

YOUTH messenger

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**PAUSING TO
LISTEN TO GOD**

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Pausing to Listen to God

Dear friends, we often hear people say that life will not be any more or any less than whatever it's predestined to be. They figure that whatever dream of a better life or effort for progress they may make is only in vain and will just end in disappointment.

This pessimistic view of Christianity is nothing short of ancient paganism, which has influenced generations and results in atheism. What a tragic waste!

Instead, the Bible teaches that God made humans in a perfect state and created a perfect environment for our perpetual growth. At the same time, He did not restrict us to robotic obedience but rather gave us the freedom to choose. In this sense, we plan our own lives, we build our own characters, and are architects of our own destiny.

Please, pause to listen to God's voice. Allow Him to speak to you through His Word. Prayerfully read the articles in this magazine to see for yourself what essence you are made of, what you are controlled by, and whether your conscience is right with God.

If you decide to escape the mad rush that envelops society today, hearing the Lord quietly pointing you in a better direction, be brave to adjust your steps to follow His path. Then you'll surely come out ahead—way ahead!

—ADRIAN FINARU

Architects of Destiny

Liliane Balbach

Part 2

In our previous issue of the *Youth Messenger*, we learned how our habits make literal pathways in our nervous system. Natural chemical entities called “boutons” are actually formed along our neural pathways when we are developing a new habit.

Watch out!

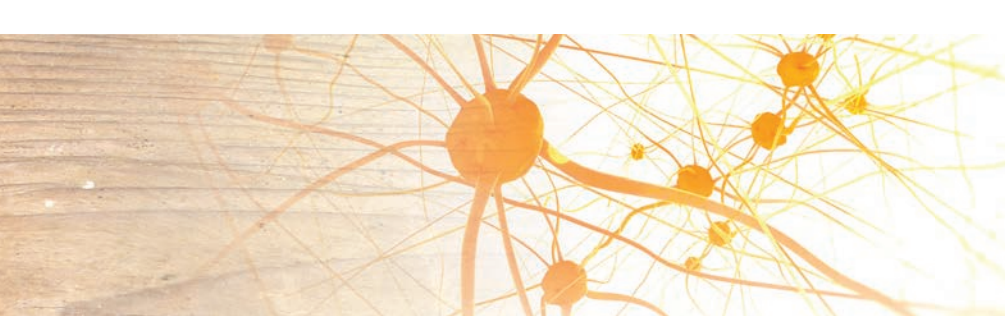
Can boutons ever disappear? At this time, there is no evidence that boutons go away if they are not used. It appears that old habits form such permanent pathways in the brain that they can never be erased. This principle is illustrated in the life of Bible characters. Remember how Moses, after killing the Egyptian in a rash moment (Exodus 2:11, 12), lived a spotless life for many years afterwards? Yet when he was at the border of Canaan, after 80 years, one of his bad habits rose up again. Because Moses lost his temper, he could never enter the Promised Land. Yes, habits and character do determine our destiny. (Thankfully, Moses’ deep repentance for that action and his faith in Christ—also a habit—was able to provide the patriarch with reassurance of his

entrance into that greater land, the heavenly Canaan.)

Yet what can cause a new habit pathway not to operate? When we break a law of health given by our Creator, the new GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) or breaking pathway may not operate. Getting inadequate sleep or becoming fatigued by overwork paralyzes the new GABA pathway even before acetylcholine or “action” pathway. How does diet affect the delicate neuron fibers? “The brain nerve energy is benumbed and almost paralyzed by overeating” (*Healthful Living*, p. 168). Spices, animal foods, rich cakes, pastries, and foods high in fat and sugar excite our delicate nerve cells. To protect us from weakening the delicate nerve fibers, our Creator gave us the ideal diet almost 6,000 years ago: Fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, and vegetables (Genesis 1:29). We must follow His health laws if we would have habit control.

Conflicting Messages

In struggling to form a new habit, have you ever been tempted to fall back into the old behavior—maybe, for example, as you were



trying to lose weight and stop snacking? Suppose a friend runs into you in the hallway at 10:00 a.m. and offers you some doughnuts. Immediately these thoughts pass through your mind: “They look so good; I will eat only one.” Just at that moment, another thought zooms by: “I had better not. I want to lose weight and establish healthful eating habits.” Your brain has an important decision to make: To snack or not to snack. Your action cell needs 10 millivolts of energy to fire. It does some quick calculation; the snacking decision will take 30 millivolts of energy; the decision not to snack takes 40 millivolts of energy.

- Don’t snack = 40 millivolts = Fire.
- Snack = 30 millivolts = Don’t fire.
- Difference = 10 millivolts = Don’t fire.

Yes, you made the right choice, but by barely 10 millivolts of energy. While you were making these choices, our enemy was walking around “as a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) trying to influence you to make a wrong choice. When he sees you gain

the victory over a bad habit, he thinks: “I lost this time, but I will lay better plans next time.” Although Satan cannot read our mind, he does notice our indecision.

While you were deciding to snack on junk food, the Holy Spirit and the heavenly angels were by your side, influencing you to make the right choice. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is real. The battle is waged many times a day and involves you and me. Whether we become victorious or are defeated depends on whose voice we obey.

You have probably experienced that bad habits are more easily formed than good ones, and are given up with more difficulty. Once habits are formed, they are like an iron net. They are very difficult to break unless a Power outside of us comes to our aid.

