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

John 14:21, 23

Ecclesiastes 10:12

LOVE TRANSFORMS

If something is cold, you have to warm it up! “But if one is cold himself...?”

Have you ever heard of something needing to be warmed up when it was already hot? Perhaps you were pleased to receive an electric blanket; but if you had been warm, would you have needed it? However, since it was warm and you were cold, it provided you with heat.

One can only heat something cold by radiating heat.

How can a person be sanctified? God is love; and when one is changed by the power of His grace, God’s love will be transmitted to him or her, and the person will radiate an image of God. Think about the symbol of warmth—sunshine. If you want to make someone enjoy the warmth, you must first be warm yourself. A block of ice cannot resemble the sun until it melts and the water gets hot and evaporates! So, if you wish someone to become warm because you are radiating heat, you may help him to become loving by loving him and practically manifesting your love! –Adapted from A.A. Combes, *Gott spricht* (God speaks), pp. 30, 31.

* * *

9

Sabbath, May 28, 2016

Brotherly Love, Part 3

“One of the strongest evidences of true conversion is love to God and man. Those who accept Jesus as their Redeemer have a deep, sincere love for others of like precious faith. Thus it was with the believers at Thessalonica. ‘As touching brotherly love,’ the apostle wrote, ‘ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more...’ ” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 262, 263.

THE SOLE SOURCE OF LOVE

1. What is the source of love? Who planted the seeds of love in man?

1 JOHN 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

“In the contemplation of Christ we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing

for those who love Him, and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ! 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' 1 John 4:10; 3:1.

"In every true disciple this love, like sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart. It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on the earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross to behold the Lamb of God." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 333, 334.

2. Therefore, when is one able to love others? Who has to live and reign in him before love can be produced?

1 JOHN 4:12; 2:5 *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us....^{2:5} But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

"The attributes which God prizes most are charity and purity. These attributes should be cherished by every Christian. 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.' 'We shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'" –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 85.

"There is among us a very limited amount of real, unselfish love. The Lord says: 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.' 1 John 4:7, 8, 12." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 137.

DEALING WITH OFFENSES AND WEAKNESS

3. In case of offense or mistreatment, how does divine love respond?

ROMANS 12:17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:15 *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

"It hurts you when one for whom you have done much becomes your enemy, having been brought under an influence opposed to you. But do you not do almost the same thing to Jesus when you turn away from Him? He has been your best Friend. He has done everything He could to win your love. He has invited your confidence. He has asked you to come to Him with all your burdens and all your griefs, and has pledged His word to give you rest and peace if you will wear His yoke and bear His burdens. He declares that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Show that you believe this. Take God at His word. You never could have stood where you now stand, bearing the responsibilities that you have borne, unless Jesus had given you special help. Acknowledge this. Praise God for the help that He has been to you, and trust Him still." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 129.

4. Facing shortcomings in others, what attitude will we have if God's love is in us?

LUKE 6:36 *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

JAMES 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

“God is always giving; and upon whom are His gifts bestowed? Upon those who are faultless in character? ‘He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ Matthew 5:45. Notwithstanding the sinfulness of humanity, notwithstanding that we so often grieve the heart of Christ and prove ourselves most undeserving, yet when we ask His forgiveness, He does not turn us away. His love is freely extended to us, and He bids us: Love one another as I have loved you. John 13:34.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 284.

OTHER INDICATIONS OF GOD’S LOVE IN US

5. What should be done when someone practices sin and clings to an improper attitude? What will a genuine brother in Christ do, and what will he not do, in such a situation?

PROVERBS 17:18 *A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.*

GALATIANS 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

“If one of these little ones shall be overcome, and commit a wrong against you, then it is your work to seek his restoration. Do not wait for him to make the first effort for reconciliation. ‘How think ye?’ said Jesus; ‘if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.’...

“Do not put him to shame by exposing his fault to others, nor bring dishonor upon Christ by making public the sin or error of one who bears His name. Often the truth must be plainly spoken to the erring; he must be led to see his error, that he may reform. But you are not to judge or to condemn. Make no attempt at self-justification. Let all your effort be for his recovery. In treating the wounds of the soul, there is need of the most delicate touch, the finest sensibility. Only the love that flows from the Suffering One of Calvary can avail here.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 440.

6. What instruction is given so we can keep from causing a fellow brother to stumble in the faith?

ROMANS 14:13 *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:32 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

“He bids us, in dealing with the tempted and the erring, consider ‘thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Galatians 6:1. With a sense of our own infirmities, we shall have compassion for the infirmities of others.

“‘Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?’ ‘One is your Master;... and all ye are brethren.’ ‘Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?’ ‘Let us not therefore judge one another:... but

judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.' 1 Corinthians 4:7; Matthew 23:8; Romans 14:10, 13.

