

THE
EDUCATION
OF
CHILDREN
ANDREAS DURA



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2018 Sabbath Studies: January to June

Cover:

Abraham and the Family Altar
His Word in Pictures (AI enhanced)

Andreas Beer

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Foreword

THIS book contains a series of Sabbath studies given by Andreas Dura, in the first six months of 2018. It brings out principles from the Bible regarding the education of children.

The first book published in the Sabbath Rest Advent Church, concerning children, was *Child Salvation*, by F. T. Wright, printed in 1987. That book dealt mainly with the importance of the new birth, and how to bring that to children; and the importance of bringing the principles of God's character¹ into the government of the family.

These current studies go deeper into the family order. They cover some of the different aspects of God's kingdom: heartfelt obedience, honesty, justice, love, equality, unity, and service; and apply those to the family with very practical examples.

The Example of Abraham

The pre-eminent Bible example of God's family order, Abraham, is mentioned in chapter 2, under the subheading, "*The Patriarchal System*." In fact, it would be hard to find another Bible character, other than Abraham and his family, who are specifically held up as an example to other Christian families.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 140-141:

Of Abraham it is written that "he was called the friend of God," "the father of all them that believe." *James 2:23; Romans 4:11*. The testimony of God concerning this faithful patriarch is,

Genesis 26

⁵ Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

And again,

Genesis 18

¹⁹ I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do

¹ See the book, *Behold Your God*.

justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

It was a high honor to which Abraham was called, that of being the father of the people who for centuries were the guardians and preservers of the truth of God for the world—of that people through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the advent of the promised Messiah. But He who called the patriarch judged him worthy. It is God that speaks. He who understands the thoughts afar off, and places the right estimate upon men, says, “I know him.” There would be on the part of Abraham no betraying of the truth for selfish purposes. He would keep the law and deal justly and righteously. And he would not only fear the Lord himself, but would cultivate religion in his home. He would instruct his family in righteousness. The law of God would be the rule in his household.

Certainly there were other good families, and fathers, especially in the last few thousand years of Christian history, but so far as the Bible goes, Abraham is upheld more highly, and of him more detail is given than any other. Therefore, his example must have important lessons for us. And indeed, this seems to be the conclusion Andreas comes to:

“The patriarchal system was not one of Abraham being first. God was first. It was not Abraham’s unlimited authority, it was God’s authority. Abraham was merely maintaining the order that God had given, that’s all. The key is to maintain the order God has given, no matter what that order is. It’s not so important what the order looks like in detail. It may be differ slightly at different ages. But it is an order. And a society which has no order cannot function. We must understand this. The important point is that there was to be no oppression on the part of the parents and no disobedience on the part of the children. Each person had their appointed duty.”

Later he quotes from:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:

Abraham’s affection for his children and his household led him

to guard their religious faith, to impart to them a knowledge of the divine statutes, as the most precious legacy he could transmit to them, and through them to the world. All were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven. There was to be no oppression on the part of parents and no disobedience on the part of children. God's law had appointed to each his duties, and only in obedience to it could any secure happiness or prosperity.

The main difference between the patriarchal order and our day, is that the patriarch was a civil *and* religious ruler, whereas in our time, the civil authority is in the hands of whatever heathen nation we reside in. But the spiritual aspects of Abraham's family order still remain:

- God's authority is recognized;
- God rules through man (man does not rule in God's place);²
- No oppression on the part of parents;
- No disobedience on the part of children;
- God's law has appointed to each their duties.

Separated for Service

Although part of Abraham's order involved dwelling separate from the heathen and their idolatry, he was not a hermit. He did not dwell alone to be exclusive and enjoy selfish solitude; he did not despise the heathen around him. The purpose of separation was to set up a training school for missionary work among the heathen.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 133-134:

Abraham was honored *by the surrounding nations* as a mighty prince and a wise and able chief. *He did not shut away his influence from his neighbors.* His life and character, in their marked contrast with those of the worshipers of idols, exerted a telling

²For more detail on this point, see the subsection "Human Vessels," especially the quote from E. J. Waggoner's *The Everlasting Covenant* regarding a true theocracy versus the papacy.

influence in favor of the true faith. His allegiance to God was unswerving, while his affability and benevolence inspired confidence and friendship and his unaffected greatness commanded respect and honor.