“We shall be individually, for time and eternity, what our habits make us” (*Child Guidance*, p. 202). Habits build character and character determines destiny. What kind of character are you designing for heaven?

Yes, habits and character do determine our destiny. . . . When tempted to repeat an old habit, we must say energetically: "No, I cannot dishonor my Redeemer. I will not do it."

Remember The Architect

An architect draws a plan for a house. With trained mind and skillful hand, he places on paper the vision he has of the building. His plan is specific in every detail. He notes the type of material to be used in the building and estimates the time and cost of the project. The completed house plan with all these details drawn on paper is called a blueprint. The builder follows the blueprint in every particular, for he must build the house that the architect envisioned.

Each of us is an architect and builder of our character. Each repeated thought and action makes a deeper groove in our brain, just like repeated walking on the lawn makes a deeper path in the sod. We can form new habits, by firmly and consistently resisting the old ones. How can we use God's laws and power to form new habits? We cannot be haphazard builders, for our character building must meet the approval of the Master Architect.

Catch a Vision of Christ

Like the architect, we must have a vision of what our character building will look like at completion. Instead of focusing on our bad habits, the Bible tells us to look to Christ: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; . . . For consider him . . . , lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:2, 3). God knew that some of us would get discouraged with our bad habits. This is why He said, "Consider him." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Since Christ was tempted on every point, He understands us and knows how to help us.

For morning devotions, we can read a Bible chapter or even a few verses on the life of Christ. We can ask the Holy Spirit to fix His life in our mind. While we are brushing our teeth, making the beds, or driving to work, we can think about Jesus. Think of His character, His words, and actions. As we face trying situations throughout the day, we can choose to respond in Christ's way, not ours. One author recommends that we spend a thoughtful hour each day meditating on the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes of His life (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83).



Changed by the law of beholding

How do I know that I will change as I study and meditate on the life of Christ? “It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed” (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 418). The apostle Paul states that “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we daily look to Christ and try to imitate His habits, thoughts, and actions, by law, we will be changed from glory to glory.

Act decisively!

When tempted to repeat an old habit, we must say energetically: “No, I cannot dishonor my Redeemer. I will not do it.” Solomon says: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). With Christ’s power, we must deny those old habits with all our might. We can never allow any exceptions. It is the exceptions that weaken the habit pathways. 🍌

LESSONS FROM A LIFE

PART 2

Alex Gurduiala

“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity” (Ecclesiastes 11:7-10).

In our previous issue of the *Youth Messenger*, we began this series on the life of Solomon. We read about how Solomon began his reign as king in the fear of God and that the Lord greatly blessed him with wisdom, wealth, and widespread influence.

But what happened to this once-honored man of God? We read that “King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites.”

“Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about” (1 Kings 11:1-3; 3:1).

“Pride, ambition, prodigality, and indulgence bore fruit in cruelty and exaction. . . . From the wisest and most merciful of rulers, [Solomon] degenerated into a tyrant. Once the compassionate, God-fearing guardian of the people, he became oppressive and despotic.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 55.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SOLOMON AT THIS POINT?

“The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice” (1 Kings 11:9).

“So complete was [Solomon’s] apostasy, so hardened his heart in transgression, that his case seemed well-nigh **hopeless**.”—Ibid., p. 75. [Emphasis supplied.]

WHAT DOES SOLOMON SAY ABOUT HIS ACHIEVEMENTS?

“I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-7).

“From the joy of divine communion, Solomon turned to find satisfaction in the pleasures of sense.”—Ibid., p. 76.

We had mentioned in our previous *Youth Messenger* article that the first two reasons for Solomon’s downfall were

- *Women (promiscuity).*
- *Business transactions made without the fear of God.*

Now let us look into the third reason:

- Indulgence,
- pride, ambition, and
- self-confidence.

WHAT IS GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SELF-EXALTATION?

We are told in Scripture that we are to be “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; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:5, 6).

It must be more than ironic that it was Solomon who wrote that there is pride before a fall. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).



“Pride goeth
before destruction,
and an haughty spirit
before a fall”
(Proverbs 16:18).

Yet “all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon” (2 Chronicles 9:20).

“The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. . . . The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psalm 10:2, 4).

Solomon knew the theory of humility; he had written much about it in the book of Proverbs. But Solomon and pride go together. From God’s law he knew the theory of the greatness of the Almighty and humanity’s inability to please the Lord by works.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF PRIDE

Pride was the cause of Lucifer’s downfall.

“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou

exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!” (Obadiah 1:3-6).

PRIDE OF AMBITION

This problem has existed since the dawn of human history in the experience of Adam and Eve:

“When the woman saw that the tree [which was in the midst of the garden] 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. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:6, 7).

When our first parents sought to be like gods to know (*i.e.*, experience) the difference between good and evil, pride blinded their hearts and eyes as they listened to the voice of Satan and ate of the forbidden fruit—and by this sin of pride and rebellion they threw the whole human race into chaos.

Again we see this pride of ambition in the lives of Korah,



Dathan, and Abiram as recorded in Numbers 16. When blinded by the sin of pride, they aspired to have the office of the high priest. God destroyed them in His wrath by opening the earth and they went down alive and perished. Oh, what a sin pride is that it makes a human aspire for that which God in His sovereignty has withheld from him or her!