"It is always humiliating to have one's errors pointed out. None should make the experience more bitter by needless censure. No one was ever reclaimed by reproach; but many have thus been repelled and have been led to steel their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

7. What should characterize our actions and speech in our daily intercourse with others?

ECCLESIASTES 10:12 *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*

COLOSSIANS 4:6 *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

1 PETER 3:15 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

"The chief requisite of language is that it be pure and kind and true—the outward expression of an inward grace.'... The best school for this language study is the home.

"Kind words are as dew and gentle showers to the soul. The Scripture says of Christ that grace was poured into His lips, that He might 'know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' And the Lord bids us, 'Let your speech be always with grace,' 'that it may minister grace unto the hearers.'" —*The Adventist Home*, p. 435.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Colossians 3:12

Proverbs 6:1, 2

Hebrews 3:12, 13

HEARING AND SHARING THE MESSAGE

A huge truck crashed into the back of a small vehicle, causing it to plunge 75 feet down into a ravine. The owner of the vehicle was a paralyzed woman who operated the car with special controls. The woman, Linda Myers, tried to call for help on her car radio. For hours, no one paid any attention to her calls for help. Finally, after fourteen hours, she cried: "Lord, let somebody come and help me!" At that moment, a truck driver heard and answered her call and called the police by radio. This led to immediate intervention, and the woman was rescued. Linda said: "When you lack human communication, the Lord is still ready to hear your cry."

This woman and the man in the Bible who was attacked on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho are not the only ones who fall into serious difficulties. There are millions who are trapped in sin and desperation; they are calling urgently for emergency help, and we can give them the message of love and hope that the Lord has entrusted to us. Will we do differently from that helpful truck driver, or will we go quickly to help by giving the message that can save a life? —Adapted from the Christian calendar *Più che vincitori in Cristo* (More than conquerors in Christ), January 5, 2011.

* * *

Friends, Fire, and Faith

“Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul....

“He does not desire us to be overcome and perish. He who curbed the lions in their den, and walked with His faithful witnesses amid the fiery flames, is just as ready to work in our behalf to subdue every evil in our nature. Today He is standing at the altar of mercy, presenting before God the prayers of those who desire His help. He turns no weeping, contrite one away.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 89, 90.

OPENLY CONFESSING THEIR FAITH

1. **Although we are not told about prior examples of religious intolerance in the Babylonian Empire, what law was enacted at the time of the Jewish captivity? What did the representatives of every nation, language, and religion in the empire do when the music began?**

DANIEL 3:4-7 *Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, ⁵That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: ⁶And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ⁷Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

“Forming this great image, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that it should receive universal homage from all, both great and small, high and low, rich and poor.” —(MS 24, 1891) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1169.

“History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted.... Force is the last resort of every false religion. At first it tries attraction, as the king of Babylon tried the power of music and outward show. If these attractions, invented by men inspired by Satan, failed to make men worship the image, the hungry flames of the furnace were ready to consume them. So it will be now.... We need the same spirit that was manifested by God’s servants in the conflict with paganism.” —(*Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 976.

“The laws and traditions of men are exalted above the law of God, and those who are true to God’s commandments suffer reproach and persecution.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 170.

2. **Who had the courage and power to resist the idolatrous command and worship? Did this situation cause these young men to waver in their faith? How did they firmly and decisively confess their conviction and faith in the true God?**

DANIEL 3:12, 16-18 *There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not*

regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.... ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

"But God decreed otherwise. Not all had bowed the knee to the idolatrous symbol of human power. In the midst of the worshipping multitude there were three men who were firmly resolved not thus to dishonor the God of heaven. Their God was King of kings and Lord of lords; they would bow to none other....

"As the three Hebrews stood before the king, he was convinced that they possessed something the other wise men of his kingdom did not have. They had been faithful in the performance of every duty. He would give them another trial. If only they would signify their willingness to unite with the multitude in worshipping the image, all would be well with them;..." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 506, 507.

FREE AND WALKING IN THE FIRE

3. Is there any indication that they complained or expressed grief to God at having to face such a terrible test? Did they resist being bound and thrown into the furnace? How can we explain such steadfastness, regardless of the consequences?

DANIEL 3:19-21 *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. ²⁰And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

PSALMS 9:10; 37:28 *The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.... ^{37:28}For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

"We have marked illustrations of the sustaining power of firm, religious principle.... The gaping lions' den could not keep Daniel from his daily prayers, nor could the fiery furnace induce Shadrach and his companions to fall down before the idol which Nebuchadnezzar set up. Young men who have firm principles will eschew pleasure, defy pain, and brave even the lions' den and the heated fiery furnace rather than be found untrue to God. Mark the character of Joseph. Virtue was severely tested, but its triumph was complete. At every point the noble youth endured the test. The same lofty, unbending principle appeared at every trial. The Lord was with him, and His word was law.