His religion was not held as a precious treasure to be jealously guarded and enjoyed solely by the possessor. True religion cannot be thus held, for such a spirit is contrary to the principles of the gospel. While Christ is dwelling in the heart it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence, or for that light to grow dim. On the contrary, it will grow brighter and brighter as day by day the mists of selfishness and sin that envelop the soul are dispelled by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

The people of God are His representatives upon the earth, and He intends that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, they are God's witnesses, the channels through which He will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace. It is His plan that all who are partakers of the great salvation shall be missionaries for Him. The piety of the Christian constitutes the standard by which worldlings judge the gospel. Trials patiently borne, blessings gratefully received, meekness, kindness, mercy, and love, habitually exhibited, are the lights that shine forth in the character before the world, revealing the contrast with the darkness that comes of the selfishness of the natural heart.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

Abraham's household comprised more than a thousand souls. Those who were led by his teachings to worship the one God, found a home in his encampment; and here, *as in a school*, they received such instruction as would *prepare them to be representatives of the true faith*. Thus a great responsibility rested upon him. He was training heads of families, and his methods of government would be carried out in the households over which they should preside.

There are a few more recent examples of this kind of system. The Waldenses, who during the pre-Reformation days lived in solitude, dwelling in communities among the alps of northern

Italy, improved this opportunity to train their children as missionaries. Another example would be Count Zinzendorf's Moravian community named Herrnhut, which also embraced this element of separation, in order to train missionaries who were sent around the world with the gospel.

Separation is still an important part of Christianity:

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

When Jesus was a child, His mother was especially instructed not to send Him to the rabbinical schools, where He would have been exposed to many false theories.

The Reformation churches of the 16th century separated themselves from the Roman Catholic church, which they believed had apostatized from the gospel.

In the 19th century, the call of the second angel's message of *Revelation 14* led to a separation between spiritual "Babylon," a religious system which clung to this world and its ways, and the faithful who wanted to follow God's leading.

Shortly after this, in the Adventist movement, the people were instructed by God to make their own schools and medical centers, where they would be free to follow the Lord's curriculum, and not that of the world.

So the separation aspect of Abraham's order still applies, and always has been a part of God's way. Andreas mentions in the second chapter of this book, that "we tried" to keep our children separate from the world, but "it didn't work." While Andreas is not with us today to elaborate on what he meant, one possibility is that the children were not really trained for missionary service, but only for selfish exclusion. It's quite possible to make this mistake, even in religious education, and even without realizing it. In

the time that Christ appeared on Earth, the Jews had built many barriers between themselves and the heathen: purportedly to protect their religion from contamination, but actually to exalt themselves. When separation is done right, it is “the righteousness of God which is by faith.” When it is done wrong, it is “my own righteousness which is of the law.”³

Ellen White also wrote of believers who had become established in the faith, *afterwards* entering institutions of learning as students in order to bring in the living principles of truth. Thus the principle of separation, for the aim of becoming a more effective missionary, is reinforced:

Selected Messages, book 3, p. 233-234:

The Waldensians entered the schools of the world as students. They made no pretensions; apparently they paid no attention to anyone; but they lived out what they believed. They never sacrificed principle, and their principles soon became known. This was different from anything the other students had seen, and they began to ask themselves, What does this all mean? Why cannot these men be induced to swerve from their principles? While they were considering this, they heard them praying in their rooms, not to the virgin Mary, but to the Saviour, whom they addressed as the only mediator between God and man. The worldly students were encouraged to make inquiries, and as the simple story of the truth as it is in Jesus was told, their minds grasped it.

These things I tried to present at Harbor Heights [at an educational convention in 1891]. Those who have the spirit of God, who have the truth wrought into their very being, should be encouraged to enter colleges, and live the truth, as Daniel and Paul did. Each one should study to see what is the best way to get the truth into the school, that the light may shine forth. Let them show that they respect all the rules and regulations of the school. The leaven will begin to work; for we can depend much more upon the power of God manifested in the lives of His children than upon any words that can be spoken. But they should

³ *Philippians* 3:9.

also tell inquirers, in as simple language as they can, of the simple Bible doctrines.

There are those who, after becoming established, rooted and grounded in the truth, should enter these institutions of learning as students. They can keep the living principles of the truth, and observe the Sabbath, and yet they will have opportunity to work for the Master by dropping seeds of truth in minds and hearts. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, these seeds will spring up to bear fruit for the glory of God, and will result in the saving of souls. The students need not go to these institutions of learning in order to become enlightened upon theological subjects; for the teachers of the school need themselves to become Bible students. No open controversies should be started, yet opportunity will be given to ask questions upon Bible doctrines, and light will be flashed into many minds. A spirit of investigation will be aroused.

But I scarcely dare present this method of labor; for there is danger that *those who have no connection with God* will place themselves in these schools, and instead of correcting error and diffusing light, *will themselves be led astray*. But this work must be done, and it will be done by those who are led and taught of God.

