

# YOUTH messenger

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**THE LAW OF LIBERTY—PART 2**

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## PART 2 *The Law of Liberty*

Generally speaking, religious individuals and groups find it easier to be in agreement with and live in obedience to the first four commandments than to be in agreement with and live in obedience to the last six of the ten commandments. Jesus summarized the first four in Matthew 22:37 with the following words: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” The last six are summarized in Matthew 22:39 with the following words: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

This is not something new, of course, since the same practice was widely popular among the religious Jews in the time of Jesus. They kept man’s obligation to God in high regard, by obeying the first four commandments while disregarding the last six. This is evident in the Good Samaritan parable, inspired by a true story that had recently taken place in the area. The priest and the Levite were most likely on their way back from the temple, where they had taught the law—but when they had the opportunity to help a fellow human being, they didn’t feel the obligation to do so.

The writers of the articles in this magazine are sharing their own thoughts and experiences related to this very important relationship between family members, friends and even enemies. I hope you will be blessed by these short readings and that your love for your neighbor will be manifested through service to Jesus in the person of His children, for He says: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matthew 25:40)

—Adrian Finaru

*I'm Free to*

## LOVE AND RESPECT MY PARENTS

by Gabriel Serban

I was 15 years old when my mom accompanied me to town to help me enroll in high school. It was a September morning and somehow I was excited for this new step in my life. However, as we approached the school, I recognized some of my friends who were already there, and as I was greeting them, I noticed that they were there by themselves. It was then when I began to be unhappy that my mom didn't let me go by myself—thinking that all my friends would now make fun of me, that I was not grown enough to be independent. Somehow my mom realized that and encouraged me to go and be with them, but she would watch me from a certain distance.

A few weeks later we found out that she was sick and on December 25<sup>th</sup> of the same year—within just a few

months—she passed away. Ever since, I regret the way I responded to my mom's love on that occasion. She was there to help me, to be with me—yet all I understood at that time was that it was just an opportunity for friends to make fun of me. How I wish to have her around now!

Sometimes it may be too late when we realize our parents' love for us. Therefore, I am free to love and respect my parents while they are alive, that I may live without regrets when they won't be among us.



## UNDERSTANDING THE PARENTS' LOVE

As you saw a picture of my teen years' experience, you may find yourself feeling the same way, unhappy for many reasons. You don't understand why there must be a curfew when you go out, you don't understand why parents have to say something on your choice of friends, you don't understand why they comment on your clothing, etc.—and you just find yourself unhappy, venting, shutting yourself down or even yelling in your heart if not verbalizing it to them. Then you may think, why should I care for them when they don't even love me?

Has this happened to you? How did you deal with such thoughts? It would be good if we could ask ourselves: **Why** do they do things this way? and then reason on the question. The short answer would be because they love us so much and they want what is truly best for us, for our future, and even for eternity. They can see the end results of our actions and they want to help us avoid certain mistakes.

It is true that mothers and fathers manifest their love differently.

The mother's love maybe more visible. She is always hugging the child; she is more sentimental, and the child always remembers that—and in some cases, they think that only mom loves them.

The father loves with his shoulders. He is always bearing the home's responsibilities.

We live in an age when sometimes the mother's salary may be higher than the father's wage. But even then, it is the father that is always worried for the home to be warmed; it is the father that makes sure that everything is functioning indoors and outdoors so that everyone may be comfortable and happy. In this way it is harder to see that the father loves you as much as the mother does since he is not always present in a visible way. But they love the same.

The parents show their children by their unconditional love the first image of God. When we think about the love that God manifested towards us, it is the same unconditional



and sincere love that the parents have for their children. This love goes beyond the times you can remember. The Bible says about Jeremiah, that even before he was formed he was known by God (Jeremiah 1:5). Before you were even formed God knew you, before you were even born, your parents loved you. They were worried when there was no noticeable movement when you were still in the womb or if they couldn't find the heartbeat right away. They watched over you in infancy and nursed you in sickness. They suffered much anxiety on your account.

“Especially have conscientious, godly parents felt the deepest interest that their children should take a right course. As they have seen faults in their children, how heavy have been their hearts! . . . If they could see their mother's tears and hear her prayers to God in their behalf, if they could listen to her suppressed and broken sighs, their hearts would feel and they would speedily confess their wrongs and ask to be forgiven.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 292.

## LOVE & RESPECT

“Children, it is necessary that your mothers love you, or else you would be very unhappy. And is it not also right that children love their parents, and show this love by pleasant looks, pleasant words, and cheerful, hearty cooperation, helping the father out-of-doors and the mother indoors?” *Ibid.*, p. 295.

Our parents are loving us with unconditional love, but imagine how great their happiness would be when they receive love and respect in return. As we read about the child Jesus, He was always bringing a smile on His mother's face. “Even in His childhood [Christ] spoke words of comfort and tenderness to young and old. His mother could not but mark His words, His spirit, His willing obedience to all her requirements.”—*The Youth's Instructor*, September 8, 1898.

Respect is manifested by obedience. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3). “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8).

“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 earlier 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.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

“If you are truly converted, if you are children of Jesus, you will honor your parents; you will not only do what they tell you but will watch for opportunities to help them. In doing this you are working for Jesus. He considers all these care-taking, thoughtful deeds as done to Himself. This is the most important kind of missionary work; and those who are faithful in these little everyday duties are gaining a

valuable experience.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 295.

“When children have unbelieving parents, and their commands contradict the requirements of Christ, then, painful though it may be, they must obey God and trust the consequences with Him.”—*Ibid.*, p. 293. But even then, we should not hate them but “bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (Romans 12:14).

### **CONFIDE IN GODLY PARENTS**

“If you are blessed with God-fearing parents, seek counsel of them. Open to them your hopes and plans; learn the lessons which their life experiences have taught.