"Such firmness and untarnished principle shines brightest in contrast with the feebleness and inefficiency of the youth of this age. With but few exceptions, they are vacillating, varying with every change of circumstance and surroundings, one thing today and another tomorrow." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 43.

4. What effect did the raging heat of the fire have on the young men and their clothing? What was the effect of their faith and commitment? What astonished the king?

DANIEL 3:23-25, FIRST PART *And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.* ²⁴*Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.* ²⁵*He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt;...*

“Thus it has been in the past history of God’s people. For refusing to worship the great golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, the three Hebrews were cast into the fiery furnace. But God preserved His servants in the midst of the flames, and the attempt to enforce idolatry resulted in bringing the knowledge of the true God before the assembled princes and great men of the vast kingdom of Babylon.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 453.

ONLY THE FETTERS CONSUMED

- 5. What alone was consumed by the fire, setting the young men free? Considering the spiritual fetters of sin, what hope can we have of being completely set free from them? With whom should we constantly be in communion?**

DANIEL 3:20, 21, 25 *And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.* ²¹*Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace....* ²⁵*He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

JOHN 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

“The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.

“And now, his own greatness and dignity forgotten, Nebuchadnezzar descended from his throne and, going to the mouth of the furnace, cried out, ‘Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.’

“Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth before the vast multitude, showing themselves unhurt. The presence of their Saviour had guarded them from harm, and only their fetters had been burned.” –*Prophets and Kings*, p. 509.

WITH GOD’S SON

- 6. Do you think that the fourth “Brother” in the fire was with them only in that critical circumstance, or that His constant presence with them was the secret of their wonderful unity and success? How may we be similarly united as brothers and make such experiences together?**

DANIEL 3:25, LAST PART ... *And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

PSALMS 37:5; 32:10, SECOND PART *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass....* ^{32:10}*He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

“What a lesson is here given to the fainthearted, the vacillating, the cowardly in the cause of God! What encouragement to those who will not be turned aside from duty by threats or peril! These faithful, steadfast characters exemplify sanctification, while they have no thought of claiming the high honor. The amount of good which may be accomplished by comparatively obscure but devoted Christians cannot be estimated until the life records shall be made known, when the judgment shall sit and the books be opened.

“Christ identifies His interest with this class; He is not ashamed to call them brethren. There should be hundreds where there is now one among us, so closely allied to God, their lives in such close conformity to His will, that they would be bright and shining lights, sanctified wholly, in soul, body, and spirit.” —*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 40, 41.

7. What praise to God did the king express after seeing that not even a hair of these faithful men had been singed? Centuries later, who else chose to obey God’s command and were greatly blessed? What are we privileged to do so that people may be influenced to praise the Lord in heaven?

DANIEL 3:26-28 *Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. ²⁷And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. ²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*

ACTS 5:27-29 *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, ²⁸Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. ²⁹Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

MATTHEW 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

“The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worshiped. They relied on God. In the hour of their trial they remembered the promise, ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ Isaiah 43:2. And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 511.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Deuteronomy 8:16

Romans 5:3

1 Peter 1:7; 4:12, 13

FOR REFLECTION

- *If we are not truly united with God, what will happen in our very first test?*
- *While thermometers may measure temperature, what events measure the level of our faith?*
- *What lesson of steadfastness and harmony may we learn from the three Hebrews' amazing experience?*
- *Are you determined to serve the Lord of heaven and none else?*
- *As their testimony moved the king to come to God, how does our witness influence others?*

VALUE OF A LOVING WORD

Russian author Leo Tolstoy was walking down a street when a beggar stopped him to ask for alms. Tolstoy answered, "I'm sorry, brother, but I have no money on me, or I would gladly give it to you."

The beggar's face lit up, and he said, "That's OK, sir. You have given me more than I asked, for you called me 'brother.' "

Recognizing another person as a brother is an enormous first step in carrying out the love contained in the gospel; actually treating him as a brother is the second. May the Lord help us to do both, because in this way we bless not only a person but the Lord Himself! –Adapted from S. Vila, *Enciclopedia de anecdotas*, p. 347.

* * *

11

Sabbath, June 11, 2016

How Pleasant It Is ...

"The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ." –*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

A GOOD AND PLEASANT THING

1. **In the Psalms, how is the happiness of living together in harmony expressed? What things symbolize the fragrance and reviving grace of harmony?**

PSALM 133:1-3 *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ²It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; ³As the dew of Hermon, and*

as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

“Among the mountains of Judah, David sought refuge from the pursuit of Saul. He made good his escape to the cave of Adullam, a place that, with a small force, could be held against a large army. ‘And when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him.’ The family of David could not feel secure, knowing that at any time the unreasonable suspicions of Saul might be directed against them on account of their relation to David. They had now learned—what was coming to be generally known in Israel—that God had chosen David as the future ruler of His people; and they believed that they would be safer with him, even though he was a fugitive in a lonely cave, than they could be while exposed to the insane madness of a jealous king.

