



The Reformation Herald

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Week of Prayer

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The Family Circle



GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT

2004 WEEK OF PRAYER

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The Family Circle

Far from silly and insipid, the real serpent is unseen, insinuating and insidious. His chief weapons are lies, deceit, temptation and discouragement, and destruction of families. He knows that if the family is smashed, then the society is shattered.

For this reason the subjects for this Week of Prayer are dedicated to *The Family Circle*. It is suggested that all family members should gather at the family altar and rededicate themselves before the Lord. Provision should be made for helping those who are isolated, sick, and aged so that they will have the same blessings if someone visits them to read these materials together with them.

It is suggested that **Sabbath, December 11**, be the **day of fasting** for those who are able to fast and take the opportunity to dedicate the mealtime to prayers and supplications.

Sunday, December 12, is the last day of the Week of Prayer and it will be a special day to thank the Lord for all the blessings we have received during the year. A **special offering** that is collected on this day will be used for the needy missions in different parts of the world. Please give generously, for the Lord blesses the cheerful giver.

Let us make needed preparation by humbling our souls individually and as a family, that all wrongs be righted. May the Lord richly bless His people during this Week of Prayer.

The brethren of the General Conference

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"The age in which we live calls for
reformatory action."
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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A Foretaste of Heaven

When Queen Victoria was a child, she did not know that she was in line for the throne of England. Her teachers tried to prepare her for that position but failed to inspire her to take her studies seriously. Finally, she was told that one day she would become a queen. Victoria quietly answered, "Then I will be good." When she understood her high calling and the role that she would play in the kingdom, she was inspired with a sense of responsibility that made a positive impact on her conduct. We are sons and daughters of the Most High, future kings and queens, and we have received a high calling to restore every original institution, including the marriage bond, to its pristine condition, as a foretaste of heaven, which we begin to enjoy already on earth.

A divine institution

The family is the nucleus of society, whose well-being, shown in the prosperity of the nation, depends upon home influences. The success of the church, also, is the product of well-established homes. Therefore, the marriage institution, which is embodied in the family, has an important place in the plan of God to restore all things before the second coming of Christ.

The marriage institution is of divine origin. Man was not to dwell in solitude. Since "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18), God gave Adam a companion, "a help meet for him," and pronounced them husband and wife. Her position is well-defined as "a helper" (literally, "a help," *ezer*, abstract for concrete; further, defined as "his counter part," *keneghdo*; liter-

ally, as agreeing to him). She was to be his companion, to be one with him in love and sympathy, so that they would be able to encourage and support one another at all times.

The teamwork

For the marriage relationship to be successful, love must exist between husband and wife. Marriage is a deep dedication and commitment to one another, for the welfare of spouses, a strong desire to share life together, and a firm determination to enter upon a lifelong loyalty to each other.

The team is composed of a husband and a wife, not merely a man and a woman. In the plan of God there is no such thing as forming a marriage team with two women or two men. That is not marriage; it's rather a perversion of the marriage relationship. According to the word of God, the marriage relationship, when kept pure and undefiled, is a sacred institution. Marriage is not merely a social relationship, an economic agreement, or just a legal contract. It is a holy, sacred, God-given relationship. Without God, marriage lacks its fundamental ingredient.

Those who are contemplating marriage should seriously consider the influence that their prospective spouse will exert upon the home and be certain that their union will promote the glory of God.

The family circle

The father should ever be a role model in godliness, love, and consideration for his little flock, and the mother is to stand by his side as an example of kindness, goodness and nobility.

In the home circle, the environment surrounding fathers and moth-

ers fills the whole house. The children, as the purchase of Christ's blood, are God's property entrusted to the parents. God wants our children to be trained from their childhood to share the burdens of the home. Every Christian home should have rules; and parents should give to their children a precious, living example.

Children should feel that they are indebted to their parents, who have watched over them and cared for them at all times. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). This is the first commandment with promise.

"Children who dishonor and disobey their parents, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new. The purified new earth will be no place for the rebellious, the disobedient, the ungrateful son or daughter."¹

"[The home] should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another."²

"One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached."³

Therefore, we, who are bearing the message of Elijah, will emphasize during this Week of Prayer the importance of the Christian family and the role of the solid home. May God richly bless us as we try to cover this subject in detail! R

References:

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 497, 498.

² *The Adventist Home*, p. 15.

³ *The Review and Herald*, June 6, 1899.

True Love

BY D. SURESHKUMAR

Love is as eternal as God Himself. It is also a precious gift from God. It is the single word that is widely used and greatly abused in the world. In evaluating what love is, I looked up the definition of the word in several sources: The Greek language uses numerous prefixes and suffixes on words to determine their placement in sentences, and also employs a more precise terminology than does our language today. With reference to the subject under discussion, for example, we have one primary word, “love,” that we apply with various meanings, whereas the Greeks have at least four words. So let’s analyze the four primary words that they use for “love” before we enter into the subject.

What is love?

Eros is the love between a man and a woman, which embraces longing, craving, and desire. *Eros* is romance or a state of being “in love.”

Storgos is the love of kindred, especially between parents and children. It is also the love that an animal has for its offspring. It is a love of obligation.

Philia is friendship. From the verb form *phileo* comes the word

Philadelphia — “brotherly love” or “brotherly kindness.” *Eros* makes lovers—*phileo* makes friends. *Eros* is a face-to-face relationship while *philia* is a shoulder-to-shoulder relationship.

Agape is from the verb *agapao*, which means “to love, to be full of goodwill and exhibit the same; to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of.” It is “based on sincere appreciation and high regard.” *Agape* is a mental attitude motivated by a deliberate choice. It is not defined in terms of the emotional. It’s a freewill predilection. This kind of love is always equated, not with what one feels, but with what one does. It is something you do. “If you love Me, you will obey My commandments” (John 14:15). *Agape* is unconquerable benevolence, undefeatable good will. It gives and sacrifices even for those undeserving (Romans 5:6–10). It is “divine love.”

Defining by language today

Let us now define love by the everyday standard. *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* says love is a relationship of self-giving. It has nothing to do with response. It is one-sided and is not affected by circumstances or situations.

Webster defines love in many ways, depending on its precise context. “Love” can be defined as:

1. Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; attraction based on sexual desire; affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests.
2. Warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion.
3. The object of attachment, devotion, or admiration.
4. Unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another. The definition doesn’t say that emotion drives it, because it is not desirous of receiving love or benefiting from it. Love is defined here as something that you do for the good of someone else without hope of reward.

Different kinds of love

Love comes in various shapes and sizes. The love between spouses is different from the love for the family. The love of people is different from the love of God. The love we have for material things, such as computers, cars, or houses, is qualitatively different from our love for friends and family. Love is an essential element in our existence from the moment we are born. As we grow through the various stages and cycles of life, we experience different

needs and seek different forms of love. The infant seeks nurture—the child, responsiveness—the preadolescent, a close friend—the teenager, friendship with the other sex—and the adult, a spouse. We never outgrow our need for any of these forms of love, especially in the family circle. Heartfelt love is not limited to what we can get from it but what we can give to it.

Christian love

The Bible points to the greatest love of all—God’s love—which is the key to total life transformation (Galatians 5:22–25). Love is the very first fruit of God’s Holy Spirit. It is a gift. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 is referred to as “The Love Chapter.” Verses 1–3 state that the gifts of prophecy, faith, language, knowledge, and sacrifice all are worthless without the gift of love. Love is not a rule but a motive. Love does not tell a Christian what to do but how to do it.

True love

The love that God imparts to us is not based upon our desire to receive something but upon an unwavering commitment. This is true love. In society today we hear people say, “Yes, I got married but I am not in love anymore.” That is not love, for love does not change. It is impossible to love someone before the wedding and not after the marriage has been consummated.

The characteristics of love

Love is life’s greatest gift and essential. Love puts pride and claims aside, and does not expect anything but love in return. Love understands that sharing is one of the greatest things in which one can rejoice. Love is unconditional, altruistic, and unselfish. It is not stubborn or overbearing, and it does not insist on its own way. Love is honesty; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love is friendship, com-

panionship, affection, undying devotion, and more. Love is caring, kind, and patient. Love is not resentful, but forgiving, understanding, and believing. Love is giving, inspiring, and supporting. Love is the free and complete expression of oneself to another. Love is open to the other person’s expression. Love endures all, hopes all, and bears all. True love never ends.

Love has growing interest in and appreciation for the other person. Love assumes an increasing responsibility for others. Love respects their feelings, ideas, and individual personalities. Love is responsive to their purposes, characteristics, and emotions. Love is sympathetic and understanding. Love is of divine origin and can reach its highest achievement only in the lives of true Christians. Love is something that does not happen instantly. Love involves experiences into which one must grow.

There is no such thing as love at first sight. Often there is an attraction between him and her that may grow into love as the two become better acquainted with each other, which may take time. They may not recognize the transition from attraction to love, but the original attraction is not and cannot be love. Love is too big, too deep, and too all-embracing to spring up in an instant. If you truly love someone for marriage purposes, you must know that person well.

While there is much emotion in connection with love, love is not emotion. “Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle.”¹

“True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse, and which suddenly dies when severely tested.”²

Instant love?

Love is not something that you can whisper to another person whom you have only met for a short period of time. A man who doesn’t know a

woman very well yet says, “I love you,” has a very self-centered motivation: he wants to use her for his own pleasure. He is lying. This is not true love; it’s a deception.

Today, society has changed the definition of words with reference to feelings and has also changed into a curse the blessings that God has given us. The world is filled with weak people who do not want to toil and sweat but only seek easy and pleasant things. Not too many are prepared to face difficulties, pressure, and opposition. Genuine love requires all of these things. Love is willing to pay the price. Abraham loved his son but he loved God more, to such a point that he was willing to obey God. And, as a result of his obedience, he was chosen to be the ancestor of Him through whom the whole world was to receive great blessings (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:8, 16).

As mentioned above, Christ said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). This is an action that has nothing to do with feelings or emotions. A young man came to me for counseling and said, “I am in love with a particular person.” I asked him, “How do you know that you are in love?” He said, “Because when I’m in her presence, my heart beats like an engine, my blood pressure rises, my pulse races, and I can’t think.” I told him, “You are not in love. You are sick. You need to go to the hospital.” That was not love. That was only a short-lived emotion. If you put yourself into the place of that young man, you will notice that, after a while, your feelings subside, and you say you’re not in love any more. This form of “love” is only an emotional reaction; it is a physical problem. We should not do anything based on emotions alone, because, when emotions change, so does our commitment.

Today many people understand that love belongs to the category of lust—a greedy, self-centered, and abusive disposition. Young men follow young women because they lust for them; they don’t love them.

Love is not blind to principle, or duty, or responsibility.

They don't know what love really is. Their interest is not in giving but in taking advantage. Sooner or later, such relationships turn sour.

Love or infatuation?

Love is not blind to principle, or duty, or responsibility. Love is not a surrender of one's personality and individuality to be dominated by another. Before entering into a true love relationship, one must disentangle the confusion caused by those who try to identify true love with infatuation. Here are a few points to be considered:

Simple infatuation is often called a "crush" or "puppy love."

Romantic infatuation is often called "romantic love."

Biological interest is a deep biological drive that seeks some erotic expression.

Real love exists when your strong tender feelings for the other person are balanced by reason and deep respect.

Romantic infatuation is very dangerous because young people easily fool themselves by acting out their intense feelings and biological urges. Romantic feeling is false or counterfeit "love." If you are infatuated, your emotions will be in charge. In real love, your reason rules your emotions. However, people easily confuse real love with romantic infatuation, because both have one thing in common—strong feelings of attachment to the other person.

Identifying infatuation

Infatuation can be diagnosed by the following symptoms:

1. In infatuation your main interest is likely to be in the other person's physical aspects. The main stress is on things you can perceive right away—what you see, hear, smell, taste or touch. A marriage

based only on such an attraction will not last long.

2. The factors that attract you are relatively few. Just the smile! Just the handsome look or pretty face! Just the lovely hair! Just the funny talk or jokes!