“If children would be more familiar with their parents, if





they would confide in them and unburden to them their joys and sorrows, they would save themselves many a future heartache. When perplexed to know what course is right, let them lay the matter just as they view it before their parents, and ask advice of them. Who are so well calculated to point out their dangers as godly parents? Who can understand their peculiar temperaments so well as they? Children who are Christians will esteem above every earthly blessing the love and approbation of their God-fearing parents. The parents can sympathize with the children and pray for and with them that God will shield and guide them. Above everything else they will point them to their never-failing Friend and Counselor.”—*Ibid.*, p. 73.

## THE BLESSING OF LOVING AND RESPECTING OUR PARENTS

“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. Unless such learn obedience and submission here, they will never learn it; the peace of the ransomed will not be marred by disobedient, unruly, unsubmitive children. No commandment breaker can inherit the kingdom of heaven.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 497, 498.

There were other things that made me unhappy besides the experience that I’ve shared with you. I didn’t like that I had a busier schedule than all my friends. While everyone was playing soccer on the street or swimming in the river next to our property, we had to work in the garden. I disliked that in such a way that I got to the point of hating to garden as well. But as I look back throughout the years, most of those whom I envied, did not even finish their studies. But because we obeyed even when we did not understand the **Why**, I can look back and thank my parents for rearing us the way they did.

As we grow up, we will start understanding more and more our parents’ love for us, but many times it may be too late to share it with them. However, the apostle Paul when quoting the fifth commandment mentions that it “is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2, 3). Obeying, we may live a longer life here on this earth, free of remorse, maybe healthier than those who destroy their health by neglecting their parents’ guidance—and also we may have life eternal where we can live together with Jesus and with our parents. What a joy it would be for a faithful mother and a faithful father to see in God’s kingdom the son and the daughter that they nurtured and brought up from conception and infancy! 



by Edward Odemo

*I Am Free to*  
**LOVE MY ENEMIES**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43, 44).

This was a very powerful sermon and its requirements were above what the rabbis taught. The listeners likely wondered: “Why would He bring this issue at this time when we are tired of forcefully paying taxes to Caesar, tired of being under his cruel government?” God’s chosen people had expected an earth-shattering announcement. There was hope this would be a declaration of independence for Israel and that (according to their human perspective) Jesus would

free them from the cruelty of the Romans. Yet Christ was actually about to declare something better—a heavenly kingdom free from hatred, enmity, confrontation, and conflict, governed with an everlasting love.

The Jews had been oppressed for years by Egyptians, then Assyrians, then Babylonians, and now the Romans. They loved their fellow Jews, but they felt free to hate everyone else, especially their political enemies.

In a way, who could really blame them? After centuries of oppression, it was as if hatred for enemies had become their version of patriotism. Hating one’s enemies came naturally to them, but this is not what God had called them to do. The truth is that God had instructed them to care for their enemies and help them. (See Exodus 23:4, 5.) Jesus also revealed the spirituality of the



law with the profound command: “Love your enemies.”

An **enemy** or a **foe** is an individual or a group considered to be forcefully adverse or threatening. “Enemy” is a strong word, and tends to invoke anger, hatred, frustration, envy, jealousy, fear, distrust, and possibly grudging respect, if not outright violence or even war. The opposite is a friend or ally.

## TYPES OF ENEMIES

Adversaries can be classed in different categories:

**Common enemy:** These are not very dangerous because their mission is to gossip and tarnish your name without PHYSICAL impact. (See Lamentations 3:62, 63; Psalm 69:12.)

**“Frenemies”:** These were once your friends but have now turned out to be your foes. You were vulnerable with them, sharing your weakness, any immature plans you might have once had, and even personal secrets. All the times you were alone together are at their mercy—and now they’re belittling these things to bring you down. This even happened to Jesus, who was perfect and never did anything foolish or wrong. “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psalm 41:9).

**Family enemy:** Within the household hatred may emerge between you and your siblings, parents, aunts, or uncles. Remember Cain and Abel, Esau

and Jacob, Rachel and Leah, Joseph and his brothers, and David and his brothers. (See Psalm 69:4, 8.)

**Enemy of Destiny:** Saul the king of Israel was mad at David—even a mere mention of that name would make him lose his appetite and cause him sleepless nights. This was only because he saw a future in David; he sensed that he was going to become the king. And the fact that Samuel anointed him angered him the most.

Joseph’s brothers wanted to kill him so they could prevent the fulfillment of his dream of ruling over them—which he finally did.

King Herod made a decree to kill all the male children of Israel in order to destroy Jesus, the future king. Yes, this war had begun in heaven, and Satan came down with all craftiness to try to establish it even in the church. As long as Satan lives, war will never end.

We are warned that when God brings His converted children into the church, Satan also brings his unconverted souls into the church—such become church members and are often even placed in positions of trust while seeking to destroy the very foundation of God’s church. In order to gain and keep these positions, they use every means at their disposal to achieve their agenda. Some Christians have allegedly been poisoned, beaten, and killed just because of a church election.

The enemy of destiny is quick to identify a talented person likely

to become a leader. He then uses all means possible to block and destroy that person and push his way into becoming the leader instead.

Remember: People can only delay God's plans, but they cannot stop them. The destiny of a person as planned by God will be accomplished.

**Associate enemy:** This kind of enemy appears when someone with whom you are associated is an enemy of someone else. Because you're connected to that person, you may end up as an enemy by default, as with the Samaritans and the Jews. (See John 4:9.)

**A sworn enemy:** These enemies make an oath, vowing in a hot decision to fight or even kill you. They will never rest till they accomplish their goal, for example, Saul against David (2 Samuel 22:18) and the enemies of Paul (Acts 23:12).

## FREEDOM TO LOVE YOUR ENEMY

When we read John 3:16, we can clearly understand the Father's immense love for undeserving sinners. Actually, the Christian message revolves around this great principle. Christians are called to love God in a way that resets our heart and enables us to love others in an extraordinary, radical way higher than human nature. This extends to our enemies as well. There is a common saying to "keep your friends close and your enemies closer."