“In the cave of Adullam the family were united in sympathy and affection. The son of Jesse could make melody with voice and harp as he sang, ‘Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ Psalm 133:1. He had tasted the bitterness of distrust on the part of his own brothers; and the harmony that had taken the place of discord brought joy to the exile’s heart. It was here that David composed the fifty-seventh psalm.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 657, 658.

2. What blessings are part of the mutual trust of united brethren?

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12 *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. ¹⁰For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. ¹¹Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? ¹²And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

ISAIAH 41:6 *They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.*

“It would be helpful for the youth, and for parents and teachers as well, to study the lesson of cooperation as taught in the Scriptures. Among its many illustrations notice the building of the tabernacle—that object lesson of character building—in which the whole people united, ‘everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing.’ Exodus 35:21. Read how the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt by the returned captives, in the midst of poverty, difficulty, and danger, the great task successfully accomplished because ‘the people had a mind to work.’ Nehemiah 4:6. Consider the part acted by the disciples in the Saviour’s miracle for the feeding of the multitude. The food multiplied in the hands of Christ, but the disciples received the loaves and gave to the waiting throng.

“‘We are members one of another.’ As everyone therefore ‘hath received a (R.V.) gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.’ Ephesians 4:25; I Peter 4:10....

“‘They helped everyone his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.’ Isaiah 41:6.” —*Education*, p. 286.

DIVERSITY IS A SPECIAL BLESSING

3. What did the apostle Paul stress concerning unity among brethren? Why is the diversity of character, personality, and way of thinking not an insurmountable obstacle to the unity in Christ’s spiritual kingdom?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10, 11 *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

EPHESIANS 4:3-6 *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

“How was it with the apostle Paul? The news he received through the household of Chloe concerning the condition of the church at Corinth was what caused him to write his first epistle to that church. Private letters had come to him stating the facts as they existed, and in his answer he laid down general principles which if heeded would correct the existing evils. With great tenderness and wisdom he exhorts them to all speak the same things, that there be no divisions among them....

“He was set for the defense of the church. He was to watch for souls as one that must render account to God, and should he not take notice of the reports concerning their state of anarchy and division? Most assuredly; and the reproof he sent them was written just as much under the inspiration of the Spirit of God as were any of his epistles. But when these reproofs came, some would not be corrected. They took the position that God had not spoken to them through Paul, that he had merely given them his opinion as a man, and they regarded their own judgment as good as that of Paul.

“So it is with many among our people who have drifted away from the old landmarks and who have followed their own understanding.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 684, 685.

4. Why was it impossible to solve the problem of doctrinal controversy that arose in Galatia? In contrast, why was it possible for the same controversy to be resolved peaceably in Jerusalem, where there were even more members?

ACTS 15:1, 2, 25-28 *And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. ²When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.... ²⁵It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. ²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*

“In the church at Antioch the consideration of the question of circumcision resulted in much discussion and contention. Finally, the members of the church, fearing that a division among them would be the outcome of continued discussion, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, with some responsible men from the church, to Jerusalem to lay the matter before the apostles and elders....

“The various points involved in the settlement of the main question at issue seemed to present before the council insurmountable difficulties. But the Holy Spirit had, in reality, already settled this question, upon the decision of which seemed to depend the prosperity, if not the very existence, of the Christian church....

“The Holy Spirit saw good not to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts, and the mind of the apostles regarding this matter was as the mind of the Spirit of God. James presided at the council, and his final decision was, ‘Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.’ ” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 190, 192, 194.

THE BASIS OF HARMONY

5. How important is the matter of unity and harmony among brethren? With the cross just ahead of Him, what was Jesus’ fervent prayer for His disciples? For whom else did He pray?

JOHN 17:11, 21, 20 *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are....²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me....²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

“It should be understood that perfect unity among the laborers is necessary to the successful accomplishment of the work of God. In order to preserve peace, all must seek wisdom from the Great Teacher. Let all be careful how they introduce ambitious propositions that will create dissension.

“We are to be subject one to another. No man, in himself, is a complete whole. Through submission of the mind and will to the Holy Spirit we are ever to be learners of the Great Teacher.

“Study the second chapter of Acts. In the early church the Spirit of God wrought mightily through those who were harmoniously united. On the Day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in one place.

“We are to demonstrate to the world that men of every nationality are one in Christ Jesus. Then let us remove every barrier and come into unity in the service of the Master.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 196.

6. To what does the Bible compare a brother who has been offended? Whose love alone is able to break down the barriers between people? What is necessary to overcome difficulties that arise because of the usual differences, defects, and weaknesses that all human beings have?