3. It tends to start fast. There is no such thing as "love at first sight." It stops the same way it starts—fast.

4. A couple's interest in each other fluctuates a lot. One day you feel sure this is the right person for marriage. Then you develop doubts and wonder if you should date another young woman/or young man for a while, to test your feelings more.

5. It causes a disorganizing and destructive effect on your personality. Infatuation makes you less effective, less efficient, and degrades your real self. Infatuation is irresponsible and fails to consider the future consequences of today's actions.

6. You live in a "two-person world"—yourself and the one you think you love. You tend to neglect your family and pay little or no attention to your friends. You turn a deaf ear to your friends, parents, teachers, or your boss. You fail to do your homework. "Romantic love" is of such central concern to yourself that you allow nothing to stand in its way. "Two persons become acquainted; they are infatuated with each other, and their whole attention is absorbed. Reason is blinded, and judgment is overthrown. They will not submit to any advice or control, but insist on having their own way, regardless of consequences. Like some epidemic, or contagion, that must run its course is the infatuation that possesses them; and there seems to be no such thing as putting a stop to it."³

7. Infatuation blinds your eyes to the defects of the other person. You tend to idolize your partner. No one can tell you anything wrong about the object of your affections. At best

you won't believe the warnings of those who try to help you. If you are infatuated, you will defend him or her against all negative remarks. You will not admit that he or she has any faults.

8. You two may have big problems and obstacles to cope with—different religions, hopes, values, family, and cultural backgrounds. Danger signals by the dozens! Yet you are not concerned. You don't feel the need to think about these enormous hazards before marriage. You think that somehow everything will come out all right.

Understanding real love

Real love can be identified as follows:

1. Your interest is in his or her total personality.

2. Many qualities of the other person attract you. You like not only the way he or she looks and talks, but also the way he or she thinks and feels about things and other people.⁴

3. It starts slowly. Studies have shown that the longer the period of courtship and engagement, the better the chances for success in a marriage. In some places the courtship or engagement lasts for years, sometimes even 5 to 10 years. (While this is neither ideal nor at all recommended, the reasoning behind it reflects an attitude and state of mind from which many can learn.)

4. The relationship tends to even out existing differences, and interest in each other becomes consistent.

5. It has an organizing and constructive effect on your personality. It brings out the best in you.

6. It does not stop suddenly. It takes a long time to end such a relationship and it takes a long time to get over it.

7. You admit the faults of the other person, but love him or her in spite of the evident defects.

8. As it is with infatuation, so it is in real love: The one you love may well be the most important person to you. But there is a big difference. In true love, you don't abandon or neglect your other relationships.

Instead, you just add the new relationship to all the others you already have. It becomes a plus, not a replacement. You still maintain good ties with your family, your friends, and your teachers. You are not in a “two-person world.”

Is love blind?

No, but infatuation is. Infatuation, like other extreme emotions, such as anger, hate, and fear, distorts thinking. “Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind. . . . Love . . . is not unreasonable; it is not blind. It is pure and holy. But the passion of the natural heart is another thing altogether. While pure love will take God into all its plans, and will be in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God, passion will be headstrong, rash, unreasonable, defiant of all restraint, and will make the object of its choice an idol. . . . True love is not a strong, fiery, impetuous passion. On the contrary, it is calm and deep in its nature. It looks beyond mere externals, and is attracted by qualities alone. It is wise and discriminating, and its devotion is real and abiding.”⁵

True love is a plant that needs cultivation. Therefore, before assuming any commitment, do your “homework” thoroughly and put some questions to yourself if you desire to have a happy union. This will help you to avoid future distress and grief. Before you yield your affections, ask: Does he or she have a mother? What is her character like? Does he or she recognize his or her obligations to her? Is he or she mindful of her wishes and happiness? If he or she does not respect and honor his or her mother, will he or she manifest respect, kindness, attention, and love toward you? When the novelty of marriage is over, will he or she love you still? Will he or she be patient with your mistakes, or will he or she be critical, overbearing, and dictatorial? True affection will overlook many mistakes.

Why do many marriages fail?

Many unhappy marriages, which end in divorce, have their

roots in infatuation and biological interest only—sometimes known as “great chemistry.” Most youth are not sure what real love is. Age and maturity lend no immunity against infatuation, which can affect anyone. Our youth should be educated away from this folly, which is called infatuation, and from another danger, namely, one-sided love, which doesn’t work.

“There is but little real, genuine, devoted, pure love. This precious article is very rare. Passion is termed love.”⁶

Essential elements in a successful marriage

- **Strong interest.** Cultivate a strong feeling for each other.
- **Respect and admiration.** Hold each other in high regard.
- **Friendship and fellowship.** Have many things in common.
- **Self-giving devotion.** Practice mutual love despite each other’s faults.
- **Affection.** Offer to your partner a shoulder to cry on when burdens are too heavy to bear alone.

“Love is a plant of heavenly growth, and it must be fostered and nourished. Affectionate hearts, truthful, loving words, will make happy families and exert an elevating influence upon all who come within the sphere of their influence.”⁷

Wrong ideas of courtship

“The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage. They follow impulse and blind passion. The courtship is carried on in a spirit of flirtation. . . . The youth trust altogether too much to impulse. They should not give themselves away too easily, nor be captivated too readily by the winning exterior of the lover. Courtship as carried on in this age is a scheme of deception and hypocrisy, with which the enemy of souls has far more to do than the Lord. Good common sense is needed here if anywhere; but the fact is, it has little to do in the matter.”⁸

Recreational dating

The present-day social order has developed what we can call “recreational dating.” Men and women go from one relationship to another, sometimes with a marriage oath easily taken and readily broken. I compare this dating system to a lady going to the supermarket. She looks at the products, chooses a nice one, puts it into the basket, takes it home, and tries it out. If she is not satisfied, she returns it (no questions asked!) and chooses a different brand. What a culture!

There can be no solid relationship on such a foundation. A marriage commitment is a liability, and there is no way you can get in and out of it without hurt and pain. Human beings are very fragile in their ability to reach out to others. God created us with a need to be wanted, to be appreciated, to be cared for, and to be loved. And when a man or a woman becomes part of a relationship that is later broken, even if the wound heals, a painful scar still remains. Not only is the pain felt—there is also a sense of reserve or caution built into the injured person, who will never again feel free to open up to another human being, because he or she has been betrayed and taken advantage of. Such negative experiences affect the woman more often than the man. Obviously, this kind of wrong dating and vicious courtship does not work and, as a result, the family relationship becomes weaker and weaker. Once you enter this dangerous zone, you are very vulnerable. God has promised to protect us if we walk in His ways and take the marriage oath seriously. The marriage covenant, entered into according to the plan of God, builds a fence around our sacred family relationship and keeps it from pain, shame, and hurt.

Serious counsels

To face the mentioned danger, we have counsels from the pen of inspiration:

1. Avoid becoming lovesick. “Imagination, lovesick sentimental-

ism, should be guarded against as would be the leprosy.”⁹

2. “Turn your mind away from romantic projects.”¹⁰

3. Do not daydream. “Think right thoughts, and you will perform right actions.”¹¹

4. Do not keep late hours. “These hours of midnight dissipation, in this age of depravity, frequently lead to the ruin of both parties thus engaged.”¹²

5. Do not trifle with hearts. “To trifle with hearts is a crime of no small magnitude in the sight of a holy God.”¹³

6. Avoid the first downward step. “When one commandment of the Decalogue is broken, the downward steps are almost certain. When once the barriers of female modesty are removed, the basest licentiousness does not appear exceeding sinful.”¹⁴

7. Do not step into forbidden ground. Do not permit familiarity. . . . “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

8. Obtain vigilant self-instruction, and bring yourself under self-control.

The role of the parents

If we want to enjoy and practice true love, we must follow the rules that God has established for us. It is very clear in the Scriptures that God has set a pattern for the preparation of our children to carry responsibilities. How can we allow our boys and girls to follow the customs of the world in dating when we know that they can’t control their emotions? Most teenagers today have never been taught to control anything. When they wish to have something they scream or pout like a little child. And they generally get what they demand from their indulgent parents who end up saying, “Let’s give them what they want, right or wrong, to keep them happy.” That’s the philosophy sanctioned by society today. To any opposition offered by their spoiled brats, parents respond by giving in. Then our children become the rulers of the house and presume to be qualified to point out

the direction that we are to take. To save them from a course that would make them useless in the world, useless in the family, and useless even to themselves, we should teach them to be submissive and responsible.

Marriage is a sacred vow

Marriage is a sacred vow. We are to enter into it with utmost reverence and the highest respect. We cannot make jokes about it or consider it lightly. And we also need to prepare our children for this very, very sacred step. One of the reasons why the world is in a distressful condition is that fathers and mothers have not prepared their offspring for one of the most important relationships that God has created for mankind.

The social system prevalent in the world today encourages emotional attachments. Such a thing should not be countenanced by Christian parents. And our children are not ready for that. They need to grow up with us first. They don’t need infatuations, commitments, crushes, and other things that cloud their romantic picture. They must first be trained. And, when they are mature enough to enter into a marriage relationship, this should be done with the assistance of the God-fearing parents, within the circumscription of the home, and not on an individual basis with puppy love.

Biblically, a courting couple has no right to assume a commitment and make marriage arrangements without first consulting father and mother. When the right principle is followed, a lot of misunderstandings, hurts, and pains can be avoided. In this sense, it is our duty as parents to help prepare the young generation for the problems that they will have to face in the world. The system of the world is falling apart. If the people of the world want to go on with their method, we will not stop them. However, our enlightened conscience tells us that we become losers if we try to imitate them. We do not need the example of worldlings who are involved in broken relationships as a model to follow.

God patterned the man to protect the woman and to provide for her. She is to face the brunt, the pain, and the sorrow. But too heavy of a burden is not to be placed upon her. To spare her a great deal of suffering, God’s provision, the husband, is to help her, cover her, and protect her. This is true love, which is to continue throughout the lifelong marriage relationship. This is what God wants Christians to understand and practice.

“A house with love in it, where love is expressed in words and looks and deeds, is a place where angels love to manifest their presence, and hallow the scene by rays of light from glory. . . . Love should be seen in the looks and manners, and heard in the tones of the voice.”¹⁵

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7).

A serious missionary work needs to be done in the home and in the church. This is where those who have received Christ are to show what grace has done and can do for them. A larger measure of divine influence is needed, so that the home on earth may become a symbol of the home in heaven. The church needs all the spiritual force that can be obtained, that all the members of the Lord’s family, young and old, may be edified and prepared for the coming events and for the kingdom of glory. K

References:

¹ *Messages to Young People*, p. 435.

² *The Adventist Home*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴ See *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 105.

⁵ *The Adventist Home*, pp. 50, 51.

⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 381.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 548.

⁸ *The Adventist Home*, p. 55.

⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 249.

¹¹ *The Youth’s Instructor*, April 21, 1886.

¹² *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1888.

¹³ *Ibid.*, November 4, 1884.

¹⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1880.

¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 417.

The Father

BY A. C. SAS

When small, a little child addresses his or her words to the father, saying, “Daddy.” That voice sounds like sweet music to the ears of a good father. How pleasant it is to hear that he is someone who is addressed with such an endearing word. He realizes that his position in the family is greatly esteemed, and that he is the highest authority in the home, and at the same time is the one most responsible for the welfare of his family.

To be a father involves both a great privilege and a tremendous accountability. The father is to a great extent responsible for the well-being and prosperity of the whole family. It means more than simply to consider himself the head of the household, subordinating his wife and children under his care. A good father is the house-band of the family, the lace that encircles all the components of the household. He is the orbit that surrounds everyone in the home, as a protector, provider, and a caretaker.

“All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice.”¹

An ideal father

To be a good father is a secret which very few realize. An ideal father is tender, compassionate, full

of sympathy and love for everyone in the household. He will show patience, and restrain his anger when provoked either by circumstances or by someone in the family or in society. He will show mature judgment in every aspect of daily life. He will wisely direct all plans to be followed in his household.