Since we, by nature, are born in the bondage of sin, our heart, thoughts, and emotions are naturally governed by worldly principles, but when we receive Christ the new life begins. Things have now changed. The bondage of sinful thoughts has been replaced with freedom to love and forgive. (See Galatians 5:13-21).

We have been bought by the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19), and any believer who takes the name of Christ is fully His property (Galatians 2:20). When we surrender to Him, anything done to us is done to Christ.

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife."—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 760.

When Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), He was referring to the enemies who hate you because you differ in religious beliefs. We have heard of many Christians being persecuted by Muslims, and even Christians turning against fellow Christians because they come from different churches, or oppression from family members due a disagreement in their beliefs.



## FACING YOUR ENEMY

Have you ever had someone who wronged you to willingly, humbly come and tell you, **“Please, I know I wronged you; I did a very bad thing to you; I am the one who was responsible for your parents’ death. . . . I just don’t know what came over me . . . but I am the cause of your suffering. . . . Please find a place in your heart to forgive me!”**

What would you do, dear brother/sister?

This indeed is a very tough step for normal human beings. It is bitter gall to swallow. Only the heart filled with the spirit of Christ will find it possible to forgive. (See Colossians 3:12-16.)

Jesus bids us pray: “Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (Luke

11:4). “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).

When we are wrong, we need to be forgiven but in order for us to be forgiven, we also need to forgive; it is a give-and-take condition. We should forgive because we are also forgiven. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15).

## FORGIVENESS

What is forgiveness? How do we understand the word “forgive”?

These famous quotes from unknown poets are familiar to most of us:

“**“To err is human,  
to forgive is divine”**”

“**Forgiveness is  
the fragrance that  
the violet sheds on  
the heel that has  
crushed it.**”

“**Forgiveness is the  
perfume which  
flowers give when  
trampled upon.**”

“**We cannot love our  
enemies if we can't  
forgive them.**”

## **THE GOLDEN RULE**

“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Proverbs 24:17). “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thus shalt thou heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee” (Proverbs 25:21).

“Who is strong? He who converts an enemy into a friend.”—*The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1906).

## **HAS SOMEONE HURT YOU?**

The members of the early church took time to reconcile with one another, confess, and make amends to the wrongs done to each other. Then their hearts were made ready to receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:14.)

Likewise, we today are looking forward to the outpouring of the latter rain. But unconfessed sins will hinder us from receiving that promise.

“**Forgiveness is the fragrance, rare and sweet,  
That flowers yield when trampled on by feet  
That reckless tread the tender, teeming earth;  
For blossoms crushed and bleeding yet give birth  
To pardon's perfume; from the stern decrees  
Of unforgiveness, Nature ever flees.**”

So what should we do? What if the person who wronged me doesn't care? We are told:

**“If there have been difficulties brethren and sisters—if envy, malice, bitterness, evil surmisings, have existed, confess these sins, not in a general way, but go to your brethren and sisters personally. Be definite. If you have committed one wrong and they twenty, confess that one as though you were the chief offender.** Take them by the hand, let your heart soften under the influence of the Spirit of God, and say, **‘Will you forgive me? I have not felt right toward you.** I want to make right every wrong, that naught may stand registered against me in the books of heaven. I must have a clean record.’ Who, think you, would withstand such a movement as this?”—*The Review and Herald*, December 16, 1884. [Emphasis added.]


## WHAT IF ONE YOU WRONGED IS NOW DEAD?

You may have pushed some people out of the church by promoting yourself. Please confess. Some have attained and maintained positions of trust in various workplaces and schools, or even earned promotions just by stepping on other people's back. Some have created job opportunities for their friends and relatives by setting traps for fellow employees. The victims lose their jobs and the plotters bring in that relative, that friend or acquaintance

to fill that position. Those wronged have suffered and even lost their life. But, “the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head” (Obadiah 1:15).

**The Spirit of Prophecy offers a strong admonition,** yet shedding a ray of hope: “You could at least have made efforts to correct your acts of injustice to your fellow men. You cannot make every case right, for some whom you have injured have gone into their graves, and the account stands registered against you. In these cases the best you can do is to bring a trespass offering to the altar of the Lord, and He will accept and pardon you. But where you can, you should make reparation to the wronged ones.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 339.

While we still have time, let's grab that opportunity and genuinely reconcile with these persons right away, so that God can forgive us.

Whatever the form or type of enemy we have, they deserve our love. On the cross, our Saviour prayed, “Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Stephen, at the point of death, also prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). People will do bad things to us because they don't understand what they're doing. Satan has blinded their eyes or they are acting in ignorance. They need our prayers and love. 



# *I Am Free to* **STAY PURE**

by Monica Osongo

**W**hen sin marred every perfect creation of God, man—being the center of the drama—was no exception. Man lost the purity, glory, and righteousness endowed to him by his Creator. One who was now pure became wretched, unclean and ranked impure indeed, as we read in Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

But thanks to our loving Father, rays of love, purity, light and life in its abundance were assured to the first pair. This became the desire of ages for the human race from that time until now. Even when the Spirit of God descended upon His servants this claim was manifested—God calling people to holiness, purity, perfection, and righteousness: “Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FREE?**

None have either been free, nor understood what it means to be free like one who has lost their freedom. In most cases only after we have fallen, having been chained by guilt and sin, that we realize how free we had been before. Remember when the Israelites were in slavery for many years in Egypt, they cried to the Lord. The same occurred when they were taken captive by Babylon. (See Psalm 137:1-4.) They cried, longing for the freedom they once had.

This is one of the examples that explains well the state of being in slavery: It’s all toil, sorrow, and sadness; no rest day nor night for souls—to the point of forgetting our God so that we can’t worship Him as we would.

To be free means to be restored to the peace of mind you had from the beginning, to have the power to make your own choice without limitations in light of His word. That freedom is what Christ brought to the human race who had been taken captive by Satan.