PROVERBS 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

EPHESIANS 2:14 *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:7 *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

“In the days of Christ, selfishness and pride and prejudice had built strong and high the wall of partition between the appointed guardians of the sacred oracles and every other nation on the globe. But the Saviour had come to change all this. The words which the people were hearing from His lips were unlike anything to which they had ever lis-

tened from priest or rabbi. Christ tears away the wall of partition, the self-love, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle that their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our neighbor and the world as our field." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 42.

7. What is recorded about the wonderful, harmonious spirit that existed in the apostolic church? How can that be the same for the church today?

ACTS 2:42-47 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. ⁴⁶And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

MATTHEW 18:19, 20 *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

"After the descent of the Holy Spirit the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth's sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.

"The believers were ever to cherish the love that filled the hearts of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' John 13:34. So closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 241.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Philippians 1:27

Colossians 3:15

Romans 15:6, 7

THE WALL

In a rough and rocky desert, there lived two hermits. They each found a cave with a wide opening which faced the entrance to his counterpart's cave. After years of prayer and deep mortification, one of the two hermits believed he had become perfect. The other man was equally pious, cheerful, and forgiving. He took time to talk with the rare pilgrims who came to the place and comforted and housed those who were lost and who had left civilization behind.

All my time is devoted to meditation and prayer, thought the first hermit. He disapproved of the frequent but tiny deficiencies of the other man. Therefore, to make the latter understand what, according to his view, was far from holiness, he decided to place a stone at the mouth of his cave every time his friend committed a misdeed. What was the result? After a few months, the entrance to his cave was completely barred by a wall of gray, stifling stones, and the poor hermit was immured within.

Was that poor hermit the only one who ever built a wall to separate himself from his friend and thus enclose himself in a kind of prison? Offenses, misunderstandings, and unresolved problems may lead us to do the same—to build a wall of retaliation, avoidance, distance, and silence. Thus we enclose ourselves in a prison of our own making. How important it is that we not permit separating, enclosing walls to be built around our hearts! —Adapted from, B. Ferrero, *A volte basta un raggio di sole* (Sometimes just a ray of sunshine), p. 24.

* * *

If Your Brother Sins

“The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal. But there is to be in the church no neglect of proper discipline....

“God’s love for the fallen race is a peculiar manifestation of love--a love born of mercy, for human beings are all undeserving. Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown. It is because of sin that mercy was brought into active exercise.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 264.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

1. May we think that we rarely make mistakes or exhibit faulty behavior? What is our very first Christian duty when we become conscious of our shortcomings?

JAMES 3:2 *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

PROVERBS 20:9 *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*

MATTHEW 5:23, 24 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

“There is a wonderful power in silence. When impatient words are spoken to you, do not retaliate. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry usually act as a whip, lashing the temper into greater fury. But anger met by silence quickly dies away. Let the Christian bridle his tongue, firmly resolving not to speak harsh, impatient words. With the tongue bridled, he may be victorious in every trial of patience through which he is called to pass.

“In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control. In His strength he may bring his thoughts and words into subjection to the will of God. The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue. Under its influence the hasty temper is subdued, and the heart is filled with patience and gentleness.” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 135, 136.

2. Should we seek reconciliation only when we are the offender, or also when we are offended? What have you experienced in this area? What should be our solution to problems among brethren?

LUKE 17:3 *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

MATTHEW 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

“But sin is not to be lightly regarded. The Lord has commanded us not to suffer wrong upon our brother. He says, ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.’ Luke 17:3.

Sin is to be called by its right name, and is to be plainly laid out before the wrongdoer.”
–*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 248.

“You both need a gentler touch. Your words are to soothe, not to harass. Let your hearts be filled with love for souls. With a deep, tender interest, work for those around you. If you see one making a mistake, go to him in the way Christ has pointed out in His word, and see if you cannot talk the matter over with Christlike tenderness. Pray with him, and believe that the Saviour will show you the way out of the difficulty.” –*Evangelism*, p. 637.

SPEAK TO THE RIGHT PERSON

- 3. If we speak to a brother about something improper that he has done and he is unwilling to listen, is it correct to just “write off” the offender and regard him as a stranger? How would we feel if the Lord were to do that to us?**

REVELATION 3:20 *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.*

MATTHEW 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

“The True Witness says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.’ Revelation 3:20. Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, the disposition to open becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit if disregarded today, will not be as strong tomorrow. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of life, and of the great eternity beyond.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 489, 490.