“The father is to stand at the head of his family, not as an overgrown, undisciplined boy, but as a man with manly character and with his passions controlled. He is to obtain an education in correct morals. His conduct in his home life is to be directed and restrained by the pure principles of the word of God.”²

The father is usually away from home during the day. He is engaged in earning the livelihood for the family. His work may be in the factory, in an office, or in a commercial enterprise. If the family lives in the country, the father may be engaged in the cultivation of the soil, plowing, planting, or harvesting. The great share of the responsibilities of the household falls upon the wife. As the husband arrives home, his countenance should glow with joy, when he sees the wife smiling, and the children running to meet him at the gate, and hugging him. It is possible that the routine of his work may not have been running as smoothly as it should, the business has not been so profitable as far as the income is concerned, or other

inconveniences have caused him to frown. An ideal father will remember to leave all these worries outside the gate, and take to his household a pleasant countenance.

“The father should study how to make the mother happy. He should not allow himself to come to his home with a clouded brow. If he is perplexed in business, he should not, unless it is actually necessary to counsel with his wife, trouble her with such matters. She has cares and trials of her own to bear, and she should be tenderly spared every needless burden.”³

“Whatever may be his calling and its perplexities, let the father take into his home the same smiling countenance and



pleasant tones with which he has all day greeted visitors and strangers. Let the wife feel that she can lean upon the large affections of her husband—that his arms will strengthen and uphold her through all her toils and cares, that his influence will sustain hers—and her burden will lose half its weight.”⁴

When he arrives home at the end of the day, if his wife was not able to have the dinner ready, he should join in by giving her a helping hand in the preparation of the evening meal. If the children have some need of bathing, let the father take care of these needs, and lighten the burden of the mother. His involvement in the home will have an impact upon the minds of the children, and when they are grown up they will imitate their father.

“The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way.”⁵

As an educator

A father should understand his duty and responsibility to teach his children. In the first years of exis-

tence, the father, together with the mother, should educate their children in the ways of life. That which the little ones learn in their young ages they will not forget throughout their lives. The character of the children should be molded when they are still very young. The father has the duty especially to educate the sons. He cannot afford to neglect his duty without encountering the result of his neglect. The Lord will hold him accountable if he does not fulfil his responsibility. A good father will not only feel the obligation to train up his children, but he will find enjoyment in doing such a noble work. His heart will be filled with satisfaction when he sees the result of his work.

The father is responsible not only to teach the children how to read and write, but also to educate them in right habits and practices. He will not only impose on his children duties and burdens, but he will set a right example before them, showing that he has learned to place himself under the control of God. The family of such a father will be a blessing to the world and to the church.

“If the father would have his children develop harmonious characters, and be an honor to him and a blessing to the world, he has a special work to do. God holds him

responsible for that work. In the great day of reckoning it will be asked him: Where are the children that I entrusted to your care to educate for Me, that their lips might speak My praise, and their lives be as a diadem of beauty in the world, and they live to honor Me through all eternity?”⁶

“During the first few years of a child’s life the molding of the disposition is committed principally to the mother; but she should ever feel that in her work she has the cooperation of the father. If he is engaged in business which almost wholly closes the door of usefulness to his family, he should seek other employment which will not prevent him from devoting some time to his children. If he neglects them, he is unfaithful to the trust committed to him of God.”⁷

The priest of the family

In a happy family, the father will never leave the home without first gathering the members of the family for a devotional service. He is the priest of the family. The wife and children should join the father in singing, reading the word of God, and praying, asking God’s protection for the day.

“In a sense the father is the priest of the household, laying upon the family altar the morning and evening sacrifice. But the wife and children should unite in prayer and join in the song of praise. In the morning before he leaves home for his daily labor, let the father gather his children about him and, bowing before God, commit them to the care of the Father in heaven. When the cares of the day are past, let the family unite in offering grateful prayer and raising the song of praise, in acknowledgment of divine care during the day.”⁸

From the experience of Abraham and other patriarchs we learn that they offered to God morning and evening sacrifices. These are represented today by the morning and evening worship offered to God. In the morning the



protection and guidance of the Lord must be sought, and at the end of the day the family should meet together again to thank the Lord for the ministry of the holy angels. At the same time they should ask the Lord to be with them during the night, that they may recover their strength and awaken in the morning refreshed for the day's duties.

"There should be a fixed time to rise in the morning, a time for breakfast, and a time for prayer, either directly before or directly after the morning meal. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before their fast is broken, and direct their young minds to our heavenly Father, who bestows upon us the bounties of His providence. Let them thank God for protecting them during the night, and ask for help and grace and the watch-care of angels through the day."⁹

"The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship. There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over."¹⁰

Take time for the children

Nothing is more pleasant than to know that children have full trust and confidence in their parents. The father should spend much time with their children, especially while they are small. He should have dialogues with them. Children have brains as well as adults do; they are thinking persons. A nice conversation with the children has a better effect on their education than scolding or punishment.

"Take time to read to your children from the health books, as well

as from the books treating more particularly on religious subjects. Teach them the importance of caring for the body—the house they live in. Form a home reading circle, in which every member of the family shall lay aside the busy cares of the day, and unite in study. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, take up this work heartily, and see if the home church will not be greatly improved."¹¹

The father who does not take time to be with his children will regret his mistake later. In some instances it will be too late to redeem the past. When children are interested to talk to their father and have a desire to be heard by him, he often says: "I have no time now; I am very busy." When they will grow up without developing a close friendship with the father, children will be busy with unimportant matters or even detrimental topics, and though the father may wish to talk to them, they will say: "Sorry, Dad, I have no time. When I wished to talk to you in my childhood, you were always busy. You never took time to listen to me. Now I am busy, with no time to listen to you." The words of inspiration give a solemn warning to such a father:

"'No time,' says the father, 'I have no time to give to the training of my children, no time for social and domestic enjoyments.' Then you should not have taken upon yourself the responsibility of a family. By withholding from them the time which is justly theirs, you rob them of the education which they should have at your hands. If you have children, you have a work to do, in union with the mother, in the formation of their characters. Those who feel that they have an imperative call to labor for the improvement of society, while their own children grow up undisciplined, should inquire if they have not mistaken their duty. Their own household is the first missionary field in which parents are required to labor. Those who leave the home garden to grow up to thorns and briers, while they

manifest great interest in the cultivation of their neighbor's plot of ground, are disregarding the word of God."¹²

"The average father wastes many golden opportunities to attract and bind his children to him. Upon returning home from his business, he should find it a pleasant change to spend some time with his children."¹³

"The father should not become so absorbed in business life or in the study of books that he cannot take time to study the natures and necessities of his children. He should help in devising ways by which they may be kept busy in useful labor agreeable to their varying dispositions."¹⁴

"Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children. Seek to become acquainted with their various dispositions, that you may know how to train them in harmony with the word of God."¹⁵

Negative attitudes

It is very often the case that the father is absorbed in the struggle for a livelihood or is bent on acquiring wealth, and he allows the mother to carry most of the burdens which overtax her strength. The result is feebleness and disease in the wife and mother. The father should share the burdens instead of leaving it to his companion.

On other occasions the mother meets with cold reserve from the father. If the routine of life does not run smoothly or as pleasantly as the husband would like it to be, he blames his wife for the lack of success. In doing this he is working against his own happiness and interest.

"Too often he returns home bringing with him his cares and business perplexities to overshadow the family, and if he does not find everything just to his mind at home, he gives expression to his feelings in impatience and faultfinding. He can boast of what he has achieved through the day, but the mother's work, to his mind, amounts to little, or is at least undervalued. To him

her cares appear trifling. She has only to cook the meals, look after the children, sometimes a large family of them, and keep the house in order. She has tried all day to keep the domestic machinery running smoothly. She has tried, though tired and perplexed, to speak kindly and cheerfully, and to instruct the children and keep them in the right path. All this has cost effort, and much patience on her part. She cannot, in her turn, boast of what she has done. It seems to her as though she has accomplished nothing.”¹⁶

Positive attitudes

A good father will understand and appreciate the cares and hardships that his wife endures. She is usually confined to a round of house duties which are not easy to accomplish. When the father arrives home he should bring sunshine to the family circle. He will help his wife in the finishing of the food she is preparing. He will remember that his wife has been the nurse, the cook, the cleaner, the housemaid, and her efforts will be deeply appreciated for what she has done in the home.

The ideal father will understand and condescend to take a worrying child from the arms of his or her mother, so that his wife may accomplish her unfinished task. If the child is restless, he will try to appease him or her; he will act as a nurse or a janitor. He will remember that his wife has spent many hours doing this work. The child belongs to both, and he feels under a sacred obligation to take part in the burden of rearing the child.

The exemplary father will not spend his time in doing simply nothing. An indolent man will always be in need and poverty. A good father will be diligent, and with honesty and sacrifice will earn the daily bread. He will be faithful in his employment. He will allow no cheating. No deception will be seen in his dealings whether in the home or abroad. He will practice hospitality, entertain visitors in his home, and help the needy and the poor.

A good father and husband will always remember the commitment he made at the wedding altar, to be faithful and maintain that vow. If perplexities and disappointments occur in his married life, or his expectations are not fulfilled as he thought before marriage, he will show tolerance, forbearance, patience and love, which will surmount mountains of difficulties. His thoughts will always be holy, elevated and noble, and he will not permit the thought of separating from her whom he chose to be his partner for life.

“How careful should the husband and father be to maintain his loyalty to his marriage vows. How circumspect should be his character, lest he shall encourage thoughts in young girls, or even in married women, that are not in accordance with the high, holy standard—the commandments of God. Those commandments Christ shows to be exceedingly broad, reaching even the thoughts, intents, and purposes of the heart. Here is where many are delinquent. Their heart imaginings are not of the pure, holy character which God requires; and however high their calling, however talented they may be, God will mark iniquity against them and will count them as far more guilty and deserving of His wrath than those who have less talent, less light, less influence.”¹⁷

The reward for a noble father

The reward will be granted to a faithful, caring, diligent, honest and good father, who fears the Lord, even in this earth. The psalmist writes:

“Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord” (Psalm 128:1–4).

“Then, Christian friends, fathers and mothers, let your light grow

dim—no, never! Let your heart grow faint, or your hands weary—no, never! And by and by the portals of the celestial city will be opened to you; and you may present yourselves and your children before the throne, saying, ‘Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me.’ And what a reward for faithfulness that will be, to see your children crowned with immortal life in the beautiful city of God!”¹⁸

“I saw you struggling with poverty, seeking to support yourself and your children. Many times you knew not what to do; the future looked dark and uncertain. In your distress you cried unto the Lord, and He comforted and helped you, and hopeful rays of light shone around you. How precious was God to you at such times! how sweet His comforting love! You felt that you had a precious treasure laid up in heaven.”¹⁹

“In your work for your children take hold of the mighty power of God. Commit your children to the Lord in prayer. Work earnestly and untiringly for them. God will hear your prayers and will draw them to Himself. Then, at the last great day, you can bring them to God, saying, ‘Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me.’”²⁰

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References:

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- ² *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- ³ *Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 428.
- ⁴ *The Adventist Home*, p. 216.
- ⁵ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 390.
- ⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, December 20, 1877.
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- ⁸ *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 392, 393.
- ⁹ *The Signs of the Times*, August 7, 1884.
- ¹⁰ *Child Guidance*, p. 521.
- ¹¹ *The Review and Herald*, July 29, 1902.
- ¹² *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 65, 66.
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- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- ¹⁶ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 158.
- ¹⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 594, 595.
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The Mother

BY E. G. WHITE

My sister, has God entrusted you with the responsibilities of a mother? You have a great work, a holy calling. If you are one of those who are to be the light of the world, that light is to shine in your home. Here you are to exemplify the Christian graces, to be lovable, patient, kind, yet firm. . . .