Therefore, God wants and is always willing to make us pure—and His invitation illustrates that we are free to stay pure, for He bids us come to Him. John 3:16 puts Christ at the center of our freedom from the bondage of slavery of sin and its consequences that had made humanity wretched beyond imagination.

Therefore, we are now free because Christ declares: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). (See also Ezekiel 34:27.) Brethren, if therefore we are now free to stay pure, Christ bids us with the assurance, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). This should be the desire of every single youth out there—to see God! Don’t you really want to be one of them?

If yes, then. . . .

## **HOW CAN A YOUTH STAY PURE?**

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

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil” (Proverbs 3:5–7).

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:3–5).

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to God’s word. This simply means that keeping God’s commandments will enable us to stay pure since it will keep us free from immoral behaviors such as stealing, fornication, adultery, etc.

## **A LESSON FROM THE WATER LILY**

Ellen White describes:

“In America we have the fresh water lilies. These beautiful lilies come up pure, spotless, perfect, without a single mar. They come up through a mass of debris. I said to my son, ‘I want you to make an effort to get me the stem of that lily as near the root as possible. I want you to understand something about it.’

“He drew up a handful of lilies, and I looked at them. They were all full of open channels, and the stems were gathering the properties from the pure sands beneath, and these were

being developed into the pure and spotless lily. It refused all the debris. It refused every unsightly thing, but there it was developed in its purity.

“Now this is exactly the way that we are to educate our youth in this world. Let their minds and hearts be instructed who God is, who Jesus Christ is, and the sacrifice that He has made in our behalf. Let them draw the purity, the virtue, the grace, the courtesy, the love, the forbearance; let them draw it from the Source of all power.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 58.

As youth, we are like these water lilies. As they grow through the tough sand and debris, they still manage to sieve out what filter in only that which makes them pure. Likewise, although living as we do in a filthy world of sin, we need to depend entirely on Christ and our heavenly Father, the source of our freedom to stay pure by portraying the true image of Christ who walked as an example for us. As a youth, Jesus was tempted in all kinds of ways but He did not sin. He maintained purity in all dimensions, and so can we also in His power as we put on the full armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18. No wonder the apostle Paul continues to give a reason for us to remain pure: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). The cross declares us pure,

which implies that we are free of immoral behavior, clean, and free from imperfections. Christ’s death on the cross makes us pure from all our imperfections. Therefore, brethren, God wants us to be presented before Christ as pure virgins without blemish, fit for heaven. And that’s why Christ also said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Let us therefore not fall back since now there is nothing else to hinder us from staying pure; sin no longer has power over us. We are Christ’s own and the spirit that He has given us is not of fear but of pure love, self-control, and confidence.

## **WHAT DOES IT COST TO STAY PURE?**

We are living in a world where doing what is right is seen as being abnormal and doing the contrary is regarded as being on the current trend. Sadly, we’ve all seen many of our fellow youth giving up because the society around them allures them so easily, and they have become addicted to things of this world and have lost their sense of the divine calling to purity. They fall so low into the depths of sin that they are no longer in any position to restore themselves back to the old paths. Money, fame, drugs, and all sorts of worldly amusements replace God in their lives. Our vow to stay pure, therefore, is based on our everyday choices. We choose what to watch on television (if anything at all), as well as what to



view on our smartphones and other electronic devices, which music to listen to, what books to read, which friends to associate with, which places to spend free time, and what to eat, drink, say, wear, etc.

Here comes the greatest test of everyone that claims to follow Christ and wants to stay pure, and it is what everyone must have asked his or herself in the process of accepting Jesus Christ. Count the cost, like the disciples of Jesus. Peter summarized it in His words to Christ: “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee” (Mark 10:28). In this Peter was asking himself what we shall gain since the sacrifice we have to offer is exceedingly high for us to be pure. In relation to wealth, Jesus had just explained to them: “Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Verse 24, 25).

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).


## LESSONS FROM YOUNG HEROES

As a youth, the prophet “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8).

Sometimes the cost may take us to prison like Daniel in the lions’ den, but in the end, we gain the victory. Daniel and his friends were found to be brighter and wiser after refusing to eat from the king’s table. Remember young Joseph in the face of temptation. He refused to be near it. (Genesis 39:7-12.)

From this every youth should learn a lesson: There is no room for compromise. Similar temptations may come our way which may seem to overpower us, but let us remember the experience of Joseph—that even when he was unjustly taken to prison, he did not forsake God.

Let us uphold and demonstrate the same purity at whatever cost. The cost for us to stay pure is a serious battle against the fleshly desires; it is a great controversy.

Let it be our daily prayer and desire to remain pure. I can now say, “I am free to stay pure, free from all the fears of tomorrow and from all the guilt of my past. Praise God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord for I am free.” 



*I Am Free to*  
**WORK FOR  
WHAT I OWN**

by Limbani Matola

It is natural for a person to desire to own something valuable. We all have something that belongs to us, and we're glad to work for its improvement. Today the world teaches about human rights. Among the rights declared in writing in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17 states that "Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property."

People work very hard to own something for themselves. As a result, many own companies, firms, industries, and various estates. They realize it is fulfilling to work for what they own. They cultivate means to make their businesses more productive, thereby encouraging others to do the same.

But unfortunately, there are also some that use wicked methods such as deception, prostitution, murder, etc., to get

ahead. Sadly, today many youth are working hard to pursue careers to be able to succeed in owning more and bigger things without pausing to think where it may take them—even if it leads into areas that are not morally upright. Some may spend excessive hours misusing social media in heavy pursuit of evil paths of gain. If we are not vigilant, any of us could get caught up in such snares.