“In Jerusalem, Jesus beheld a symbol of the world that had rejected and despised His grace. He was weeping, O stubborn heart, for you! Even when Jesus’ tears were shed upon the mount, Jerusalem might yet have repented, and escaped her doom. For a little space the Gift of heaven still waited her acceptance. So, O heart, to you Christ is still speaking in accents of love: ‘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.’ ‘Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.’ Revelation 3:20; 2 Corinthians 6:2.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 151.

- 4. What should we think of one who does not speak with his offending brother about a difficulty while telling others about the offense? What will fall on us if we act in this way?**

LEVITICUS 19:17 *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

PSALM 141:5 *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.*

1 TIMOTHY 5:20 *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

“Christ’s instruction as to the treatment of the erring repeats in more specific form the teaching given to Israel through Moses: ‘Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine

heart: thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbor, that thou bear not sin for him.' Leviticus 19:17, margin. That is, if one neglects the duty Christ has enjoined, of trying to restore those who are in error and sin, he becomes a partaker in the sin. For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.

"But it is to the wrongdoer himself that we are to present the wrong. We are not to make it a matter of comment and criticism among ourselves; nor even after it is told to the church, are we at liberty to repeat it to others." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

PRAYER AND MERCY

5. What can happen if we permit bitterness instead of love to take root in our hearts? Who can be affected by this?

DEUTERONOMY 29:18, LAST PART ... *Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.*

HEBREWS 12:14, 15 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: ¹⁵Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*

"Transgression placed the whole world in jeopardy, under the death sentence. But in heaven there was heard a voice saying, 'I have found a ransom.'" —(Letter 22, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1076.

"A knowledge of the faults of Christians will be only a cause of stumbling to the unbelieving world; and by dwelling upon these things, we ourselves can receive only harm; for it is by beholding that we become changed." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

6. How do we consider our debt to the Lord and men—as enormous (ten thousand talents), or as small (only a hundred cents)? Is our attitude similar to that of the king in Jesus' parable or to that of the unmerciful servant?

MATTHEW 18:26-30 *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

"How many are today manifesting the same spirit. When the debtor pleaded with his lord for mercy, he had no true sense of the greatness of his debt. He did not realize his helplessness." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 245.

"We were all debtors to divine justice, but we had nothing with which to pay the debt. Then the Son of God, who pitied us, paid the price of our redemption. He became poor that through His poverty we might be rich. By deeds of liberality toward His poor we may prove the sincerity of our gratitude for the mercy extended to us. 'Let us do good unto all men,' the apostle Paul enjoins, 'especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Galatians 6:10.... 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' Mark 14:7; Matthew 7:12." —*Prophecy and Kings*, p. 652.

7. Therefore, what should we do every time we kneel and ask for forgiveness from God? How are we instructed by Jesus to forgive our brother?

MARK 11:25 *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

COLOSSIANS 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

MATTHEW 18:35 *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

“When one who professes to serve God wrongs or injures a brother, he misrepresents the character of God to that brother, and the wrong must be confessed, he must acknowledge it to be sin, in order to be in harmony with God. Our brother may have done us a greater wrong than we have done him, but this does not lessen our responsibility. If when we come before God we remember that another has aught against us, we are to leave our gift of prayer, of thanksgiving, of freewill offering, and go to the brother with whom we are at variance, and in humility confess our own sin and ask to be forgiven.”
—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 58, 59.

“We have a divine audience to which to present our requests. Then let nothing prevent us from offering our petitions in the name of Jesus, believing with unwavering faith that God hears us, and that He will answer us. Let us carry our difficulties to God, humbling ourselves before Him. There is a great work to be done; and while it is our privilege to counsel together, we must be very sure, in every matter, to counsel with God, for He will never mislead us. We are not to make flesh our arm. If we do, depending chiefly upon human help, human guidance, unbelief will steal in, and our faith will die.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 487.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 25:12; 9:8

Ephesians 4:32

Luke 6:38

THE TOWER OF REPENTANCE

Near Hoddam Castle, Dumfrieshire, Scotland, was a tower called “The Tower of Repentance.” It is told that an Englishman, as he was walking near the castle one day, saw a shepherd boy lying on the lawn near the tower reading the Bible.

“What are you reading, lad?” asked the passerby.

“The Bible, sir,” replied the boy.

“The Bible. You must be wiser than the parish priest. Can you tell me the way to heaven?”

Not the least disturbed by the man’s mocking tone, the shepherd said, “Yes, sir, I can; you must take the path to the tower.”

The man realized that the boy had learned well the lesson of his book; after uttering an insult, he left the boy and walked on in silence.

Dear friend, have you been to “the tower of repentance”? If not, please realize that you must enter it.

If we have offended someone, it is obvious that it is our duty to meet the offended brother and seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If the brother is the offender, according to Jesus' teaching, we are still instructed to go, help him recognize his mistake, and take the first step toward reconciliation. In every case, whoever is the offender, we have to enter the tower of repentance, love, and forgiveness. May the Lord help us continually to make this experience. —Adapted from *N.T. Anecdotal* as quoted in A. Lerín, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 14.