Mothers do not half appreciate their privileges and possibilities. They do not seem to understand that they can be in the highest sense missionaries, laborers together with God in aiding their children to build up a symmetrical character. This is the great burden of the work given them of God. The mother is God's agent to Christianize her family. She is to exemplify biblical religion, showing how its influence is to control us in its everyday duties and pleasures, teaching her children that by grace alone can they be saved, through faith, which is the gift of God. This constant teaching as to what Christ is to us and to them, His love, His goodness, His mercy, revealed in the great plan of redemption, will make a hallowed, sacred impress on the heart.

Scolding and fretting, gathering clouds and gloom about the soul, will bring only a shadow and discouragement in the home life. Let not one word of fretfulness, harshness, or passion escape your lips. The grace of Christ awaits your demand. His Spirit will take control of your heart and conscience, presiding over your words and deeds. Never forfeit your self-respect by



hasty, thoughtless words. See that your words are pure, your conversation holy. Give your children an example of that which you wish them to be.¹

A heavenly influence

Mothers, it is your privilege to bind your children to your heart with the tenderest and strongest cords of love.²

The mother especially should be fitted for her appointed work of patient labor. It is her privilege and sacred duty to train all who are under her care and her influence, by her teachings and her example, for lives of usefulness. Every woman has an influence with those with whom she associates. That influence may be either good or bad. The mother is

exercising her influence continually. Every glance of her eye, every word her lips utter, every act of her life, carries with it an influence which has power to affect the character and future destiny of her children. This influence may gladden the heart, or bring discouragement, and deform the character.

In view of these facts, mothers should take time for reflection and prayer. They should earnestly seek wisdom from God.³

We have much to learn in regard to child training. When teaching the little ones to do things, we must not scold them. Never should we say, "Why did you not do this?" Say, "Children, help mother do this;" or, "Come, children, let us do this." Be their companion in doing these things. When they finish their work, praise them.

Years ago the children in my home were learning how to knit. One of them asked me, "Mother, I should like to know whether I am helping you by trying to do this knitting work?" I knew that I should have to take out every stitch, but I replied, "Yes, my child, you are helping me." Why could I say that they were helping me?—Because they were learning. When they did not make the stitches as they should have made them, I took out every stitch afterward, but never did I condemn them for their failure. Patiently I taught them until they knew how to knit properly.

The mother is the queen of the home. She must not allow her children to treat her as a slave. Many a mother has gone down into the grave with a broken heart, because

she made a slave of herself, doing things that she should have taught her children to do. Let every mother teach her children that they are members of the family firm, and must bear their share of the responsibilities of this firm. Every member of the family should bear these responsibilities as faithfully as church members bear the responsibilities of church relationship.⁴

Teach your children the way of the Lord. In your morning and evening devotions join with them in reading the Bible and singing beautiful songs of praise. Let them learn to repeat God's law.⁵

Loving restraint

The salvation of children depends very much upon the course pursued by the parents. Children must be restrained, and their passions subdued, or God will surely destroy them in the day of His fierce anger; and the parents who have not controlled them will not be blameless. It is because the home training is defective that the youth are so unwilling to submit to proper authority. I am a mother. I know whereof I speak when I say that youth and children are not only safer but happier under wholesome restraint than when following their own inclinations. Parents, your sons and daughters are not properly guarded. They should never be permitted to go and come when they please, without your knowledge and consent. The unbounded freedom granted to children at this age has proved the ruin of thousands. . . .

Mothers are accountable in a great degree for the health and lives of their children, and should become intelligent in regard to laws upon which life and health depend. Parents should teach their children by example that health is to be regarded as the chiefest earthly blessing; that all pleasures and indulgences which will interfere with health are to be sacrificed. If the children are taught self-denial and self-control, they will be far happier than if they are allowed to indulge their desires for pleasure and extravagance in dress.

"The world may clamor for our time and affections, fashion may invite our patronage, but the words of the apostle should be enough to lead Christian mothers from the indulgence of pride in dress and demoralizing amusements: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Christian mothers should take their position on the platform of truth and righteousness; and when urged to unite with the world in patronizing fashions which are health-destroying and demoralizing, they should answer, "We are doing a great work, and can not be diverted from it. We are seeking to develop in our children sound, worthy, and beautiful characters, that they may bless the world with their influence, and have immortal beauty and glory in the world to come."⁶

Children often become impatient under restraint, and wish to have their own way and to go and come as they please. Especially from the age of ten to eighteen they are inclined to feel that there can be no harm in going to worldly gatherings of young associates. But the experienced Christian parents can see danger. They are acquainted with the peculiar temperaments of their children, and know the influence of these things upon their minds; and from a desire for their salvation, they should keep them back from these exciting amusements.⁷

Could my voice reach the parents all through the land, I would warn them not to yield to the desires of their children in choosing their companions or associates. Little do parents consider that injurious impressions are far more readily received by the young than are divine impressions; therefore their associations should be the most favorable for the growth of grace and for the truth revealed in the word of God to be established in the heart. If children are with those whose conversation is upon unimportant, earthly things, their minds

will come to the same level. If they hear the principles of religion slurred and our faith belittled, if sly objections to the truth are dropped in their hearing, these things will fasten in their minds and mold their characters. If their minds are filled with stories, be they true or fictitious, there is no room for the useful information and scientific knowledge which should occupy them.⁸

Watch, watch, watch!

Satan works through young associates to influence and corrupt the minds of each other. It is the most effectual way he can work. Young associates have a powerful influence over one another. Their conversation is not always choice and elevated. Evil communications will be breathed into the ear, which, if not decidedly resisted, find a lodgment in the heart, take root, and spring up to bear fruit, and corrupt their good manners.⁹

Some are constantly leaning to the world. Their views and feelings harmonize much better with the spirit of the world than with that of Christ's self-denying followers. It is perfectly natural that they should prefer the company of those whose spirit will best agree with their own. And such have quite too much influence among God's people. . . .

God does not own the pleasure seeker as His follower. Those only who are self-denying, and who live lives of sobriety, humility, and holiness, are true followers of Jesus. And such cannot enjoy the frivolous, empty conversation of the lover of the world.¹⁰

The young should not be suffered to learn good and evil indiscriminately, with the idea that at some future time the good will predominate and the evil lose its influence. The evil will increase faster than the good. It is possible that after many years the evil they have learned may be eradicated; but who will venture this? Time is short. It is easier and much safer to sow clean, good seed in the hearts of your children, than to pluck up the weeds afterward.¹¹

When does child-training begin?

Our Creator Himself declares that the mother's habits prior to the birth of her child will affect its character and destiny. In speaking to . . . one mother [Manoah's wife, in Judges chapter 13], the Lord spoke to all the anxious, sorrowing mothers of that time, and to all the mothers of succeeding generations. Yes, every mother may now understand her duty. She may know that the character of her children will depend vastly more upon her own habits before their birth, and her personal efforts after their birth, than upon external advantages or disadvantages. If the mother would be a fit teacher for her children, she must form habits of self-denial and self-control before their birth.¹²

If children are disciplined aright, they will soon learn that they can receive nothing by crying or fretting. A judicious mother will act in training her children, not merely in regard to her own present comfort, but for their future good.¹³

The poor little children are thought not to know or understand the meaning of a correction at the age of eight, nine or ten months, and they begin to show stubbornness very young, and it is cherished and nourished by its parents till their evil passions grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength.¹⁴

Much parental anxiety and grief might be saved if children were taught from their cradles that their wills were not to be made law, and their whims continually indulged. It is not so difficult as is generally supposed to teach the little child to stifle its outbursts of temper and subdue its fits of passion.

Few parents begin early enough to teach their children obedience. The child is usually allowed to get two or three years the start of its parents, who forbear to discipline it, thinking it is too young to learn to obey. But all this time self is growing strong in the little being, and every day makes it a harder task for the parent to gain control of the child. At a very early age children can compre-

hend what is plainly and simply told them; and by kind and judicious management can be taught to obey. I have frequently seen children who were denied something that they wanted throw themselves upon the floor in a pet, kicking and screaming, while the injudicious mother alternately coaxed and scolded in the hope of restoring her child to good nature. This treatment only fosters the child's passion. The next time it goes over the same ground with increased willfulness, confident of gaining the day as before. Thus the rod is spared and the child is spoiled.

The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance. And, in order to maintain this authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; as firm, steady hand and a kindness which convinces the child of your love will accomplish the purpose. But let selfishness, anger, and self-will have its course for the first three years of a child's life, and it will be hard to bring it to submit to wholesome discipline. Its disposition has become soured; it delights in having its own way; parental control is distasteful. These evil tendencies grow with its growth, until in manhood supreme selfishness and a lack of self-control place him at the mercy of the evils that run riot in our land.¹⁵

Opportunities of inestimable worth, interests infinitely precious, are committed to every mother. During the first three years of the life of Samuel the prophet, his mother carefully taught him to distinguish between good and evil.¹⁶

Many neglect their duty during the first years of their children's lives, thinking that when they get older they will then be very careful to repress wrong and educate them in the right. But the very time for them to do this work is when the children are babes in their arms. It is not right for parents to pet and humor their children; neither is it right for them to abuse them. A firm, decided straightforward course of action will be productive of the best results.¹⁷

When under stress . . .

Sometimes everything seems to go wrong. It is fretfulness all around, and all have a very miserable, unhappy time of it. The parents lay the wrong upon their poor children, and think them very disobedient and unruly, and the worst children in the world, when the cause of the disturbance is in themselves. In this manner some parents raise many a storm, by their lack of self-control. Instead of kindly asking the children to do this, or that, they are ordered in a scolding tone, and at the same time a censure or reproof is on their lips which the children have not merited. This course, pursued toward children, destroys their cheerfulness and ambition. They do your bidding, not from love, but because they dare not do otherwise. Their heart is not in the matter. It is a drudgery, instead of a pleasure, which often leads them to forget to follow out all your directions, which increases your irritation, and makes it still worse for the children. The fault-finding is repeated, their bad conduct arrayed before them in glowing colors, until a discouragement comes over the children, and they are not particular whether they please or not. A spirit of "I don't care" seizes them, and they seek that pleasure and enjoyment away from home, away from their parents, which they do not find at home. They mingle with street company, and are soon as corrupt as any of the worst.

Upon whom rests this great sin! If home had been made attractive, had the parents manifested love and affection for their children, and with kindness found employment for them, in love instructed them how to obey their wishes, they would have touched an answering cord in their hearts, and their willing feet, and hands, and hearts, would have all readily obeyed them. Parents, by controlling themselves, and speaking kindly, and praising their children when they try to do right, encourage their right efforts, make them very happy, and throw a charm into the family circle which will chase away every dark shadow, and bring cheerful sunlight in. . . .

Parents, when you feel fretful, you should not commit so great a sin as to poison the whole family with this dangerous irritability. At such times set a double watch over yourself, and resolve in your heart not to offend with your lips. Nothing but pleasant, cheerful words should escape from your lips. Say to yourself, "I will not mar the happiness of my children by a fretful word." By thus controlling yourself, you will grow stronger. Your nervous system will not be so sensitive. You will be strengthened by the principles of right. The consciousness in your heart that you are faithfully discharging your duty, will strengthen you. Angels of God will smile upon your efforts, and help you. . . .

The mother can and should do much toward controlling her nerves and mind when it is depressed; and even when she is sick, she can, if she only schools herself, be pleasant and cheerful, and can bear more of their noise than she would once have thought it possible. If infirmities, or depression of spirits affect the mother, she should not make the children feel her infirmities, and cloud their young, sensitive minds, and cause them to feel that the house is a tomb, and the mother's room the most dismal place in the world. The mind and nerves can gain tone, and strength, by exercising the will. The power of the will in many cases will prove a mighty soother of the nerves.

Do not let your children see you with a clouded brow. If they yield to temptation, and afterwards see and repent of their error, forgive them just as freely as you hope to be forgiven of your Father in heaven. Kindly instruct them, and bind them to your hearts. It is a critical time for children. Influences will be thrown around them to wean them from you, which you must counteract. Teach them to make you their confident. Let them whisper in your ear their trials and joys. By encouraging this, you will save them from many a snare that Satan has prepared for their inexperienced feet. But if you treat your children only with sternness, if you forget your own child-

hood, and forget that they are but children, and try to make them perfect, and make them men and women in their acts at once, you will close the door of access which you might otherwise have to your children, and you drive them to open a door for injurious influences, to affect their young minds, and before you awake to their danger, their minds have been poisoned by others.