Equal Rights

Andreas makes a comment regarding the difference between our time and Abraham's time, which could be misunderstood. The comment is as follows:

“Is the patriarchal system of government obsolete, then? What shall we choose? In Abraham's day, the family was taught to look to him as their head. There is another system which is followed these days. We don't generally use the patriarchal system anymore. How could we describe the situation today? What is your ideal picture in modern times? Would it be the same? *Today we have equal rights*; children have rights by law, as well. If a parent abuses their child, they get punished by law. They can't do what they want with their children anymore. This is the environment and culture in our society—at least in western countries. Children

have definite rights in our countries. Those rights are respected. They must be respected. The children know this too.”

Since Abraham’s order was simply God’s order,⁴ are we to understand from this paragraph that God’s kingdom does not administer or respect “equal rights”? Are we to understand that the world has improved on the principles of God’s kingdom, and that Satan was therefore correct in his accusation that God’s kingdom was oppressive? I don’t think Andreas would have intended it to be taken this way.

Let’s first of all recognize that only in heartfelt obedience to God’s law, which is the foundation of His kingdom, are the true rights of each creature respected.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52:

It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor that *law* by which alone it was possible for *order and equity* to be maintained.

The following is written regarding the time when Christ appeared on the Earth:⁵

Education, p. 74-76:

When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and artificial. The Jews, destitute of the power of God’s word, gave to the world mind-numbing, soul-deadening traditions and speculations. The worship of God “in Spirit and in truth” had been supplanted by the glorification of men in an endless round of man-made ceremonies. Throughout the world all systems of religion were losing their hold on mind and soul. Disgusted with fable and falsehood, seeking to drown thought, men turned to infidelity and material-

⁴As Andreas stated: “It was not Abraham’s unlimited authority, it was God’s authority. Abraham was merely maintaining the order that God had given, that’s all.”

⁵I added the italics.

ism. Leaving eternity out of their reckoning, they lived for the present.

As they ceased to recognize the Divine, they ceased to regard the human. Truth, honor, integrity, confidence, compassion, were departing from the earth. Relentless greed and absorbing ambition gave birth to universal distrust. The idea of duty, of the obligation of strength to weakness, of human dignity and **human rights**, was cast aside as a dream or a fable. The common people were regarded as beasts of burden or as the tools and the steppingstones for ambition. Wealth and power, ease and self-indulgence, were sought as the highest good. Physical degeneracy, mental stupor, spiritual death, characterized the age.

As the evil passions and purposes of men banished God from their thoughts, so *forgetfulness of Him inclined them more strongly to evil*. The heart in love with sin clothed Him with its own attributes, and this conception strengthened the power of sin. Bent on self-pleasing, men came to regard God as such a one as themselves—a Being whose aim was self-glory, whose requirements were suited to His own pleasure; a Being by whom men were lifted up or cast down according as they helped or hindered His selfish purpose. The lower classes regarded the Supreme Being as one scarcely differing from their oppressors, save by exceeding them in power. By these ideas every form of religion was molded. Each was a system of exaction. By gifts and ceremonies, the worshipers sought to propitiate the Deity in order to secure His favor for their own ends. Such religion, having no power upon the heart or the conscience, could be but a round of forms, of which men wearied, and from which, except for such gain as it might offer, they longed to be free. So evil, unrestrained, grew stronger, while the appreciation and desire for good diminished. Men lost the image of God and received the impress of the demoniacal power by which they were controlled. The whole world was becoming a sink of corruption.

There was but one hope for the human race—that into this mass of discordant and corrupting elements might be cast a new leaven; that there might be brought to mankind the power of a new life; that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world.

Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest *the nature of His law*, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness.

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that *the law is a law of love*, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that *in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind*, and with it the stability, *the very foundation and framework, of human society*.

So far from making arbitrary requirements, God's law is given to men as a hedge, a shield. Whoever accepts its principles is preserved from evil. *Fidelity to God involves fidelity to man. Thus the law guards the rights, the individuality, of every human being*. It restrains the superior from oppression, and the subordinate from disobedience. *It ensures man's well-being*, both for this world and for the world to come. To the obedient it is the pledge of eternal life, for it expresses the principles that endure forever.

Christ came to demonstrate the value of the divine principles by revealing their power for the regeneration of humanity. He came to teach how these principles are to be developed and applied.