Do you aspire to a great place in life, motivated by the pride of your depraved heart? “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 45:5). Cry unto God to break this pride of ambition and seek the face of God in repentance.

PRIDE OF POSITION

The Bible also speaks of the pride of position which is sin against God. In the time of the exodus, the proud king of Egypt, Pharaoh, said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2).

Pharaoh’s arrogant defiance of his Creator is revealed in his

demanding question: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?”

The human race in all its pride is saying the same thing today:

- a. Who is God that I should obey His voice?
- b. Why should I bow to His authority?
- c. Why should I deny myself anything?
- d. Why should I ask for help?
- e. I don’t need God!

Oh, what a sin pride is, that it makes you stand out against God and say you will not bow to His supreme authority.

Not only does pride lead to rejection of God—often we do not even realize that it is controlling us. Gradually pride takes over until it conquers without us even being aware of our slavery to our own ego.

“As inclination gained the ascendancy over reason, self-confidence increased, and [Solomon] sought to carry out the Lord’s purpose in his own way. He reasoned that political and commercial alliances with the surrounding nations would bring these nations to a knowledge of the true God; and he entered into



unholy alliance with nation after nation. Often these alliances were sealed by marriages with heathen princesses. The commands of Jehovah were set aside for the customs of surrounding peoples.”—Ibid., p. 54.

Like their king, Judah was filled with pride and self-sufficiency, as later described.

“Thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and

the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan” (Isaiah 2:6-13).

While this passage condemns Israel for their pride, it describes the actions of Solomon as king. Let us take a warning from seeing how subtle and destructive this form of pride can be!

TRAPPED IN PROSPERITY!

“Yielding to the temptations incident to his success and his honored position, [Solomon] forgot the Source of his prosperity. An ambition to excel all other nations in power and grandeur led him to pervert for selfish purposes the heavenly gifts hitherto employed for the glory of God. The money which should have been held in sacred trust for the benefit of the worthy poor and for the extension of principles of holy living throughout the world, was selfishly absorbed in ambitious projects.

“Engrossed in an overmastering desire to surpass

other nations in outward display, the king overlooked the need of acquiring beauty and perfection of character.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 55.

“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father” (1 Kings 11:4–6).

Solomon’s separation from God through communication with idolaters was his ruin. As he cast off his allegiance to God, he lost the mastery of himself. He who said: “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12) departed from purity and law.

We cannot serve two masters, and just as God warned Solomon of his danger, so today He warns His children not to imperil their souls by affinity with the world and the snare of greed.

DID GOD FORSAKE SOLOMON?

“By messages of reproof and by severe judgments, [God] sought to arouse the king to a realization of the sinfulness of his course. He removed His protecting care and permitted adversaries to harass and weaken the kingdom.”—*Ibid.*, p. 77.

WHY DOES THE LORD SEND US REPROOF AND JUDGMENT?

“Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, the disposition to open becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit if disregarded today, will not be as strong tomorrow. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of life, and of the great eternity beyond. Our condemnation in the judgment will not result from the fact that we have been in error, but from the fact that we have neglected heaven-sent opportunities for learning what is truth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 489, 490.

Finally, “the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father’s sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son” (1 Kings 11:11, 12).

Solomon was at the bottom of the barrel!

“In penitence [Solomon] began to retrace his steps toward the exalted plane of purity and holiness from whence he had fallen so far. He could never hope to escape the blasting results of sin, he could never free his mind

"Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart."

from all remembrance of the self-indulgent course he had been pursuing, but he would endeavor earnestly to dissuade others from following after folly. He would humbly confess the error of his ways and lift his voice in warning lest others be lost irretrievably because of the influences for evil he had been setting in operation."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 78.

SOLOMON'S ADVICE TO THE YOUTH

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1).

None can be stable without watchfulness and prayer as our only safety for both young and old.

"Those who heed the warning of Solomon's apostasy will shun the first approach of those sins that overcame him. Only obedience to the requirements of Heaven will keep man from apostasy. God has bestowed upon man great light and many blessings; but unless this light and these blessings are accepted, they are no security against disobedience and apostasy. When those whom God has exalted to positions of high trust turn from Him to human wisdom, their light becomes darkness. Their entrusted capabilities become a snare. . . .


"All who enter the City of God will enter through the strait gate—by agonizing effort; for 'there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth' (Revelation 21:27). . . . God hates sin, but He loves the sinner. 'I will heal their backsliding,' He declares; 'I will love them freely' (Hosea 14:4)."—*Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

WHY REPENT TODAY?

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

"Shall the warnings given by Christ be passed by unheeded? Shall we not make diligent work for repentance now, while Mercy's gracious voice is still heard?"—

Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 269. 

An old builder of houses informed the owner of the company where he was employed that he wanted to retire and spend more time with his family.

He would miss the salary, he told the owner, but he really wanted to retire. The builder reasoned with himself that the company would not miss an employee that much! The owner was sad to see a good employee go, and kindly requested the builder to build one more house as a favor to the company, and afterwards, he would be free to retire. The builder was not enthusiastic at all about this request and it could easily be seen, but he finally agreed to it.

He began building the house in a shoddy way, using materials of poor quality and, trying to finish as quickly as possible this unwanted project. His mind was somewhere else, and “let’s get it over with” was his motto during the construction. Finally he completed the work and the owner of the company came to inspect the job done. After the inspection, he approached the builder, and gently gave him the key of the house.