Satan and his host are making most powerful efforts to sway the minds of the children, and they must be treated with candor, Christian tenderness and love. This will give you a strong influence over them, and they will feel that they can repose unlimited confidence in you. Throw around your children charms for home, and your society. If you do this, they will not desire so much the society of other young associates. . . . Because of the evils now in the world, and the restriction necessary to be placed upon the children, parents should have double care to bind them to their hearts, and let them see they wish to make them happy.

Parents should not forget their childhood years, how much they yearned for sympathy and love, and how unhappy they felt when censured and fretfully chided. They should be young again in their feelings. You should bring your mind down to understand the wants of your children. With firmness, all mixed with love, require your children to obey you.¹⁸

Conclusion

The great burden in the education of children rests upon the mother. She it is who forms their characters. The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world. Mothers, remember that in your work the Creator of the universe will give you help. In His strength, and through His name, you can lead your children to be overcomers. Teach them to look to God for strength. Tell them that He hears their prayers. Teach them to overcome evil with good. Teach them to exert an influence that is elevating

and ennobling. Lead them to unite with God, and then they will have strength to resist the strongest temptation. They will then receive the reward of the overcomer.¹⁹

Would that every mother could realize how great are her duties and her responsibilities, and how great will be the reward of faithfulness. The mother's daily influence upon her children is preparing them for everlasting life or eternal death. She exercises in her home a power more decisive than the minister in the desk, or even the king upon his throne. The day of God will reveal how much the world owes to godly mothers for men who have been unflinching advocates of truth and reform—men who have been bold to do and dare, who have stood unshaken amid trials and temptations; men who chose the high and holy interests of truth and the glory of God, before worldly honor or life itself.

When the Judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened; when the "well done" of the great Judge is pronounced, and the crown of immortal glory is placed upon the brow of the victor, many will raise their crowns in sight of the assembled universe, and pointing to their mother say, "She made me all I am through the grace of God. Her instruction, her prayers, have been blessed to my eternal salvation."²⁰ **R**

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The Children

BY N. KAKONKO

When God created Adam, He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." When God performed the first marriage in the Garden of Eden, He blessed them and said unto them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 2:18; 1:28).

In other words, the Lord told the first pair to have children. These children are given to us as a heritage from God. We are supposed to guard them jealously because we shall be held accountable for them on the judgment day. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3).

"In love, faith, and prayer let parents work for their households, until with joy they can come to God saying, 'Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.'"¹

Children need proper care and training, for they are the future church of God. They are so precious in His sight that one day our Lord Jesus told His disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little

children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Size of the family

It is good and reasonable to have a small family which you can manage to look after. But in some places people have many children because they count on them as wealth. By this they commit sin if they cannot support them, placing a burden on others. Some go to the extent of sending their children to relatives who do not fear God, and eventually the children are spoiled. But God puts the blame on such parents, who will be held accountable.

"[Parents] should calmly consider what provision can be made for their children. They have no right to bring children into the world to be a burden to others. Have they a business that they can rely upon to sustain a family so that they need not become a burden to others? If they have not, they commit a crime in bringing children into the world to suffer for want of proper care, food, and clothing."²

Let parents sit down by themselves and in the fear of God decide

how many children they can manage to support and raise in the way of the Lord. It is not wrong to have many children if you can amply provide them with proper food, clothing, shelter, both religious and secular education, and health care.

Child training

The Bible plainly states this: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

This training is so important that, if neglected, it will affect the children adversely. As parents, your prime concern should be to bring up your children in such a way that they will be able to stand the test of time, as did Joseph, Moses, Daniel, and others who received early child training.

"Parents should not increase their families any faster than they know that their children can be well cared for and educated. A child in the mother's arms from year to year is great injustice to her. It lessens, and often destroys, social enjoyment and increases domestic wretchedness. It robs their children of that care, education, and happiness which parents should feel it their duty to bestow upon them.

Let us be the best friends of our children. Let us provide an atmosphere in our homes which is full of sunshine, and our children will remain in our company most of the time.

"The question to be settled by you is, 'Am I raising a family of children to strengthen the influence and swell the ranks of the powers of darkness, or am I bringing up children for Christ?'"

"If you do not govern your children and mold their characters to meet the requirements of God, then the fewer children there are to suffer from your defective training the better it will be for you, their parents, and the better it will be for society. Unless children can be trained and disciplined from their babyhood by a wise and judicious mother who is conscientious and intelligent, and who rules her household in the fear of the Lord, molding and shaping their characters to meet the standard of righteousness, it is a sin to increase your family. God has given you reason and He requires you to use it."

Some parents are so pliant towards their children that they fail to correct them, fearing they will offend them and make them unhappy. They often speak to them in a very docile voice which lacks authority. Others flatter themselves that their children, especially their babies, are too small to be corrected and to understand what the parents say and expect of them. And because of the parents' failure to correct these evils early, the children are spoiled.

Solomon enjoins parents thus: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die" (Proverbs 23:13). We are not encouraging the beating of children in anger or cruelty, of course, yet according to the Bible, sometimes a swift spanking administered in love may be the last option after all other efforts have failed. Let

all such correction be done only with prayer and in calm self-control.

Some children in our churches are orphans, others come from families of different religious backgrounds, and all need to be cared for. In such cases it becomes the church's responsibility to mold their characters according to our faith.

"Fatherless and motherless children are thrown into the arms of the church, and Christ says to His followers: Take these destitute children, bring them up for Me, and ye shall receive your wages. . . . Those who refuse these opportunities for doing good will hear from Jesus: 'As ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.' Please read Isaiah 58: [verses 5-11]."

Orphans are a challenge from the Lord to us as individuals and as a church. Let us all wake up from our spiritual slumber and fulfill this long-neglected duty.

Television, computer, and sensational books

Television, radios, and computers, so often abused, have proved very dangerous to many youth and children. Most television programs are worldly and unchristian. Some programs are educational, but the advertising that comes in between is objectionable to Christian standards. All children have impressionable minds and need not feed on this stuff. Invariably, they are inclined to imitate the actions shown on the screen and this often instills bad morals in them. They waste precious time watching things that will not help them in their future life, jeopardizing both their temporal and eternal destinies.

One thing we all need to understand is that our principles and tastes

differ from those of the world. What the world sees as good to look at is bad to our sight in the light of God's word. Therefore, let us follow the example of king David, who said: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Psalm 101:3).

Let parents explain to their children the evil of most TV programs. Tell them that God is dishonored by those who indulge in them.

The computer, which is good of itself, becomes Satan's tool to destroy children and grown-ups, if used wrongly. In this area, also, parents should keep their eyes open.

Another concern is the type of literature our children read. They often have access to books, which destroy their integrity. Some popular magazines are full of sensational stories and pictures which suggest evil thoughts and eventually deeds. Most of these publications carry fictitious and imaginary stories, authored by infidels, which leave destructive effects on the minds of our young people. The Spirit of Prophecy says:

"Many of the popular publications of the day are filled with sensational stories that are educating the youth in wickedness and leading them in the path to perdition. Mere children in years are old in a knowledge of crime. They are incited to evil by the tales they read. In imagination they act over the deeds portrayed, until their ambition is aroused to see what they can do in committing crime and evading punishment."⁵

Pornographic magazines and pictures are among the most dangerous tools of Satan to deprave the character of our children. Therefore, if we love our children, we should keep them away from all scenes parading immorality. We must help them. Let us do our best to cultivate their minds and hearts. It is a good thing to go out with them in nature, where they can develop a taste for the beauties revealed in the handiwork of God.

"Parents can associate God with all His created works. The only schoolroom for children from eight to

ten years of age should be in the open air, amid the opening flowers and nature's beautiful scenery. And their only textbook should be the treasures of nature. These lessons, imprinted upon the minds of young children amid the pleasant, attractive scenes of nature, will not be soon forgotten."⁶

Dear parents, let us take the Bible to shape the future life of our children. There is nothing lacking in this magnificent book. It leads the youth to know their Creator and Maker, and to serve Him wholeheartedly.

Dressing

Every tree is known by its fruits. This is a true saying. The way our children dress tells what kind of character they and their families possess. Today's style of dress, even among professed believers, is pathetic. Some parents allow their children to dress in a horrible manner. The Bible is clear on one point: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Parents, should we allow our children to become abominable in God's sight without arresting this evil? God forbid! It is our duty to

teach our children to dress properly and decently.

"Let us be faithful to the duties of the home life. Let your children understand that obedience must reign there. Teach them to distinguish between that which is sensible and that which is foolish in the matter of dress, and furnish them with clothes that are neat and simple. As a people who are preparing for the soon return of Christ, we should give to the world an example of modest dress in contrast with the prevailing fashion of the day."⁷

Today's society is morally spoiled largely due to the manner of dress exhibited in the world. And to some extent children of professed Christians are so affected that they imitate the current fashions. The wearing of tight and transparent clothes by our people is strongly opposed to the standards of our faith. And it has a negative influence on beholders, causing them to sin with their eyes. As a matter of fact, the wearing of tight clothes not only offends others but also obstructs the free flow of blood through the vessels. Let these points be emphasized to our children so that they do not fall in this snare.

"Our words, our actions, and our dress are daily, living preachers, gathering with Christ or scattering

abroad. This is no trivial matter to be passed off with a jest. The subject of dress demands serious reflection and much prayer."⁸

Association

There is an English maxim which says, "Birds of a feather flock together"—that is, birds of the same variety tend to congregate. Let this be a lesson to God-fearing parents! As guardians of these young souls, we should be concerned with the kind of companions our children have. We should help them select good companions, showing them the evil of having rebellious or irreligious playmates.

Some parents are so weak that they do not care to know with whom their children associate. And often when they see some strange words and actions in their children they begin to wonder as did the disciples, "From whence then hath it tares?" (Matthew 13:27). While the parents are asleep, absorbed in businesses and pleasures, the enemy is sowing tares in the children's hearts by their association with worldly friends and even with supposedly Christian friends whose bent to the world may often be very subtle and sly.

Let us therefore awaken out of our spiritual slumber before our chil-



dren are spoiled. Our responsibility to guide our children is not transferable. Above all, let us be the best friends of our children. Let us provide for them a home atmosphere full of sunshine, and our children will remain in our company most of the time.

“There is no greater curse upon households than to allow the youth to have their own way. When parents regard every wish of their children and indulge them in what they know is not for their good, the children soon lose all respect for their parents, all regard for the authority of God or man, and are led captive at the will of Satan. The influence of an ill-regulated family is widespread and disastrous to all society.”⁹

Dear parents, let us try to seek companions for our children within the families of our fellow Christians, as the Bible says. “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (Psalm 119:63). If we fail to show interest in looking for suitable companions for our children, we shall reap unfortunate consequences as did David with his son Amnon, who followed the wicked advice of his foolish friend. Because of his sin of incest, he not only lost his life but also caused estrangement in the family, and war in the country.

We should help our boys and girls to find associates having in view God’s purpose to mold their characters for an important work that He has planned for them.

Let us therefore wrestle with God in prayer for our children, that they may walk along safe paths and grow up to be responsible men and women.

Obedience

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise” (Ephesians 6:1, 2).

The first lesson which parents need to teach their children is willing obedience motivated by love. Just as God requires us to render faithful obedience to Him, He also requires the children to render obe-

dience to their Christian parents without murmuring.

“Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the early years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.”¹⁰

Here lies a challenge to our children and youth. Obedience and respect are to be shown not only to parents, but also to all elderly persons and to those in authority. It is our duty to educate our boys and girls in these lines.

In our days, Satan is very busy trying to lead the children into hard-hearted disobedience to all authority. What a contrast is found in the days of Abraham! Look at young Isaac. He believed in the word of God and obeyed his father’s instruction by consenting to be offered as a sacrifice. Today, young people tend to be “disobedient to parents” (2 Timothy 3:1). It’s one of the signs of the last days.