* * *

***Please read the Missionary Report
from Bangalore, India, on page 65***

13

Sabbath, June 25, 2016

You Did It unto Me

“Christ identified Himself with the necessities of His people. Their needs and their sufferings were His. He says: ‘I was anhungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.’ God’s servants should have hearts of tender affection and sincere love for the followers of Christ. They should manifest that deep interest that Christ brings to view in the care of the shepherd for the lost sheep; they should follow the example given by Christ and exercise the same compassion and gentleness, and the same tender, pitying love that He has exercised toward us.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 186, 187.

MINISTRY TO OURSELVES

- 1. What parable did Jesus present to illustrate the attitude of a rich man? Of whom was he thinking, and for whom was he working? What was his plan for all his goods?**

LUKE 12:16-19 *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

“God has opened ways in which covetousness can be overcome—by performing benevolent deeds. By your life you are saying that you esteem the treasures of the world more highly than immortal riches. You are saying: ‘Farewell, heaven; farewell, immortal life; I have chosen this world.’ You are bartering away the pearl of great price for present gain. While thus admonished of God, while in His providence He has, as it were, already

placed your feet in the dark river, will you, dare you, cultivate your money-loving propensities?... Our Saviour frequently and earnestly rebuked the sin of covetousness." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 545.

2. But what happened to the rich man and his goods? How should we apply this parable today to our own lives and circumstances?

LUKE 12:20, 21 *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

MATTHEW 25:41-45 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

“Men will compass land and sea for earthly gain, and endure privation and suffering to obtain their object, yet will turn away from heaven’s attractions, and not regard eternal riches. Men who are in comparative poverty are usually the ones who do the most to sustain the cause of God. They are generous with their little. They have strengthened their generous impulses by continual liberalities. When their expenditures pressed close upon the income, their passion for earthly riches had no room or chance to strengthen. But many, when they begin to gather earthly riches, commence to calculate how long it will be before they can be in possession of a certain sum. In their anxiety to amass wealth for themselves, they fail to become rich toward God.

“It should be your object, in whatever vocation you may be found, to do your work in a manner that shall glorify God. All that you gain, you should look upon as capital to be invested in the bank of heaven. It should be your joy to devote means, and time, and ability to win souls for Christ, to send the light to those who sit in darkness.” –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 275.

CHRIST’S MINISTRY

3. Who stands in contrast to such people? What did Jesus say about His mission and Himself?

MATTHEW 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

LUKE 22:27 *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

“The apostle Paul exhorted his Philippian brethren: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.’ Is the servant greater than his master? Christ has given us His life as a pattern, and we dishonor Him when we become jealous of every slight, and are ready to resent every injury, supposed or real. It is not an evidence of a

noble mind to be prepared to defend self, to preserve our own dignity.... There is strength to be obtained of God. He can help. He can give grace and heavenly wisdom. If you ask in faith, you will receive; but you must watch unto prayer. Watch, pray, work, should be your watchword." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 426, 427.

4. What service, normally performed by servants and non-Jewish slaves, did Jesus perform for His disciples?

JOHN 13:4, 5 *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

"The ordinance of feet washing most forcibly illustrates the necessity of true humility. While the disciples were contending for the highest place, in the promised kingdom, Christ girded Himself, and performed the office of a servant by washing the feet of those who called Him Lord....

"Having washed the disciples' feet, He [Jesus] said, 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.'... Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service." –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 298.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

5. Making reference to service for others, what instruction was given by the apostle Paul? Considering the needs of different people, as what did Paul consider himself?

GALATIANS 5:13, LAST PART ... *But by love serve one another.*

EPHESIANS 6:7 *With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.*

ROMANS 1:14 *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

"Is it the disposition generally among servants to do as much as possible? Is it not rather the prevalent fashion to slide through the work as quickly, as easily, as possible, and obtain the wages at as little cost to themselves as they can? The object is not to be as thorough as possible but to get the remuneration. Those who profess to be the servants of Christ should not forget the injunction of the apostle Paul, 'Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.' " –*Messages to Young People*, pp. 229, 230.

6. Therefore, what spirit should we have as we are called to serve our brother? In whose name should this be done?

COLOSSIANS 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

“With a loving spirit we may perform life’s humblest duties ‘as to the Lord.’ Colossians 3:23. If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life. The sweet savor of Christ will surround us, and our influence will elevate and bless.

“You are not to wait for great occasions or to expect extraordinary abilities before you go to work for God. You need not have a thought of what the world will think of you. If your daily life is a testimony to the purity and sincerity of your faith, and others are convinced that you desire to benefit them, your efforts will not be wholly lost.” –*Steps to Christ*, pp. 82, 83.