“This is now your house! This is a gift from our company to you for all these years of service!” The builder was shocked and speechless. . . . What a pity! If he only would have known that beforehand, he would have done things so differently. . . . He was really a surprised man!

The same happens in our life. . . . We build our life, one day at a time, and often we don’t put forth the best effort to build it. Afterwards, we are surprised when we discover that we must live in the house we have built. If we could only do things over, how careful we would be! But we cannot go back.

You are the builder. All day long you use nails, hammers, and wood as you build the walls. There is a saying that goes, “Life is a project that you build yourself.” Your attitudes, your choices today are the materials you are using in building the “house” you will live in tomorrow.

Build wisely! 🍷

ELSA BUREC

THE OLD BUILDER

“My Pride”

The life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ are a standing rebuke to every form of pride to which men are liable. Take, for instance—

Pride of birth and rank: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

Pride of wealth: "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Pride of respectability: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Pride of personal appearance: "He hath no form nor comeliness."

Pride of reputation: "Behold, a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Pride of independence: "Many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."

Pride of learning: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

Pride of superiority: "I am among you as he that serveth." "He humbled himself," was "made a curse for us."

Pride of success: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." "Neither did his brethren believe in him." "He was despised and rejected of men."

Pride of self-reliance: "He went down . . . to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

Pride of ability: "I can of mine own self do nothing."

Pride of self-will: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Pride of intellect: "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."

Pride of bigotry: "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us."

Pride of resentment: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Pride of reserve: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected."

Pride of clique: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

—*Indian Witness, as published in The Youth's Instructor, Vol. 42, No. 2*

What Kind of Ground Will You Be?

BETHANY LYDIA MURESAN

WHY DID CHRIST TEACH IN PARABLES?

Christ knew that the people could learn best if He taught them through simple analogies that they could relate to. Through the things with which His hearers were well acquainted, Christ sought to present the gospel. He taught in parables to bring before our minds object lessons to be studied in the natural world. It is very interesting to note that when sin entered there came a veil that in a certain sense covered nature's lessons from the eyes of the majority. Christ wanted to remove the "barriers" which obstructed their view. He desired for them to see for themselves object lessons from nature and hear the Holy Spirit speaking to their soul. Jesus taught the unknown through the known and used illustrations that could be

remembered as the people labored from day to day. "[Jesus'] words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 18.

So, don't you think it's important to study the parables that our Lord has so graciously given to us? Let's study one right now!

"THE SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW"

You have probably heard this parable many times, but since it has a very important meaning we are going to take a moment to look at it carefully:

Matthew 13:3-8 says that Jesus "spake many things unto [the people] in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and

the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

“He who gave the parable of the tiny seed is the Sovereign of heaven, and the same laws that govern earthly seed sowing govern the sowing of the seeds of truth.”—Ibid., p. 33.

Let us study carefully the following facts.

Wayside

Birds came and ate the seeds.

Stony Ground

There was not enough soil. The sun scorched them. They withered.

Thorny Ground

The thorns choked the good seeds.

Good Ground

The seeds sprung up and produced fruit abundantly.

What does all this really mean?

First of all, what is the spiritual seed? “. . . Christ came to sow the seeds of truth.”—Ibid., p. 37. Let’s look at the different kinds of ground and what kinds of hearers they represent.

WAYSIDE HEARERS

Jesus tells us who this kind of ground represents. “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matthew 13:19).

This kind of ground represents hearts that are so absorbed in worldly ambitions, are so absorbed in self-gratification, selfish amusement, and sinful indulgences that even as they hear the truth they do not see their personal need of a Saviour.

“The seed sown by the wayside represents the word of God as it falls upon the heart of an inattentive hearer. . . . The spiritual faculties are paralyzed. Men hear the word, but understand it not. They do not discern that it applies to themselves. They do not realize their need or their danger. They do not perceive the love of Christ, and they pass by the message of His grace as something that does not concern them.”—Ibid., p. 44.

STONY GROUND HEARERS

Can plants grow in rock? No—why not? It is because there is very little soil there for them to grow in. Sometimes in this little bit of soil the plant springs up anyway. But there the plant cannot find nutrients to sustain itself and it withers away. The same problem occurs in a heart that is satisfied with a superficial profession of religion. The person is not willing to be dead to self.

“The seed sown upon stony ground finds little depth of soil. The plant springs up quickly, but the root cannot penetrate the rock to find nutriment to sustain its growth, and it soon perishes. Like the rock underlying the layer of earth, the selfishness of the natural heart underlies the soil of their good desires and aspirations.... This class may be easily convinced, and appear to be bright converts, but they have only a superficial religion.”—Ibid., p. 46.

THORNY GROUND HEARERS

Have you ever had a garden? If you have, you know that one of the biggest jobs is weeding it. But what happens if you leave the patch for a few weeks? Probably

there will be more weeds than good plants. How did those weeds appear? You didn't plant them! They didn't even need cultivation! The same scenario happens in our hearts. The Lord sows seeds of truth in our hearts—but what happens if we don't pull those nasty weeds? They grow and choke out the good plants. We have to be constantly on guard so that we pull each weed before it gets big. The bigger it becomes, the harder it is to pull out and very soon it chokes the good seeds so much that they die. We don't want that to happen!