"Satan is constantly presenting inducements to God's chosen people to attract their minds from the solemn work of preparation for the scenes just in the future. He is in every sense of the word a deceiver, a skillful charmer. . . . He is wide awake, busily engaged in leading the world captive, and through the agency of worldlings he keeps up a continual pleasing excitement to draw the unwary who profess to believe the truth to unite with worldlings. The lust of the eye, the desire for excitement and pleasing

entertainment, is a temptation and snare to God's people. Satan has many finely woven, dangerous nets which are made to appear innocent, but with which he is skillfully preparing to infatuate God's people. There are pleasing shows, entertainments, . . . and an endless variety of enterprises constantly arising calculated to lead the people of God to love the world and the things that are in the world."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 550.

## AN EXAMPLE OF ECONOMY

In contrast, as we focus on the value of wholesome work, the Bible calls us to consider the behavior of ants. "Go to the ant, ... consider her ways, and be wise." "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer" (Proverbs 6:6; 30:25). Ants, though seemingly weak and perhaps easily crushed under one's foot, nonetheless make use of wisdom to protect and preserve themselves in this world. They also work freely as people do. It is in fact because of their wisdom that they are able to be so prosperous and cover the earth just like humans. In summertime, one will find that ants are working diligently to collect and store as much food as they can for winter in the underground cities they have built. Ants ensure that they accumulate food. They generally hibernate in winter, and prepare and gather in summer.

Using tiny organs like antennae and their legs, these little

creatures move around laboring until they accomplish great things. They prosper because they work hard. They have time to work and time to relax or hibernate. When it is time to work, they work. They don't spend all they earn; they keep some for future use.

"Solomon presents to the world the industry of the ant as a reproach to those who waste their hours in sinful idleness, in practices which corrupt soul and body."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1157.

If we are to succeed like the ants that work freely and honorably, we need to follow God's directions of working, knowing that we have nothing of ourselves in this world. (See Job 1:21.)

## LEARNING FROM ANTS

### 1. Ants work to take care of themselves and their little ones.

- They care for one another.
- They are always looking out for one another.
- They protect each other and openly display love towards one another.
- They are known to defend and die for one another.

### 2. Ants support each other to succeed in their missions.

- They work constantly together.
- They are faithful to one another and to the queen. There are no protests, shootings, or boycotts; they just continue laboring as one within the colony.
- They have fellowship with one

another—sharing everything they find with all in the nest.

### **3. Ants are organized and follow order and system.**

- They break bread with one another, sharing all the food that is gathered and brought into the nest. They have a doctrine, an “operating system” within the nest that God ordained right from the time He created them. He spoke once and they have been doing what they were told to do ever since. Humanity, on the other hand, has been disobedient in what God originally instructed us to do.
- They obey God’s Word. Ever since their creation, they have just kept on doing His will. John 14:15.

### **4. Ants build their nests.**

- They build and repair together. Matthew 18:20; Ecclesiastes 4:9.
- They have constant fellowship with each other within the nest.

### **5. Ants leave a story for others to use and follow. They leave a legacy.**

- Ants traveling on a shorter trail between the nest and food can make more trips in an hour than ants traveling along longer trails, leaving more pheromone. Therefore, over time, the shortest trail has the strongest pheromone scent and becomes the preferred pathway. That explains why you see ants marching in a straight line directly toward your picnic.

- They adopt one another whenever the opportunity arises.
- They dwell in peace with one another within the nest. Galatians 5:14.
- They laboriously protect the queen (symbolic of the church) and each other with their lives. Romans 12:10-13.

### **6. Ants are adaptive. They can survive in harsh seasons by adopting survival skills.**

- If there’s plenty of food nearby, the foraging ants return quickly and recruit more workers to help gather food. When food is scarce, the foragers have to travel further, so they return more slowly. In this case, fewer ants are sent out to join the hunt. This coordination of worker ants’ efforts is a good example of adaptive ant behavior.

### **WHAT ABOUT US?**

In contrast to the ant, whenever someone devises wicked ways to gain a livelihood, typically the benefits of that labor end up solely for selfish purposes. Such persons don’t remember their Creator by returning the tithes and offerings that belong to Him and they seldom share with others what they earn. The Sabbath is not remembered to honor God. Life is treated like a competition. There is a desire to look better than others, to drive fancier cars than others, use better smartphones than others, and finally everything is about rising higher than anyone else. (Isaiah 14:13, 14.) We as young people are



in danger of being tempted to be drawn into such an attitude. **So, let's keep foremost in mind three directions from God:**

### a. Six days of work

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates” (Exodus 20:9, 10).

“All labor necessary to provide for the sustenance of the body is to be done in the six working days.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 6, 1898.

### b. Resting on the 7th day

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

“At the very beginning of the fourth commandment the Lord said, ‘Remember.’ He knew that amid the multitude of cares and perplexities man would be tempted to excuse himself from meeting the full requirement of the law, or would forget its sacred importance. Therefore, He said: ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’ (Exodus 20:8).

“All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 353.

### c. Tithing

“Thou shalt remember the Lord

thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 8:18). “Thou shalt truly **tithe all the increase** of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year” (Deuteronomy 14:22). “And **all the tithe** of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s: **it is holy** unto the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30). [Emphasis added.]

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

“He who gives men power to get wealth has with the gift bound up an obligation. Of all that we acquire He claims a specified portion. The tithe is the Lord’s.”—*Education*, p.138.

Job was a great man who possessed a lot of wealth. He lived a life to bless others, especially those in need. Job 29:11-16. Just like ants, we can do the same thing.

## CONCLUSION

God is love. His law is good. It is the law of liberty. We are all called to obey His law and be free to work for what we need, to return to God what is His, and to share with others as He directs. May we each keep in mind the reality that yes, we are free—and that we will ultimately give an account to our Maker for whatever we have done. Like the wise old ant, let us freely make our choices in wisdom!

## MISCHARACTERIZATION:

# I Am Free to SPEAK THE TRUTH

by Marco  
Alonso



The Bible story starts off by exposing a rather embarrassing fact about humanity; our pursuit to cover up and mischaracterize. This self-destructive endeavor is not limited to mischaracterization of others—but also of yourself. In the Eden story, we see Satan taking the form of the most cunning animal in the garden and introducing Eve to his mischaracterization of God. This mischaracterization of their Creator and Originator—will later manifest in their lives as self-told lies. Take a look.