OUR MINISTRY FOR CHRIST

7. With whom has Jesus completely identified Himself? Therefore, when we perform some service for those who are needy, for whom are we doing it? What great promise is given to all who work for others in this spirit?

MATTHEW 25:34-40 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

“By the terms of our stewardship we are placed under obligation, not only to God, but to man. To the infinite love of the Redeemer every human being is indebted for the gifts of life. Food and raiment and shelter, body and mind and soul—all are the purchase of His blood. And by the obligation of gratitude and service thus imposed, Christ has bound us to our fellow men. He bids us, ‘By love serve one another.’ Galatians 5:13. ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ Matthew 25:40.” –*Education*, p. 139.

FOR REFLECTION

- ***What do those who will be rejected by God believe concerning themselves and their actions? But whom have they really served?***
- ***Whom have those who will be welcomed into the eternal kingdom thought they were ministering to?***
- ***With what spirit have they done this?***
- ***Do we believe that in serving others we are being a blessing to Christ?***
- ***As we work, are we doing it as if we were working for Christ?***
- ***Are we speaking as we would speak with Him?***
- ***Are we acting as we would act for Him?***
- ***Are we doing everything as if we were doing it for Him?***

LOVE MEANS HELPING OTHERS

A kindergarten teacher was trying to explain to the little children in her class what love is. She was having difficulty with this, so she asked them what love is. A little six-year-old girl got out of her chair, went to the teacher, hugged her, kissed her, and said: "This is love."

Then the teacher said, "Okay, but love is something more. What is this something?" After thinking for a while, the same little girl got up and began to tidy up the chairs that were out of place. She cleaned the chalkboard, picked up the papers on the floor, arranged the books that were scattered around on a table, and then, with an air of satisfaction, told the teacher: "Love is more than words; it is helping others."

It is true. Love is more than words. This is exactly what we have studied in the lessons for this quarter. This is what the little girl demonstrated. Let us remember that love means helping others and consider what the apostle John wrote: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:18. —Adapted from *Expositor Biblico*, quoted by A. Lerín, in *500 Ilustraciones*, illustration No. 7.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT from Bangalore, India

To be read on Sabbath, June 25, 2016

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, July 2, 2016*

“The churches of Asia salute you.” 1 Corinthians 16:19.

A well-known city in India, Bangalore, officially known as Bengaluru, is the capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. With a population of over 10 million, it is the third largest city in India and 27th largest city in the world, located in southern India on the Deccan Plateau at over 900 meters (3,000 feet) above sea level—the highest of all of India’s largest cities. Bangalore is known for its pleasant year-round climate.

The city is also one of the most ethnically diverse in the country, with over 62% of the city’s population made up of migrants from other parts of India. Historically a multicultural city, Bangalore has experienced a dramatic social and cultural change with the liberalization and expansion of the information technology (IT) industry and the outsourcing of many, many such jobs from developed countries to India. IT companies in Bangalore employ over 35% of India’s entire pool of 1 million IT professionals.

The state of Karnataka is also well known for its violence against Christians. In 2008, an extreme Hindu group began anti-Christian activities in this state, including the bombing of Protestant churches. This violent act has been repeated again and again in this state. It is very difficult for Christians to conduct public evangelistic activities. The majority Hindu population is violently opposed to the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. In fact, Bangalore is well known for its huge statues of Hindu gods.

The work of the International Missionary Society, S.D.A. Church, Reform Movement, began in 1982 with the establishment of one local church. At the beginning, there were more than forty members, but there was a decline in the membership because of the difficulties associated with meeting in private homes. Nevertheless the faithful church members continued to work in Bangalore, and at present there are thirteen members and ten regular Sabbath school attendees.

Since India has a very strong caste system, it is difficult to convince an unconverted individual to attend a home church. However, the volunteer workers who carry on the work in this region gather different groups together every Sabbath, even though they cannot accommodate many people in the central place where they meet due to the limitation of space. They have tried many times to rent larger places for worship, but the Hindu landlords are not willing to rent their buildings for Christian religious activities.

For a very long time, this church in India has requested help in acquiring a church building. As a major city in India, Bangalore's property prices are very high. But there is great potential for God's work here, because most of the members are employed and there are possibilities to reach many professionals in this region. The young people of the Bangalore church are very active in helping to advance God's work among the youth in other parts of India. Since they all have jobs, they are a great help to the Indian Field. When it's time for the communion service, the members all travel to Tirupattur, in the southern state of Tamilnadu, where the headquarters are located.

Your generous gifts for the Bangalore church building next Sabbath will give them the opportunity to acquire a place of worship for the faithful brethren and visitors. Greetings and blessings from heaven to all with 2 Corinthians 8:12: "... It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

*—Douglas Francis
Asian Division Leader*