“The gospel seed often falls among thorns and noxious weeds; and if there is not a moral transformation in the human heart, if old habits and practices and the former life of sin are not left behind, if the attributes of Satan are not expelled from the soul, the wheat crop will be choked. The thorns will come to be the crop, and will kill out the wheat.

“Grace can thrive only in the heart that is being constantly prepared for the precious

Grace can thrive only in the heart
that is being constantly prepared
for the precious seeds of truth.

seeds of truth. The thorns of sin will grow in any soil; they need no cultivation; but grace must be carefully cultivated.... If the heart is not kept under the control of God, if the Holy Spirit does not work unceasingly to refine and ennoble the character, the old habits will reveal themselves in the life....

“Christ specified the things that are dangerous to the soul. As recorded by Mark He mentions the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things. Luke specifies the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life. These are what choke the word, the growing spiritual seed. The soul ceases to draw nourishment from Christ, and spirituality dies out of the heart.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51.

GOOD GROUND

“The sower is not always to meet with disappointment. Of the seed that fell into good ground the Saviour said, This ‘is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.’ ‘That on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having

heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.’

“The ‘honest and good heart’ of which the parable speaks, is not a heart without sin; for the gospel is to be preached to the lost. Christ said, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance’ (Mark 2:17). He has an honest heart who yields to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He confesses his guilt, and feels his need of the mercy and love of God. He has a sincere desire to know the truth, that he may obey it. The good heart is a believing heart, one that has faith in the word of God. Without faith it is impossible to receive the word. ‘He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him’ (Hebrews 11:6).—*Ibid.*, pp. 58, 59.

CONCLUSION

What can we learn from all this? With Christ’s help, let us strive to pull out the weeds in our hearts. Let us realize our need of a Saviour. Ask God to help you be truly dead to self. And may we be represented by that good ground! 🌱

**Of the seed that fell into good ground
the Saviour said, This is he that heareth
the word, and understandeth it.**

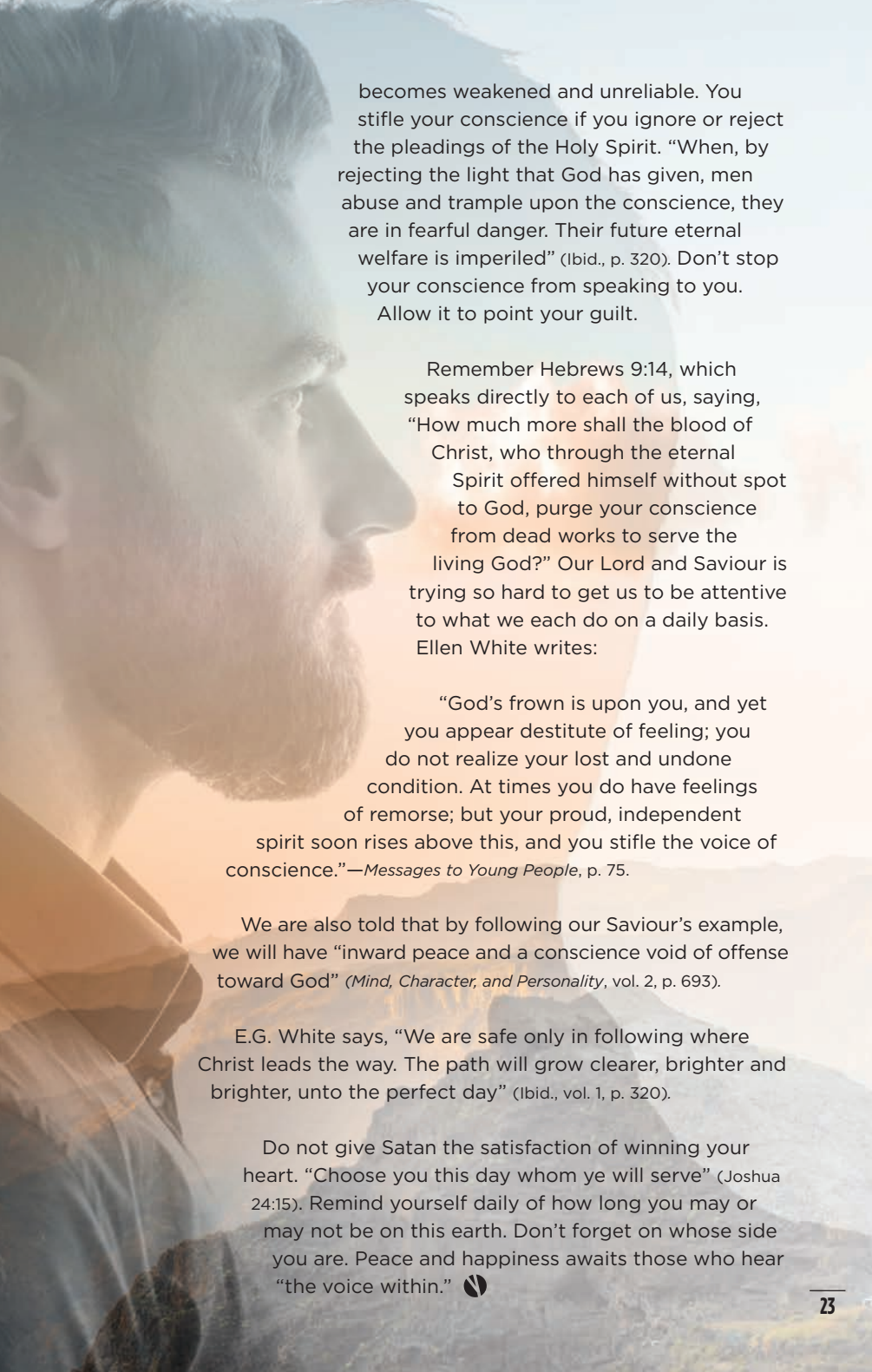
The Voice Within:

RACHEL STANTON *Our Conscience*

Moral faculties or feelings of right and wrong have been planted in our mind by Christ. Romans 2:15 says “The work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” Christ has placed a conscience in us so we are able to recognize when we do wrong. Our conscience has the ability to accuse or excuse another or one’s self, as the verse states.

The problem with our sinful and degenerate nature is that our consciences have gone down the same path, as it is written in 1 Corinthians 8:7: Our “conscience being weak is defiled.” We have to ask ourselves why is it that we don’t feel as much guilt as we should. We should also wonder when we can trust our conscience. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Therefore, to answer the question, we need to be careful about what our heart will lust after, or it will take us down a dark and dreary path. The Bible says “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23, 24). You may need to ask yourself in what direction the choices you make will send you—towards God or away from Him. Psalm 68:5 tells us that He is there for us as a father to the fatherless. Study your Bible more, pray often, and ask yourself what Christ would do in your position. “Take your conscience to the Word of God and see if your life and character are in accordance with the standard of righteousness which God has there revealed” (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 323). Line your conscience up in harmony with the Word of God.

Don’t allow your conscience to degrade and become desensitized to the wickedness around you. Once you violate your conscience, it



becomes weakened and unreliable. You stifle your conscience if you ignore or reject the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. “When, by rejecting the light that God has given, men abuse and trample upon the conscience, they are in fearful danger. Their future eternal welfare is imperiled” (Ibid., p. 320). Don’t stop your conscience from speaking to you. Allow it to point your guilt.

Remember Hebrews 9:14, which speaks directly to each of us, saying, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Our Lord and Saviour is trying so hard to get us to be attentive to what we each do on a daily basis. Ellen White writes:

“God’s frown is upon you, and yet you appear destitute of feeling; you do not realize your lost and undone condition. At times you do have feelings of remorse; but your proud, independent spirit soon rises above this, and you stifle the voice of conscience.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 75.

We are also told that by following our Saviour’s example, we will have “inward peace and a conscience void of offense toward God” (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 693).

E.G. White says, “We are safe only in following where Christ leads the way. The path will grow clearer, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day” (Ibid., vol. 1, p. 320).

Do not give Satan the satisfaction of winning your heart. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15). Remind yourself daily of how long you may or may not be on this earth. Don’t forget on whose side you are. Peace and happiness awaits those who hear “the voice within.” ❶

Technology DEPENDENCE

Isaac Senior



ENT

It was a Monday in late August, the sky was crystal clear, and the sun shone as brightly as ever. Its radiance was so unbearable, in fact, not a single soul in my entire neighborhood—or probably in the entire city for that matter—found the idea of stepping outside and embracing the sunshine to be amusing.

Unfortunately, staying indoors wasn't all that pleasing either at this point in time. Thus two of my friends and I, like most of my neighbors, found ourselves sitting under the shade of an open garage. With idle stares we scanned the road in front of the driveway, glancing at anything that moved, which for the most part was nothing but occasional speeding cars passing by.

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

This was the week after the unwelcome Hurricane Francis had smashed its way through central Florida, leaving all of us frustrated and unhappy with the results. Francis, a category four hurricane, had done quite a bit of damage, leaving people homeless, injured, and sadly, some even dead. In my case, and that of my friends, Francis had not killed us, but it most certainly had left us lifeless, so to speak. So much of our life had been interrupted by the hurricane that we wondered “what's next.”

You see, for children of the twenty-first century, technology plays a major role in their lifestyle. Computers, cell phones, iPods, the Internet, all of these are key

components that help keep our life technologically healthy.

On that hot summer day, however, we were far from healthy, and all thanks to the not-so-benevolent Francis which the week before had recklessly swept across the city, cutting out power in various neighborhoods, including ours. Now, it certainly doesn't take a genius to figure out that when the power goes out, life for a twenty-first-century teen can get quite a bit complicated; like if it were the end of civilization. That's pretty much how all of us felt that Monday.

As a result, my friends and I were sick and dying of boredom, and although generations before ours would have easily brushed off these technological needs, we found ourselves in dire and tragic circumstances. So the three of us sat, one holding a cell phone which had died an hour ago, another holding a laptop which was one bar away from suffering the same fate, and me—well, let's just say, feeling very frustrated that our lives were as it had been "hijacked."

What we were going to do then, none of us knew, but we all did feel like something had to be done.

WHY NOT GIVE THIS A TRY?

Finally, after some time of coping with our tragic losses, we moved on, deciding to follow the advice of the older generation and revert to spending time together, communicating on a personal basis, without the cell phone and the Internet. As time passed, our misery began to give way. We began to let go of our loss and grasp our gain. We discovered how much we enjoyed our communications one on one, without the electronic devices. We did not have to press any keys, since we were not text messaging.