**“For God doth know** that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). [Emphasis added.]

Consider this. Satan was offering a reason—unexpressed by God—as to why He had forbidden Adam and Eve to consume the fruit of this tree—thus mischaracterizing God’s intentions behind the command, “Ye shall not eat it of it.” This in turn convinces Eve that God is really trying to keep her from being wise, so she immediately gets this urge to seize on this presumably forbidden wisdom.

“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” (Genesis 3:6). [Emphasis added.]

She then proceeds to offer this fruit to Adam and they now find themselves naked. While they’re not dead yet, something is not right. After all, what is death? They have never experienced anything like this. However, something is clear; they are naked. And this does not feel right. Even as they look at each other, it is embarrassing. While both have shared the same forbidden dining experience, this naked reality is not comfortable. So, they go on to do what you and I have done many times. Perhaps something you are planning on doing or recently did. Wisdom is no longer your pursuit, but rather a cover-up and mischaracterization of yourself and others.

Throughout their time in Eden, God and the angels would come down and spend time with them. It was part of their routine. So, when God comes down to spend time with them—as He always did—Adam and Eve run for cover. They have attempted to cover themselves with fig leaves but now this fig-leaf clothing is not enough. Somehow hiding becomes the most logical thing to do.

## WHERE ARE YOU?

“Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9).

Pause for a second and think. Isn't this the question God is asking you? Isn't this the question asked throughout the Bible story? Where are you? (Genesis 3:9). What have you done? (Genesis 4:10). How did you get here? (1 Kings 19:9). What are you doing here? Where are you? You are supposed to be here with Me, but you're no longer here. What happened to our relationship? It was going very well! Was it something I did?

As it turned out, it was indeed thought of as something God did. But in reality, it was something Adam and Eve **assumed** that God did.

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12, 13).

Somehow Satan had mischaracterized God's character and identity. Now, not only are Adam and Eve mischaracterizing each other but they are also mischaracterizing God in an attempt to cover up and frame what has just happened. From now on, every Bible diegesis will have at its core the pursuit of truth or deceit: Is God really who He says He is?

## THE LAW AND THE FREEDOM

Fastforward to Moses' time. God's people are having a really hard time understanding God and His real intentions. Moses has been asked to lead them out of Egypt. But in his attempt to do so, Pharaoh's attitude worsens and he's not willing to budge. The more Moses asks him, the more he gets stubborn. This leads the Israelites to misinterpret God's intentions and start viewing Him as the aggressor rather than their Saviour. All of a sudden, they find themselves out of Egypt, and God is trying to reveal His true self to them by calling them to Mount Sinai. Here He is going to tell them 10 principles—the Ten Commandments about Himself and the way He is. These are then expressed in how they were to relate themselves to Him and to those around them, one of them being the following:

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16).

In other words, “you should not mischaracterize your neighbor by making false statements.” Here's the truth. I have done that. I have lied and mischaracterized events and people. Allow me to describe the mixed emotions when admitting to this. It feels like I'm putting myself out there, and definitely begging to be questioned about my integrity. It is easy to mischaracterize our dishonesty with the “it's my

perspective” disguise. But deep down you know that is not really what exactly happened or what was said. But on the flip side, it is also a feeling of relief and freedom. . . .

Which leads me to my next point. When we talk about the 9th commandment—the “do-not-lie” commandment—God is offering us a principle of liberty. You don’t have to pretend with God; He knows. He knows exactly where you are. He knows why you’re there. He knows what you’re doing. He knows how you got there. He knows what you have done. He knows. And through His introspective questions, He invites you to come out and allow Him to heal you. Coming out and taking ownership for your reality is daunting. And it almost feels like washing a wound that has been healed but not been cleaned out. You need to scrape it and clean it out. It hurts but it is necessary.

## PETER

One of my favorite Bible accounts is Jesus’ interaction with Peter. Often characterized as the loud and outspoken one, Peter seemed to be the one to be always boldly voicing his opinions. We all know a Peter-type of guy. The obnoxious one that needs to let everyone know he/she is there. And of course, this Peter personality is never you and !! But let’s face it—to a certain extent—we all share some of Peter’s personality.

There is this one instance in which Peter is attempting to make

a public statement about his loyalty to Jesus. He wants to let everyone know that he will always be there for Him. Regardless of what everyone else does, Jesus can trust him. Remember, there was a feud going on between them as to who would occupy the most influential position in Jesus’ new government. The closest one would be the one counseling Jesus on what to do, similar to the secretary of state or vice president. Also, it is worth noting that to be fair, all of the disciples had been trying to tell Jesus what to do. However, in this instance Peter is putting it out there. Peter’s loyalty claim is then met by Jesus’ heart-crushing and bubble-bursting response.

“Jesus answered him, “Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice” (John 13:38).

The day would not end before Peter would flat out lie about his relationship to Jesus. As Peter is met with these heart-piercing words, Jesus goes on to reassure him something about Himself:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

As Peter’s enthusiasm was crushed by this reality, Jesus goes





on to say, “Don’t let your heart be troubled.” Do you really believe in God? Then you most definitely believe in Me. There’s enough space for you at my Father’s house. If that weren’t the case, I would have let you know. That is why I am going to prepare a place for you, even though you will lie and deny me. I really want to be with you.

Peter’s false beliefs about himself would later on translate into him doing the unspeakable—deny and lie about Him whom He loved the most.

Later that night, in the midst of the confusion Peter found himself on the spot. He was recognized as one who had been with Jesus. The truth of the matter was that at this point in time, it was not popular to be allied with Him. After all, Jesus was being arraigned in court and would most definitely get a death sentence. So, in a spirit of survival, Peter assures those around him that he does not know Jesus and flat out lies about his relationship to Him.