Training our children is not an easy work, especially if this task has been neglecting over a period of years. It certainly requires much tact, persistence, and prayer. But if we follow the instructions of the Lord, we can still obtain good results.

When Jesus was a child, He was obedient to His earthly parents, and to those in authority, though He was God. There is no better model to be held up before our children.

God does not compel anyone to obey Him, but we should sacrifice and lay down our own glory in the dust in order to do the Master’s bidding. Let parents remember that children need

to do the same in order to achieve the same goal. Let them know there are blessings awaiting them if they take heed to this injunction. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19).

Conclusion

It is the privilege and a duty for every Christian family to hold evening and morning worship. The family altar is a way to teach our children to respect the hour of prayer. They learn to sing, pray, and read the Bible. The Lord commanded the children of Israel:

“Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

“Will the Lord of heaven pass by such homes and leave no blessings there? Nay, verily. Ministering angels will guard the children who are thus dedicated to God. They hear the offering of praise and the prayer of faith, and they bear the petitions to Him who ministers in the sanctuary for His people, and offers His merits in their behalf.”¹¹

It is our God-given responsibility to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord. They are the Lord’s heritage. If we do not fulfill our duty to fence our children with an impregnable shelter against the influences of the world, most of them will fall under the control of Satan, and God will hold us accountable.

“Unitedly and prayerful the father and mother should bear the grave responsibility of guiding their children aright.”¹²

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⁶ *Counsels on Health*, p. 177.

⁷ *Child Guidance*, pp. 424, 425.

⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 641.

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Regaining the Straying Home

BY HEE MUN WOO

Though everything shows that the end is at hand, many homes are in a precarious situation, where the religion of Christ is neglected. The enemy has attacked the human family since the Garden of Eden and is bent on its destruction. Satan hates the family system established by God (one husband and one wife and their children who worship and obey Him by a well-ordered, well-disciplined family). Today, near the close of earth's history, the families of God's remnant are special objects of Satan's attack for, as prophecy has foretold, "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17). What are some of the ways by which he seeks to do this?

TV—a devil in the room

Some have said that television is a devil in the room. Even so, many enjoy watching TV in their living rooms, bedrooms, and every personal room. They seem to have time to watch TV, but no time to study the Word of God. While television can provide us with some news and information, it also brings us many unnecessary things and even moral corruption, robbing us of the time and energy that belong to our Lord. And today TV has become a theater in the home, a medium of Satan to cause departure from the faith, caus-

ing people to give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. In the time of E. G. White, they did not have such a sophisticated medium as this, but even through the theater of those days many lost their faith. What did she warn about these dangerous things?

"Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence, as the desire for intoxicating drinks strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement."¹

From this testimony we can clearly see why TV with all its dramatic sensationalism should be discarded. Watching TV daily is worse than going to the theater from time to time. It surely corrupts the moral atmosphere of the home.

The computer—another danger

We are living in a new era from which so many products proceed. A computer with internet access is an essential facility to the civilized society of today. But with this new technology other problems also occur. Computers are useful in our daily life by virtue of their speed and precision, providing us with a wealth of information from around the globe. But we also need to realize that this tool is sometimes more dangerous than television. From within this instrument, proceed evil thoughts (adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, and so forth), inspired by Satan and now flooding the world. All these evil things come from within and defile the human family. Therefore, even computers may pose a potential danger to us and our children if put to wrong use. Today this may be the greatest means in the hands of Satan to damage our spiritual life and to corrupt our young people and our children.

"The desire for excitement and pleasing entertainment is a temptation and a snare to God's people, and especially to the young. Satan is constantly preparing inducements to attract minds from the solemn work of preparation for scenes just in the future. Through the agency of worldlings he keeps up a continual excitement to induce the unwary to join in worldly pleasures. There are

shows, lectures, and an endless variety of entertainments that are calculated to lead to a love of the world; and through this union with the world faith is weakened. . . .

“[Satan] is in every sense of the word a deceiver, a skilful charmer. He has many finely woven nets, which appear innocent, but which are skilfully prepared to entangle the young and unwary. The natural mind leans toward pleasure and self-gratification. It is Satan’s policy to fill the mind with a desire for worldly amusement, that there may be no time for the question, How is it with my soul?”²

“The youth of today are a sure index to the future of society; and as we view them, what can we hope for that future? The majority are fond of amusement and averse to work.”³

Besides, our children are inclined to misuse the computer even on the Sabbath day. Therefore, we as Christian parents should give special attention to our children and educate them and pray for them in order to avoid this, and to set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Culture and fashion

“Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God.”⁴

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

We are the children of God and His people, and we have a duty not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. We have to help the needy, and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven us.

We must be careful not to be of the world. We are forbidden to conform to its practices and fashions. By

His prophet Isaiah, God shows us the corrupted condition caused by the influence of the world. “The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet” (Isaiah 3:16). This condition can be seen also today. The professed followers of Christ are no longer a separate and peculiar people. The line of demarcation is indistinct. The people are subordinating themselves to the world, to its practices, its customs, and its selfishness. By their way of eating and drinking, by their outward adorning, and by their love of objectionable fashions, they show that they do not have Christ. The Saviour requires His followers to abstain from these evils.

“God will have a people separate and distinct from the world. And as soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children. They are the children of the world and of darkness.”⁵

“While we should not conform to worldly fashions, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment. The children of God should be pure within and without.”⁶

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (Song of Solomon 6:10).

The most beautiful adorning that our sisters can show is the hidden personality of the heart, namely, the character, “in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:3, 4).

“I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on among us, in the conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married.”⁷

“The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man,

neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:5). God’s prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who advocate doing away with the distinction of dress between males and females. . . .

“God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime.”⁸

“There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized.”⁹

“Our words, our actions, and our dress are daily, living preachers, gathering with Christ or scattering abroad. This is no trivial matter to be passed off with a jest.”¹⁰

“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:14–16).

“Said the angel: ‘God’s people are *peculiar*; such He is purifying unto Himself.’ I saw that the outside appearance is an index to the heart.”¹¹

Immorality

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

“A terrible picture of the condition of the world has been presented before me. Immorality abounds

everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age.”¹²

“Many of the young are eager for books. They read everything they can obtain. Exciting love stories and impure pictures have a corrupting influence.”¹³

“I have been shown that persons of apparently good deportment, not taking unwarrantable liberties with the other sex, were guilty of practicing secret vice nearly every day of their lives.”¹⁴

“It is the special work of Satan in these last days to take possession of the minds of the youth, to corrupt their thoughts, and inflame their passions, knowing that by thus doing he can lead them to self-pollution, and then all the noble faculties of the mind will become debased, and he can control them to suit his own purposes. All are free moral agents; and as such they must bring their thoughts to run in the right channel. Their meditations should be of that nature which will elevate their minds, and make Jesus and Heaven the subjects of their thoughts. Here is a wide field in which the mind can safely range. If Satan seeks to divert the mind from this to low and sensual things, bring it back again, and place it on eternal things; and when the Lord sees the determined effort made to retain only pure thoughts, He will attract the mind, like the magnet, and purify the thoughts, and enable them to cleanse themselves from every secret sin. ‘Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 10:5). The first work of those who would reform is to purify the imagination. If the mind is led out in a vicious direction, it must be restrained to dwell only upon pure and elevated subjects. When tempted to yield to a corrupt imagination, then flee to the throne of grace, and pray for strength from Heaven. In the strength of God the imagination can be disciplined to dwell upon things which are pure and heavenly.”¹⁵

Pray together; stay together

There is a saying, “The family that prays together stays together.” Families whose hearts unite at the family altar morning and evening have a hedge thrown about them; a wall of protection from the onslaughts of the enemy. It is important also to stay together—deliberately and purposefully.

“It is wrong to allow children, at some expense, to visit at a distance, unaccompanied by their parents or guardians. It has a wrong influence upon the children. They come to feel that they are of considerable consequence and that certain privileges belong to them, and if these are not granted, they think themselves abused. They refer to children who go and come, and have many privileges, while they have so few.

“And the mother, fearing that her children will think her unjust, gratifies their wishes, which in the end proves a great injury to them. Young visitors, who have not a parent’s watchful eye over them to see and correct their faults often receive impressions which it will take months to remove. I was referred to cases of parents who had good, obedient children, and who, having the utmost confidence in certain families, trusted their children to go from them at a distance to visit these friends. From that time there was an entire change in the deportment and character of their children. Formerly they were contented and happy at home, and had no great desire to be much in the company of other young persons. When they return to their parents, restraint seems unjust, and home is like a prison to them. Such unwise movements of parents decide the character of their children.

“By thus visiting, some children form attachments which prove their ruin in the end. Parents, keep your children with you if you can, and watch them with the deepest solicitude. When you let them visit at a distance from you, they feel that they are old enough to take care of and choose for themselves. When the young are thus left to themselves,

their conversation is often upon subjects which will not refine or elevate them, or increase their love for the things of religion. The more they are permitted to visit, the greater will be their desire to go, and the less attractive will home seem to them.

“Children, God has seen fit to entrust you to the care of your parents for them to instruct and discipline, and thus act their part in forming your character for heaven. And yet it rests with you to say whether you will develop a good Christian character by making the best of the advantages you have had from godly, faithful, praying parents. . . .

“The prevailing influence in the world is to suffer the youth to follow the natural turn of their own minds. And if very wild in youth, parents say they will come right after a while, and when sixteen or eighteen years of age, will reason for themselves, and leave off their wrong habits, and become at last useful men and women. What a mistake!”¹⁶

“Love is the key to a child’s heart, but the love that leads parents to indulge their children in unlawful desires is not a love that will work for their good. The earnest affection which springs from love to Jesus will enable parents to exercise judicious authority and to require prompt obedience.”¹⁷

United interests; common goals

From the time the children are quite young, parents would do well to have them unite with them in various goals and projects, both short-term and long-term. These youngsters are entrusted to you by God to be your companions; they are not merely passing strangers on their way to some other way of life. Treat them as companions! It is worthwhile to note that many of the world’s most fruitful and well-respected businesses—both large and small—are family businesses, those in which parents and children are united in a specific line of work. They work together, and the children and grandchildren carry on the

tradition. People often have great confidence in patronizing such a business, for they know that it is usually characterized by a higher level of integrity and service than is generally found elsewhere. This benefits not only the community, but it also strengthens and reinforces the family bond at the same time. It is unlikely that any father or mother has ever regretted training and working with their own sons and daughters to accomplish a goal, task, or lifework.

Even in cases where the talent, ability, or natural inclination of the child widely differs from that of the parents, the overall goals can be the same. The ultimate goal of salvation is to be shared, and through creative thinking, determined effort, and much prayer, a great deal of good can be achieved, laboring together in united service both in this present world and for eternal interests.

“By precept and example parents are to teach their children to labor for the unconverted. The children should be so educated that they will sympathize with the aged and afflicted and will seek to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and distressed. They should be taught to be diligent in missionary work; and from their earliest years self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others and the advancement of Christ’s cause should be inculcated, that they may be laborers together with God.”¹⁸

“To every parent God says, ‘Take heed unto thyself’—*thyself*, father; *thyself*, mother. Before you can do your children justice, you must surrender yourselves to God’s training. You must be filled with high motives and noble aspirations. Each day you must endeavor to make yourself more worthy of your trust. Then God will cooperate with you.

“The family firm should be well organized. Together the father and mother should consider their responsibilities. Together they should work for the highest good of their children. There is to be no variance between them. Never

should they in the presence of their children criticize each other’s plans or question each other’s judgment.”¹⁹

Conclusion

“The work of reformation that is needed must begin in the home.