After a while, I realized we were actually having a great time. Surprisingly enough, we had begun to enjoy ourselves, forgetting about the heat, forgetting about our circumstances. Instead we took our situation and carved out of it our own simple lifestyle, one that didn't require the complexity of technology. I felt as if I was experiencing a new kind of health, one that did not require the vain and material ingredients of the

"He shall call upon Me,
and I will answer him:
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him."
[Psalm 91:15]



old, but instead relied on much more natural and wholesome ingredients; ingredients like friendship, companionship, positivity, and contentment.

POSITIVE RESULTS

To this day I haven't forgotten that lifestyle which I am sure previous generations have cherished for lifetimes, and just that small glimpse of it, which I received that day, has led me to understand how much we have become technology dependent. The prophet of the Lord foresaw this coming, when he said that in the last days "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). I also understood the importance of the personal interaction in my life. I have come to realize that though it is a great privilege and luxury to live with means of technology, under no circumstances can their value be compared to that of living by natural means, such as friendship, love, and joy.

WAIT—THERE'S MORE!

Computer batteries and cell phone batteries run out of power, and then what? Can you call a friend? Can you send an e-mail? Yes, you can. I have a Friend with whom I communicate on a personal basis without cell phones and computers. Yes, no e-mails and no text messaging. I have an open line at all times. I can talk to Him with clear reception. My friend is holding His arms wide open to extend a hearty reception to you, too. He says; "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation" (Psalm 91:14-16). Lines are open now. He is waiting for your call. 📞

At One Door . . .

Eunice Gessner

It was quite a warm, sunny day in London—a strange thing for a city so notorious for its cool days and gloomy, overcast skies. The stack of seven books I held in my left arm seemed to get heavier by the hour, and so I decided to switch arms before moving on to the next door. Although it was only nearing 1 o'clock in the early afternoon, I could feel the heat (and slight discouragement) already beginning to dampen my enthusiasm and energy. So far I had made no sales, had received zero donations, and had heard one too many “not interested,” or had simply received no reply after knocking and ringing the bell at several doors. Nonetheless, I turned my steps towards the next door and, after whispering a quick prayer, rang the doorbell and waited. At that time, I had three special prayers which I kept repeating to the Lord in my mind. The first one was that I wanted to sell exactly two books before having to return for lunch, which was only about 30 minutes from then. The second request was that I wanted to sell a *Great Controversy* since up until that point, throughout the canvassing project, I had sold nearly every other book except

The Great Controversy—a book that I believe every human being should read. Lastly, I was also feeling quite thirsty and knew I would appreciate a glass of cold water, yet felt shy to actually ask someone.

With those three requests present in my mind, I stood there and stared at the door in front of me. It wasn't long till I heard footsteps approaching; my pulse quickened, and I swallowed several times. A middle-aged woman who appeared to be from some area in the Middle East opened the door as far as the chain-door-lock would allow and peered at me through the opening with curious eyes and a straight face. I swallowed again and gave her my best smile before politely saying, “Hello, how are you doing today?” After her response, I noticed that she was making no move towards removing the chain lock or opening the door, so I proceeded to ask her if she had a quick minute. At first she gave me a blunt “no,” and I felt sure this would be another rejection; however, after a quick pause she asked me, “Why? What do you want?” The expression on her face as well as her demeanor

made me feel as though it would be a waste of time to even bother continuing with the canvass. But something prompted me to go ahead anyway, and so I did. After explaining that I was a student working on a special project and after she glanced at the books in my hand, she closed the door for a moment to remove the chain-door-lock and then opened the door all the way. This was definitely an encouraging sign, so I continued the canvass and began showing her the books, starting with *Plants That Heal*. When I came to *The Great Controversy* I said another small, quick prayer in my mind and gave it my absolute best. I went on about what a wonderful and inspiring book it was and how it was personally one of my favorites. As she flipped through the pages, I enthusiastically commented on everything positive I could think about the book. After a short while, she mentioned to me how she was currently reading a book called *The Great Delusion*, after which she added that the title—*The Great Controversy*—appealed to her since it appeared to be of somewhat the same nature as the book she was presently reading. With that statement I was even more encouraged and added a few more positive remarks about *The Great Controversy*. When I finally did stop “rambling,” she pondered for a few moments while I held my breath and,

after one last look at *The Great Controversy*, she asked, “How much for both?—*Plants That Heal* and *The Great Controversy*?” I told her the amount, and she kindly excused herself to go bring the money, after which I placed both books in her hands and also slipped in a free *Steps to Christ*. I smiled widely (I couldn’t help it), thanked her, wished her a good day, and was preparing to turn around and start towards the sidewalk when she sweetly asked me if I would like a glass of water, since it was a bit warm out. I’m sure you know what my response was, and after gulping down a large glass of cool water, I gave her another big thank-you and headed for the sidewalk, feeling as though I was going to burst inside. I remember having to just stand there on the side of the street to take a deep breath and thank God for His undeserved goodness. He had answered all three of my prayers at ONE door! At that point all my energy and enthusiasm came back, and I had a spring in my step. I was encouraged beyond words to know that I had undeniable proof that God was indeed with me. He was beside me and listening to and answering my prayers. Indeed, what a wonderful God we serve; all His promises are true!

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you” (Jeremiah 29:12). 🕊

Test Your Reading!