**“But [Peter’s] appearance was unnatural. He was acting a lie,** and while seeking to talk unconcernedly he could not restrain expressions of indignation at the abuse heaped upon his Master.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 712.

[Emphasis added.]

As he was adamantly mischaracterizing Jesus through

curse and swearing, Jesus was passing by the hallway and this is when Peter and Jesus’ eyes meet. There was no anger or hostility, but rather kindness, sorrow, and pity for him. At this point Peter realized that Jesus was indeed the truth and the life. Jesus knew him better than he thought he knew himself. And somehow Jesus still wanted to live with him. . . .

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

Out of all of my 3 siblings, when I was 6 years old—I was perhaps one of those who would often get in trouble for reasons we will not discuss today. Lying came easy to me. The reason was this was always the easy way out. Of course, my parents would always see past my interesting interpretation of events. Still today I remember a long conversation my father had with me. It went something like this: “You can lie and mischaracterize any event to me, but the most dangerous lie is the one you tell yourself.”

Peter had convinced himself that he was unstoppable. He had repeated several times how he valued Jesus. But he was incapable of being honest with himself. He still loved himself

above everyone and everything else. He had followed Jesus because deep down, he wanted to have an influential position, and, secondly, he loved Jesus. In that hierarchical order. But when the rubber met the road, his primary, real feelings were revealed.

Here is what you and I can learn from his experience.

Be real with yourself and with others. What we talked about today might spark someone to come out and open up to you about who they really are or a lie they have been living. If you are on the receiving end, remember this before considering punishing this behavior. Do you want to create a culture of honesty? Or do you want to reward dishonesty? God loves and rewards honesty and we must do the same. Granted, there are some instances that dishonesty has tangible and irreversible consequences. But remember mercy. Jesus' love and acceptance of Peter was iconic. Even after Jesus told him right to his face that he would deny his Lord three times before the day was over, Jesus still accepted Peter. He accepted him to the point of letting him know that even though Peter would lie and deny him, He still wanted to Peter to live with Him—that where He was, Peter would be also.

### **POSSIBLE ENDING #1:**

I hate to break it to you, but your life is a mess. You have lied.

People have lied to you. You are really not that strong, but the reality is that God does not reject you. Other people will. In fact, you will or already have rejected others as well. It is human to reject. It is human to cover and hide yourself. After all, Adam and Eve's natural response after sin was to reject and hide. God won't do that. Please extend this non-rejection attitude to others.

### **POSSIBLE ENDING #2**

Peter got the point. In 1 Peter 1:17 he essentially says, if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in reverent fear during the time of your stay on earth.

Peter understood that you and I are judged, evaluated, and perceived by what we do—our works and actions. We are judged and perceived by what is real. Your truth and reality is what you do, not what you hope is true or what your ideal is. Understand this and you'll realize that the truth will indeed make you free—free to be what you do. 🎯





*I Am Free to*

## ENJOY WHAT IS MY OWN

by Nthabiseng Moshoane

### 1. BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, SEEN IT: FREE TO ENJOY WHAT IS NEW TO ME



Ecclesiastes 1:9: “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

If you have ever bought a secondhand (or preloved as they tend to be called) car, it is a fantastic feeling. However, the reality is that it is new to you as the owner, but it is not a new car. When we get new things or reach milestones, it might feel like the world does not celebrate our victories enough, especially in this world of bragging on social media. But Solomon says there is no new thing under the sun, so although things are wonderful to us and we should give thanks and glory to God, this does not make them novel to the rest of the world.

### 2. YOLO (YOU LIVE ONLY ONCE): FREE TO CONSUME



Ecclesiastes 2:10: “And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.”

“Noble in youth, noble in manhood, the beloved of his God, Solomon entered on a reign that gave high promise of prosperity and honor. . . . But the pride of prosperity brought separation from God. From the joy of divine communion Solomon turned to find satisfaction in the pleasures of sense.”—*Education*, p. 152.

We live in a hedonistic world that reminds us that you only live once. If we are saved, we will live eternally—and this is determined by our choices on earth; those choices in turn affect our relationship with God.

### 3. TICK, TOCK: FREE TO ENJOY MY TIME



Ecclesiastes 3:1 “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:”

Time is strange, we have it and can choose how to spend it, but circumstances, responsibilities, and eventually death limit our freedom in it. While we have the freedom of time, let us season it with good decisions that reflect that we are working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

### 4. LOVE LOVES LOVE: FREE TO LOVE



Ecclesiastes 4:9,10: “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”

As humans, we want to be loved. This need for love accompanies us our whole lives and forms part of healthy human relationships. What we often miss is that we also have a responsibility to love others and make them comfortable enough so they see that we love them.

In the above verse, we are reminded of the benefits of companionship. We can lift each other up when we fall. Such benefits represent a relationship whereby one can see that the other has fallen and also exercise selflessness in helping the fallen

one rise. Sometimes we want people to sympathize with us, but we shut our eyes to them in their time of need.

### 5. BROKEN PROMISES: FREE TO NOT COMMIT



Ecclesiastes 5:2 (first part), 5: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. . . . Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.”

Remember how the Israelites promised to God to obey everything He said. Not long after, they were backsliding. When we look at them, we tend to forget that we do the same. We continuously break our promises to our Promise Keeper and without hesitation we find new promises to break. When we ponder on how much we offend the Lord, it should dawn on us just how deeply unfathomable is His love for us. The Israelites were “amateurs” compared to the things we do and how we rationalize our individual backsliding.

### 6. OUR DAILY BREAD: FREE TO BE SATISFIED



Ecclesiastes 6:7: “All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.”

How many times have we strived to reach a goal but are dissatisfied when we reach it?

Often we are not content, so even when we reach personal milestones, we harbor a spirit of disgruntlement instead of contentment. This attitude then robs us of our joy and our freedom to enjoy the fruits of our labor as God designed. A miserable outlook on life can dull even the grandest achievements.