There rests upon parents the most solemn obligation to train their children in the fear and love of God. In the home the purest morals are to be preserved. Strict obedience to Bible requirements is to be taught.”²⁰

“Parents, shall your children be lost because of your lack of faithfulness? Neither you nor they will prosper in any other path than the path of obedience. If you have failed in your duty to your family, confess your sins before God. Gather your children about you, and acknowledge your neglect. Tell them that you desire to bring about a reformation in the home, and ask them to help you to make the home what it ought to be. Read to them the directions found in the Word of God. Pray with them; and ask God to spare their lives, and to help them to prepare for a home in His kingdom. Thus you may begin and continue a work of true reform.

“Be pleasant in the home. Restrain every word that would arouse unholy temper. ‘Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath,’ is a divine injunction. Remember that your children are young in years and experience. In controlling and disciplining them, be firm, but kind. Encourage them to do their duty as members of the family firm. Express your appreciation of the efforts they put forth to conquer their inclinations to wrong. Let the Word of God be your rule, and ever keep in mind the responsibilities for which in the great day of judgment you must give account.”²¹

“If the work of reformation be begun and carried forward in each family, there will be a living and prosperous church. Things must first be set in order at home. The cause needs those who can work at home, who will study the Bible, and practice its teachings, and who will train

up their children in the fear of God. Then let diligent, persevering effort be put forth for others, with earnest prayer for the aid of divine grace and power, and great results will follow missionary labor.”²²

“It is the privilege of parents and children to grow together in the grace of Christ. Those who comply with the conditions laid down in the Word will find full provision for their spiritual needs and for power to overcome.”²³

“Parents are not left to carry forward alone the work on which so much depends. Christ says, Come unto Me. I will bear your burdens and your perplexities. All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Me. I will give you strength. Go to Him, fathers and mothers. Many of you cannot properly fulfill your trust until you are more closely connected with Christ. Some ask, ‘Why does not the Lord work miracles today, as He did when He was upon the earth?’ Let parents live in the home the life of Christ, and the transformation in the lives of their children will testify to God’s miracle-working power.”²⁴



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³ *Child Guidance*, p. 440.

⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 647.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 137.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 355.

⁷ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 181.

⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 460.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 648.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 136. [Author’s italics.]

¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 346.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

¹⁵ *A Solemn Appeal*, pp. 75, 76.

¹⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 401–403.

¹⁷ *Child Guidance*, p. 271.

¹⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 429.

¹⁹ *The Review and Herald*, July 8, 1902. [Author’s italics.]

²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 10, 1904.

²¹ *Ibid.*, April 21, 1904.

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Heaven on Earth

BY MARIO ALVARADO PALACIOS

Heaven according to pagan views

Throughout the ages, heaven has always been considered as the most desirable and pleasant place to be; it is viewed as the final reward for those whose lives have been characterized by deeds of goodness. Since the days of antiquity, the nations that were separated from Noah and his teachings held these basic concepts, but mixed them with error. For most oriental people—the Buddhists, for example—heaven is Nirvana, the highest and most perfect state to which a person can attain, becoming liberated from earthly desires that have caused all pain and suffering.

For the Egyptians, as soon as a person passed through the “judgment of the dead” in the presence of 42 judges and was declared innocent, he would reach heaven and there cultivate the fields of the gods. But he would have the alternative of crying out, “I’m pure, I’m pure, I’m pure,” or of returning to earth in order to take care of his dear ones (belief in the immortality of the soul).

To the Greeks, heaven was the highest sphere. As they believed in the immortality of the soul, death was not the worst of evils, but was actually considered to be the greatest good. Because of that Socrates, after being sentenced to die, gladly accepted to drink the poisonous hemlock juice. Even though he could have been freed from condemnation through the influence and bribes of his friends and pupils, he preferred to die, leaving his wife and

children. “Where do you want to be buried?” they asked him. “No one can bury me,” he answered, adding, “Socrates is not a body that can be seen and touched; Socrates is the soul that escapes to the highest sphere.”

The error of Socrates has taken many to their eternal ruin. Believing that people immediately go to heaven after their death, many have committed suicide in the hope of putting an easy and abrupt halt to whatever pain, injustices, disillusionments, and sufferings they faced in this world.

What is heaven for a Christian?

A hymn entitled *Let Us Seek That Better Land*, gives us important concepts summarizing what heaven is: “It is the home of the just and holy; where happiness and love reigns. It is the inheritance of the redeemed, where they will enjoy eternal pleasures from God. It is the home of God, the angels and the redeemed ones. It is the heavenly Eden. It is the kingdom of God.”

When there is relative peace as we enjoy it today, most professed Christians do not set their hearts on things above, the joys of heaven. They content themselves with formally fulfilling their religious duties. They do not have much longing or concern for that “better land.” The world does not persecute them, so they blend right in with it. There is a warning for them: “If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the

lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:48–51).

Tribulation and persecution bring us closer to God and to heaven. Religious oppression has often forced Christians to leave their relatives, their friends, and their country, seeking refuge among other nations, where they have often had to find other means of labor to earn their daily bread. And they have been thankful to God for having obtained freedom to hold spiritual communion with their brethren in the faith. “‘They knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to heaven, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.’”

What are the graces of heaven?

The Bible tells us that: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Nevertheless, God has revealed to us a glimpse of the incomparable beauty: “And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” “And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the

tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land . . . and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” “They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people.” “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Isaiah 32:18; 33:24; 35:5, 6; 60:18, 20; 11:6, 7; 65:22; Revelation 21:4). There is no doubt that heaven is the dearest place for the human soul. Paraphrasing the words of the prisonkeeper in Philippi, we can exclaim, “What must I do to be in heaven?” (Acts 16:30).

At the beginning of Christ’s ministry, He was preaching: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Has it come to you, is it among you, and is it in you? Truly, the kingdom of heaven has already begun in every heart that has received Christ as his or her personal Saviour. The principles, the peace and the joy of heaven abide there.

Heaven on earth

“Heaven is to begin on this earth. When the Lord’s people are filled with meekness and tenderness, they will realize that His banner over them is love, and His fruit will be sweet to their taste. They will make a heaven below in which to prepare for heaven above.”²²

“Home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation

of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another. . . .

“To a large extent parents create the atmosphere of the home circle, and when there is disagreement between father and mother, the children partake of the same spirit. Make your home atmosphere fragrant with tender thoughtfulness. If you have become estranged and have failed to be Bible Christians, be converted; for the character you bear in probationary time will be the character you will have at the coming of Christ. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth.”²³

“Our work for Christ is to begin with the family in the home. The education of the youth should be of a different order from that which has been given in the past. Their welfare demands far more labor than has been given them. There is no missionary field more important than this. By precept and example parents are to teach their children to labor for the unconverted. The children should be so educated that they will sympathize with the aged and afflicted and will seek to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and distressed. They should be taught to be diligent in missionary work; and from their earliest years self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others and the advancement of Christ’s cause should be inculcated, that they may be laborers together with God.”²⁴

“When religion is manifested in the home, its influence will be felt in the church and in the neighborhood.”²⁵

How to reach heaven

“The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.”²⁶

God requires righteousness of His people in order for them to live in heaven. Our fitness for heaven must be obtained here and now. Our life in heaven will be the life of Christ, which begins on earth. In

this sense, the experience of Paul is a lesson to us. He said: “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

This lofty experience can be ours as well, if day by day and moment by moment we yield our will to God, “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

Only thus can we obtain a character in harmony with the character of God and with His commandments.

Christ as the “Son of man” declared: “I have kept my Father’s commandments” (John 15:10). “By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life.”²⁷

If we can live the life of Christ here, then we will be able to live it in heaven as well. This means that we will be clothed with His robe of righteousness and will ultimately be declared fit for heaven. Those who are destitute of this robe will be rejected.

In the parable of the wedding feast, the opposite happens. “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:11–13).

Excluded from heaven

Certainly, the life of Christ is not the life of a sinner. The life of heaven is not the ordinary life we live here on earth.

“In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him ‘in

whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2:3). But after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him. The sinner could not be happy in God's presence; he would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for him."⁸ Sinners would not find there what pleases them. In vain would they search for a butcher shop to satisfy their appetite. There will be no disco places to visit. There will be no tobacco, alcohol, or gambling. Their companions in frivolity will not be there. There will not be in heaven any useless pastime such as television viewing.

"Heaven would be to [the sinner] a place of torture; he would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, and the center of its joy. It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them."⁹

There is a great danger before us: "Let no one deceive his own soul in this matter. If you harbor pride, self-esteem, a love for the supremacy, vainglory, unholy ambition, murmuring, discontent, bitterness, evil-speaking, lying, deception, slander-ing, you have not Christ abiding in your heart, and the evidence shows that you have the mind and character of Satan, not of Jesus Christ, who was meek and lowly of heart. You must have a Christian character that will stand. You may have good intentions, good impulses, can speak the truth understandingly, but you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven. . . . There must be thorough conversions among those who claim to believe the truth, or they will fall in the day of trial. God's people must reach a

high standard. They must be a holy nation, a peculiar people, a chosen generation—zealous of good works."¹⁰

The work of Elijah rewarded in heaven

As the remnant people of God are symbolized by the prophet Elijah, we still need to do a work before being translated to heaven. Before Elijah was taken up from the earth, a work of reformation and judgment was given him to perform in Israel. After Elijah came out of the cave in Horeb, the Lord told him: "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay" (1 Kings 19:15–18).

The work of reform that we as a remnant people must do begins right in our own homes, that is, with the conversion of our family.

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

"[The ministers'] great reformatory movement must begin in presenting to fathers and mothers and children the principles of the law of God."¹¹

This work of reform is to start with those who bear the weightiest responsibilities in the church. "Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first. In the day of final reckoning God will inquire what he did to win to Christ those whom he took the responsibility of bringing into the world. Great

good done for others cannot cancel the debt that he owes to God to care for his own children."¹²

The neglect of this work by those who are the head of families, brings irreversible consequences.

"Many children will rise up in judgment and condemn their parents for not restraining them and charge upon them their destruction. The false sympathy and blind love of parents cause them to excuse the faults of their children and pass them by without correction, and their children are lost in consequence, and the blood of their souls will rest upon the unfaithful parents."¹³

We have been called to do a work in the spirit and power of Elijah. Obviously, we are not going to anoint kings, but we are to do what was predicted in Malachi 4:5, 6. The work in behalf of our families, so that they may stand in that great day, requires our time, our dedication, utmost interest, much prayer, watchfulness, and anxiety. "With joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed. Fathers, mothers, shall the voices of your children swell the song of gladness in that day?"¹⁴ Our sincere desire is that it will be so, and that this present time of probation, which our merciful God is still granting us, may be used to hasten this noble purpose. **R**

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- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 429.
- ⁵ *The Adventist Home*, p. 38.
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- ⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.
- ⁸ *Steps to Christ*, p. 17.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ¹⁰ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 441.
- ¹¹ *Child Guidance*, p. 556.
- ¹² *The Adventist Home*, pp. 353, 354.
- ¹³ *Child Guidance*, pp. 563, 564.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 569.

Guarding the Avenues of the Soul

BY D. P. SILVA

Whether in a great metropolis or a small town, the main avenues and thoroughfares occupy strategic positions. With rare exceptions, they always lead to the center of the city. In certain places these avenues are even referred to as “arteries.” At the center of the city are the most important institutions and administrative offices. The security of the entire administration depends largely on what goes in through those avenues. The administrative institutions must always be well protected because the whole city and all surrounding areas are affected—positively or negatively, depending on what happens to the administration. The same applies to countries. The access roads must always be well protected.

The tragedy that occurred in New York City and Washington D.C. in the United States on September 11, 2001, is a poignant example of how well guarded all the accesses to a city or to a country should be. As it is well known throughout the world, the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense, were severely targeted by three civilian airplanes commandeered by terrorists of al-Qaeda. More than 3,000 persons died in this tragedy, and all indications show that the fourth airplane was on its way to strike the White House, the residence of the American president. But it crashed in Pennsylvania before reaching its

target. Ever since these terrorist attacks on that tragic September morning, all the ports, airports, and U.S. borders have been well guarded.