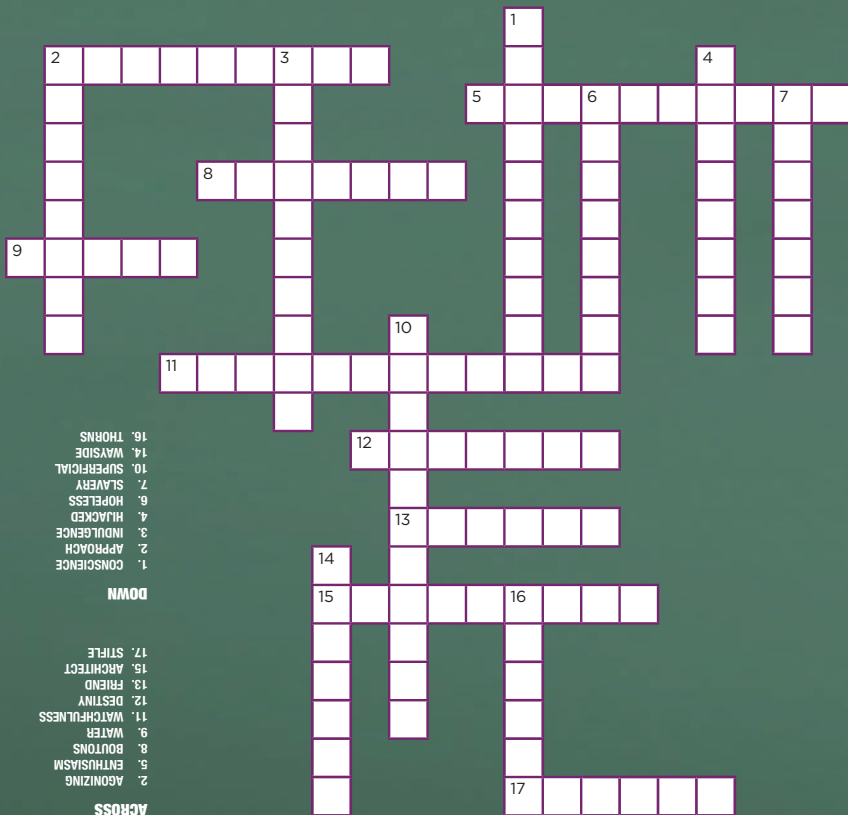
ACROSS

- All who enter the City of God will enter through the strait gate by _____ effort.
- At one door, the heat had been dampening _____ in the canvasser, but she prayed and rang the doorbell.
- When we form a new habit, _____ are formed along our neural pathways.
- At one door, the woman bought two books and even gave _____ in exact answer to prayer!
- None can be stable without _____ and prayer.
- Habits and character determine our _____.
- When computer batteries and cell phone batteries run out of power, there is an eternal _____ we can still access.
- Like the _____, we must have a vision of what our character building will look like at completion.
- A proud, independent spirit will _____ the voice of conscience.

DOWN

- We each should take our _____ to the Word of God and make sure it aligns with it.
- Those who heed the warning of Solomon's apostasy will shun the first _____ of those sins that overcame him.
- The third reason for Solomon's downfall was _____, pride, and self-confidence.
- The youth unable to access their tech devices felt as if they had been _____.
- Solomon's apostasy made his case seem well-nigh _____.
- Pride conquers us without us being aware of our _____ to our own ego.
- Stony-ground hearers may be easily convinced but they have only a _____ religion.
- In the parable of the sower, the _____ hearers are inattentive.
- If the attributes of Satan are not expelled from the soul, _____ will come to be the crop and will kill out the wheat.





- DOWN**
1. CONSCIENCE
2. APPROACH
3. INDULGENCE
4. HIJACKED
6. HOPLESS
7. SLAVERY
10. SUPERFICIAL
14. WAYSIDE
16. THORNS
- ACROSS**
2. ACQUINIZING
5. ENTHUSIASM
8. BOUTONS
9. WATER
11. WATHEFULNESS
12. DESTINY
13. FRIEND
15. ARCHITECT
17. STIFLE

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The Prayer and the Life

Do I mean the prayer I offer,
 Do I feel the words I say,
 When before our heavenly Father,
 I kneel from day to day;
 When at morning and at evening
 I incline to seek His face,
 And my voice goes up in pleading
 To His glorious throne of grace?

When my voice goes up in pleading,
 Does my heart go with it too?
 There are many things I ask Him,
 That His might and grace may do;
 Petition on petition
 Goes up to meet His ear;
 Oh, are they such petitions
 As our Father loves to hear?

I tell Him of my wants—my needs;
 But when I turn away,
 Do I think of what I asked for?
 Do I watch as well as pray?

Do I strive against temptation?
 Do I seek like Christ to live?
 Do I use aright the blessings
 That so freely He doth give?

My prayers are with much speaking—
 Yet, when I leave the spot,
 How quickly are its memories fled.
 How soon those prayers forgot!
 Oh, if the thought that gave them birth
 So lightly treasured be,
 How can I think God's mercy
 Will remember them for me?

Yet one petition further, Lord!
 Wilt Thou not deign to hear?
 O, let my spirit breathe anew
 Through all my daily prayer;
 Then help me, as I pray, to live,
 Kept by Thy grace divine,
 And the glory of the prayer and life,
 Alike, O Lord, be Thine.