**7. KNOW GOD,  
KNOW LIFE.  
NO GOD,  
NO LIFE:  
FREE TO SEEK THE LORD**



Ecclesiastes 7:29: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”

“God made man upright. . . .

Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

Despite God’s lofty ideals for us, we have opted out and sought out our own substitutes that will never compare to what He has planned for us on earth and in heaven. God is ours and we are His. In all that He created, we are the only ones that have a plan of salvation crafted so we can be reunited with Him as per His original design.

**8. EARNINGS:  
FREE TO  
ENJOY MY  
INCOME AND LABOR.**



Ecclesiastes 8:15 “Then I commended mirth, because a man

hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.”

God has designed us to work and enjoy the fruits of our labor. When Adam was punished for his disobedience in the garden of Eden, his labor was to become more wearisome than God had originally intended. Despite the increased burden, God still saw it fit that our labor would not be in vain and we could enjoy the fruits thereof. Because it can get tiresome and because it was part of Adam’s punishment, when we as humans work, it might feel as if it is a restriction to our liberties because we work our whole lives. But all is not lost—God does not want us only to work, He wants us to enjoy the output of our work. What a glorious feeling it is to know that the God who helped you sow, is the God who is pleased when you reap.

**9. OPPORTUNITY  
COST: FREEDOM  
TO CARE AND SHARE**



Ecclesiastes 9:11 “I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

Why share when you are the one working hard? But are you

really working hard though? If you say you are working (or even if you are not), be thankful for the opportunity to work and that the outcome is money that can be spent. Since time and chance happen to all (Ecclesiastes 9:11), these riches, that cannot be taken to heaven, (we will be walking on streets of gold so there is no need), provide absolutely no guarantee that they will be yours for your lifetime. We may think we have made certain life choices that entitle us to discredit or alienate those that made less glorified choices, and thus we assume they deserve the poverty that comes with those choices. The Bible says the righteous will not be forsaken nor their children beg for bread. Have we ever considered that God is telling us that it is through our prosperity that the righteous need not beg?

“Our heavenly Father lays blessings disguised in our pathway, but some will not touch these for fear they will detract from their enjoyment. Angels are waiting to see if we embrace opportunities within our reach of doing good—waiting to see if we will bless others, that they in turn may bless us.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 28.

**10. RESTRAIN FOR GAIN: FREE TO EXERCISE TEMPERANCE**



Ecclesiastes 10:17: “Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the

son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!”

Paul describes us as God’s royal people. Those of royalty have both constraints and liberties not experienced by an ordinary person. In our royal walk with the Lord, do we not focus more on how our liberties can serve us than how they are an opportunity for us to show our discipline and commitments?

“The observance of temperance and regularity in all things has a wonderful power. It will do more than circumstances or natural endowments in promoting that sweetness and serenity of disposition which count so much in smoothing life’s pathway. At the same time the power of self-control thus acquired will be found one of the most valuable of equipments for grappling successfully with the stern duties and realities that await every human being.”—*Education*, p. 206.

**11. CAST THYSELF: FREE TO SACRIFICE**



Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”


The Hebrew economy in the Bible was based on the system of sacrifice and systematic benevolence. God had promised Jacob he would not be lacking; he and his generations were not in a vacuum. There was still an expectation that the Israelites



would comply with the laws of God that governed their lives. This might seem like a plug-and-play prosperity gospel message because as long as you are (at least outwardly) keeping God's law, financial prosperity is a sure outcome. Yet Christ says the poor will always be with us and deacons were ordained for the needy in the early Christian church. Therefore, despite God's legitimate expectation for us to comply with His law, throughout the ages there are examples that the faithful were not always rich. Even Christ, our Saviour, Himself was not wealthy in terms of money; He had nowhere to lay His head. Considering this prevailing poverty, what then should those of us that are doing better than others financially do? We are free to enjoy our income if we have remitted our tithe and are faithful in offerings. Yes, we are free to enjoy but more importantly we are free to share with others because we are investing in riches that have a far better return than any annuity; we are investing in a heaven which, when we reach it, we will consider cheap enough.

## 12. REST AND RESET: FREE TO REST

Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

God gave work. God gave rest. God created time. He gave us freedom to balance work and rest within the time provided. What liberties do we have regarding this? We have the freedom of the Sabbath. Think how much strife and worldly problems that God spares us in giving us the chance to keep the Sabbath. For one day a week we are free from school, "kind regards emails," traffic, cooking, and so much more. But despite that Sabbath freedom and all its social, spiritual, fellowship and many other benefits, we often choose to burden the Sabbath with our burdens. The Sabbath is a day in which even God rested, so how much more do we need that sanctified rest! Let proper Sabbathkeeping be an honorable endeavor for us instead of the weekly surprise which we treat it as. We are free to prepare and keep the Sabbath, so let's enjoy doing so! 

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## Come and See

"Master, where dwellest Thou?  
He saith unto them, come and see!"

John 1:38, 39

Come and see where Jesus dwelleth,  
And the love that love excelleth;  
Peace to calm earth's troubled waters,  
O, ye weary sons and daughters,  
Come and see!

Come and see a Friend that clingeth  
Closer when the storm-cry ringeth;  
Listen to the voice so cheering,  
Of a better time that's nearing,  
Come and see.

Come and see the strength to bear you  
Through the toils that else would wear you;  
Pity for those sorrows hidden,  
Help to do the "all things" bidden.  
Come and see.

Come and see the promise graven,  
Of remaining rest in Heaven;  
Peace I leave you, peace bequeath you,  
Crosses now, but crowns shall wreath you.  
Come and see.

Wisdom that mistaketh never,  
Fellowship death cannot sever;  
Patience whence your soul may gather  
Quietness in vexing weather,  
Come and see.

Come and see, 'tis Christ, none other,  
Jesus, Master, Elder Brother,  
Who lived, who died, who liveth for us,  
And o'er all shall reign victorious,  
Come and see!

by Anna L. Price