The modern electronic means of communication used by the terrorist net, well exemplifies the resources used by Satan to reach, corrupt, and even destroy the human mind. Millions of dollars were spent coordinating those attacks. Much time was spent in training the suicidal pilots in American flight schools. All was carefully devised so that all would happen according to the attacker’s plans. And it worked! The mastermind of the attacks stated that the results were beyond expectation.

In the broader spiritual sense, Satan likewise is a skillful planner. He uses all resources at his command, and if those are not efficient enough, he creates new ones to reach his objectives. Even more, he has 6,000 years of active work experience with the human mind.

When dealing in Eden with sinless beings, the archenemy used powerful methods to attract the holy pair. First, he attracted Eve to the place where the tree of knowledge of good and evil was placed. Eve saw the tree with its pleasant fruit, and she heard the charming voice of the enemy speaking through the serpent. Eve became fascinated with the forbidden fruit and touched it. Finally, she ate it (olfactory and palate senses) and took it to her companion. All five senses were utilized by the enemy to reach his infernal object. Immediately after Eve’s fall, the wily

foe used her as an instrument in the fall of Adam.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

The word of God in Proverbs 4:23 tells us to “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” We need to keep in mind that the expression “heart” in the majority of cases refers to the human mind.

The Pharisees accused the disciples of Jesus of disrespecting the traditions of the elders, because they did not follow the ritual of purification that the Jews were accustomed to before meals. When Jesus was alone with His disciples He said: “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man” (Matthew 15:18-20).

Let us meditate on the inspired thoughts found in these three Bible references: Proverbs 4:23; 23:7; and Matthew 15:18-20.

1. We need to guard our heart well.
2. Whatever is in our heart shows what we are.
3. If the heart is not well guarded, out of it will proceed murders, adulteries, prostitutions, false wit-

nesses, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man. By God's grace, we need to control the avenues of the soul so that our hearts may be full of the heavenly influence; then, out of it will proceed only those things that are for the honor and glory of God.

Let us consider the battle going on for the control of the human mind. On the one hand, God through His great love seeks—with our consent—to assume control of our mind, preparing us for His glorious eternal kingdom. On the other hand, Satan also seeks to invade our mind—even against our will—to assume control of our life and lead us to eternal destruction. Divine power, and satanic as well, are reaching out for the control of our mind utilizing all the avenues of the soul.

"The apostle [Peter] sought to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to forbidden themes or from spending its energies on trifling subjects. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentinelled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness."¹

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

What are the avenues of the soul? Our five senses: eyes, ears, taste, touch, and smell. "All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues to the soul."²

The avenues of the soul should be shut to all that is impure, earthly, and satanic, and be constantly open towards Heaven. The apostle Paul wrote: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:1-5).

Even though Satan will try to attack our mind through all the senses, it seems that the most vulnerable ones are the senses of seeing and hearing. We are constantly bombarded with what we see and hear. Here are some of the resources he uses in the destruction of mankind:

Books

Books exert a tremendous influence on the mind of the readers. When the Word of God is heard, read, and obeyed, it is able to transform millions of lives, preparing them for eternity. On the other hand, books written by infidel and immoral authors are able to destroy millions of lives, preparing them for eternal destruction.

"Pure healthful reading will be to the mind what healthful food is to the body. You will thus become stronger to resist temptation, to form right habits, and to act upon right principles."³

"The nature of one's religious experience is revealed by the character of the books one chooses to read in one's leisure moments. In order to have a healthy tone of mind and sound religious principles, the youth must live in communion with God through His word. Pointing out the way of salvation through Christ, the Bible is our guide to a higher, better life."⁴

"If you had never read one word in . . . books [of infidel authors] you

would today be far better able to comprehend that Book which, above all other books, is worthy to be studied, and which gives the only correct ideas regarding higher education."⁵

Old and modern theater

"Among the most dangerous resorts of pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements.

"The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence. . . . The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement."⁶

The theatrical scenes presented in the olden days are today massively shown on television, videos, Internet, and so on. It is not necessary for anyone to leave home to go to the theater nowadays. The theater can easily come right to your home through TV and the Internet.

From an article written by Paul Smithson entitled, "The Influence of TV," we quote the following:

"In a recent TV guide I found that of 290 movies listed to be aired on cable, only 47 were not described as having strong language, adult themes, nudity, violence, or sexual situations. Of those 47, only 18 had been produced in the last two decades. And of those 18, nine were children's films. The others were mostly documentaries.

"Why has TV become so corrupt? Just look behind the scenes. Public opinion published a survey of 104 of Hollywood's most influential writers, producers, and executives.

The results were that 97% support abortion; over 80% believe homosexuality is not wrong; over 50% do not think adultery is wrong; over 90% seldom or never attend religious service.

"When we continually allow ourselves to be influenced by things which Jesus warned against, our hearts become calloused and begin to think nothing of watching and hearing filth. Like those in Jeremiah's day many no longer 'know how to blush' at sin (Jeremiah 8:12). Do you blush at sin? Does it bother you to hear and see nudity, sex, and profanity? Some might blush if they were out in public, but many do not when they see it right in their own living room."

Video games

From a newsletter of the "Spiritual Cinema Alliance," we extract the following:

"If we want to make a positive change in the world, we cannot ignore video games because their violent subject matter is having a major influence on our youth and our society as a whole. . . .

"In 1992, Dr. Brandon Centerwall wrote that 'long-term childhood exposure to TV is a causal factor behind approximately one-half of the homicides committed in the United States, or approximately 10,000 homicides committed annually;' and that if, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would today be 10,000 fewer homicides each year in the United States.

"The United Nations, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, National Institute of Mental Health, American Academy of Mental Health, and the U.S. Surgeon General, have all made definitive statements about the relationship between childhood exposure to visual violent images and later manifestation of real world aggression and violent criminal acts. . . .

"Right now, we have an epidemic of violent video games training

our children to be de-sensitized killers. I am appalled and concerned when I see what children are watching. What are parents thinking to allow their children to watch these games? All I can say is that parents are either unconscious or negligent when they allow their children to partake of these games. Every parent needs to know and control what their children are watching as modes of entertainment!

"Unfortunately, many parents do not monitor their children's media activity. They just give in to the desire of their children, who are bombarded with aggressive gaming industry marketing and strong peer pressure. . . .

"These video games are effectively being used by the military to train snipers to be able to kill people, . . . so why not the kids who watch them also?

"So what are these violent video games doing, especially to the brains of children? Children have been scientifically proven to process information differently than adults, in a different area of the brain than adults. Children's brains are still in a critical stage of development and they are permanently impacted by such conditioning techniques to violence through video entertainment. . . .

"The Australian Family Association is extremely concerned about film and literature classifications. Spokesperson Danny Casey believes there's just too much evidence linking violent behaviour to some videos and especially video games.

"According to psychiatrist, Dr. Julian Parmegiani, watching violent videos could tip some people over the edge. He says, 'children who watch violent videos behave more aggressively.' "

Music

The effect of music on human behavior is evident. We are affected either for good or for evil depending on the kind of music we hear. For instance, when we listen to Handel's Messiah, we feel as if we are attending a heavenly choir.

The power of the sacred music is very well illustrated in the experience of King Saul and David:

"And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Samuel 16:23).

"David's skillful playing upon the harp soothed the troubled spirit of Saul. As he listened to the enchanting strains of music, it had an influence to dispel the gloom which had settled upon him, and to bring his excited mind into a more rational, happy state."⁷

On the other hand, demonic music is used to invoke the presence of Satan in a spiritualistic environment. Rock music has its evil effect upon those who listen to such music. Sadly, most of the music played in many churches is really used by Satan to achieve his purposes.

"Music can be a great power for good; yet we do not make the most of this branch of worship. The singing is generally done from impulse or to meet special cases, and at other times those who sing are left to blunder along, and the music loses its proper effect upon the minds of those present. Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. . . .

"Many want to do things after their own style; they object to consultation, and are impatient under leadership. Well-matured plans are needed in the service of God."⁸

"The low, common pleasure parties, gatherings for eating and drinking, singing and playing on instruments of music, are inspired by a spirit that is from beneath. They are an oblation unto Satan."⁹

Some famous singers give very important information about rock music.

Little Richard said: "I believe this kind of music is demonic . . . a lot of beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you'll see that is true."

Mike Warnke stated his plans for using acid rock to keep his young crowd tuned in. He had initiated hypnotic rock music as a prelude to his rituals and encouraged heavier usage of drugs with it.

Jerry Lee Lewis, who openly claims the presence of the devil in him, boasts that he's dragging his audiences to hell along with him. He says, "How am I going to get them to heaven with a 'Whole Lotta Shaken Goin' On'? You can't serve two masters; you'll hate one and love the other."

David Winter openly admits in his book *New Singer, New Song* that "an incessant beat does erode a sense of responsibility in much the same way as alcohol does. . . . You fall in the grip of a relentless stream of sound to which something very basic and primitive in the human nature responds."

Dr. Joseph Crow of the University of Seattle has declared: "Rock is a use of music based on mathematical formulae to condition the mind through calculated frequencies (vibrations), and it is used to modify the body chemistry to make the mind susceptible to modification and indoctrination. Rock music can be (and is) employed for mind bending, reeducation and reorganization."

How about "gospel music," "Christian rock," and kindred types of heavily rhythmic music? All these have the same origin: they come from the great musician who once was Lucifer, and became Satan, the adversary.

Our Mission

What is our highest priority as parents? To prepare our families for the kingdom of God. What is our mission as a church? The same mission that Elijah and John the Baptist had.

Of John the Baptist it is written: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,

and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16, 17).

Regarding the remnant people of this last generation, it was prophesied: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

We urgently need to restore the family altar. The study of the Word of God with persevering prayer, morning and evening worship, the gathering of the family before sunset on Fridays to sing, pray, and study God's Word, all these should be restored.

"In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Our message is not to be one of peace and safety. As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear—'Prepare to meet thy God.'"¹⁰

Let us seriously take heed of these timely words of Inspiration about the two classes of people in God's church:

a) "This age is one of peculiar temptation, especially to the self-sufficient ones, who feel no special need of guarding the avenues of the soul. Unless they heed the warnings God has given, they will most surely be drawn away from the principles of the truth. They will stand among those who dishonor the faith and give heed to seducing spirits. They plead for indulgence of appetite.

They enjoy those things which animalize the nature. They do not know what it means to be meek and lowly in heart. They take no delight in contemplating the character of the Saviour. The rebuke of Christ is upon them because in thought and action they are corrupt."¹¹

b) "He who wears Christ's yoke sees constantly new beauty and loveliness in the Saviour. He counts self as nothing, for he keeps his eyes fixed on Jesus. He thinks of Jesus and speaks of Jesus. His soul is constantly reaching forward and upward for more distinct views of the One in whom all his hopes of eternal life are centered. Nothing is permitted to eclipse this view. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same likeness from glory to glory, from character to character, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."¹²

"Christ Himself will decide who are worthy to dwell with the family of heaven. He will judge every man according to his words and his works. Profession is as nothing in the scale. It is character that decides destiny."¹³

In this short period of probation still available to us today, let us seek the Lord with all our hearts and pray that He may fit us to live in His kingdom. Together with our families, we want to utter these words at His soon return, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). R

References:

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 518.

² *My Life Today*, p. 86.

³ *The Review and Herald*, December 26, 1882.

⁴ *Messages to Young People*, p. 273.

⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 162.

⁶ *My Life Today*, p. 86.

⁷ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 369.

⁸ *Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 325.

⁹ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 367.

¹⁰ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E.G. White Comments], volume 4, p. 1184.

¹¹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 405.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 74.

MOVING? Please let us know.



Fruitful Plants

*When we study horticulture,
We learn all about the plants
And that which makes them flourish green
and thrive so well in strong advance.*

*Yet, there's a science greater still—
To learn of every feature
That fosters life and vibrant health
In yet a higher creature. . . .*

*The humans made in God's own image
Grow as plants in fertile loam;
The richest, most productive soil
Is found within a happy home.*

*Most fruitful growth occurs right here—
Where, rooted in the deepest love,
All hearts unite in looking always
To one Father up above.*

—bbm