Thus, the rights of each creature, and the Law of God, are inseparable. To disregard one is to disregard the other. And the application of the Law of God is much deeper than merely human laws: it applies to the thoughts and intents of the heart, the deep inner motives. The equality that God gives is not just an outward attempt to balance things according to human ideas, it is a rebuilding within man of the respect of God's ownership of all creation, because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

Our modern nations are *not* built on a deep respect for the Law of God. Instead, their legal systems are designed roughly (but not necessarily intentionally) on the last six of the commandments, which define man's relationship to his fellow man. And the application of this legal system is aimed primarily to restrain and con-

trol the outward behavior. They have no power to change the inner man, therefore they can never bring true equal rights.

As well, the standard of what is considered a “right” is constantly changing. Same-sex marriages are now considered a “right” in many countries; aborting the life of unborn babies is considered a “right”; young people gain the “right” to buy and consume alcoholic drinks, tobacco, and other recreational drugs such as cannabis, at a certain age; the right to gamble and buy lottery tickets, also comes at this same age. There was a time when the right to dissolve a marriage came only by reason of adultery; but then later, “abuse” was added as a reason, and still later, “irreconcilable differences,” was enough to satisfy the ever-lowering standard.

Most of these “rights” have nothing to do with God’s kingdom, because lust, mistreating the body, and hardness of heart, are forbidden; being incompatible with the Law that commands love to God and love to man: the law of unselfishness.

Even the attempt of modern laws to give “*equal rights*” is often misused by the carnal heart. Andreas gives an example of when he was a child:

“When I was a child, I had a pair of felt shoes for indoors at school. My friends and I liked to run and slide down the hallways at school. The teacher thought we were getting a little too wild, so she wanted to stop us. She grabbed me by the hair as I was sliding by, and it skidded me to a stop. It hurt, so I said, “Ouch!” very loudly. The teacher felt sorry and apologized. I was happy that she said sorry, so then I cried loudly to make her feel even sorrier.”

In this example, there was a clear expression of the desire for revenge, and a disrespect of the authority of the teacher. When people feel that the law is on their side, often they will attempt to use it to threaten or harm the other person. Then after the law has been misused a number of times, a new law is made with fur-

ther restrictions, to prevent the misuse of the previous law! The problem is most often in the hearts of the people, and less frequently in the law. If God's law was in the heart, there would be no need for more and more laws, giving more and more "rights" to people, in order to protect them from the abuse of those rights by others.

I once had to deal with my 15 year old autistic son, who was running away to the library to play on their internet, instead of doing his schoolwork. I asked the librarian,

"Is there anything you can do to prevent him from using the computers?"

I was told that not only can they not do anything, but they can't even tell me what books he takes out of the library! So it was the library allied with the child, helping the child avoid his duties, and thus standing against the parent. I can remember in my childhood, things being quite different. In those days, the parents, teachers, police, and other authorities were all basically united together, supporting each other's authority. Now, it seems fragmented; the authorities are disrespected by each other, or looked upon with suspicion.

So in the reality of the situation, regarding "equal rights," as the laws work out among carnal men, it would be more accurate to say,

"Today women are not expected to submit to their husbands, and children are not expected to submit to their parents."

In other words, there was a time in the past when, at least outwardly, a family order somewhat similar to that of the patriarchs was common in the world. But because some men abused that privilege, laws were made forbidding any kind of corporal punishment for a child. But that does not mean that our current nations believe in non-violence, for when the same child turns 19, the police can use clubs, tasers, and all manner of physical vio-

lence, including shooting at it with a gun if necessary, to restrain it. Such are the unavoidable hypocrisies inherent in human attempts to make sinners respect each other.

But in God's kingdom, violence is never used at any stage:

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

To say, "today we have equal rights" seems to imply that there were not equal rights under God's system, or Abraham's system, which is clearly incorrect. Wherever sin exists, there will *never* be equal rights, for the very practice of sin takes away the rights of others, and no worldly system of law can take away sin. The best that human systems of law can attempt to do, is to reward actions that are in harmony with the law, and to restrain actions that are against the law by affixing punishments to them.

The question then remains, why compare Abraham's family order with today's implementation of "equal rights," when Abraham never used oppression, and did give equal rights to the members of his household? Most likely, Andreas is referring to the misapplication or misunderstanding of the Patriarchal Order which was common in our society, and which many of us were raised under. And so, in the chapters of this book, he brings out the true spiritual principles that Abraham followed, and which we are still to follow today. The world has not suddenly grasped these principles, but the pendulum is just swinging between one extreme (the father or parents have almost unlimited authority over the child) to another extreme (the father or parents have very limited au-

thority over the child). The gospel truth is not in between these two extremes, but something entirely different.

In these next paragraphs, Ellen White compares Abraham's implementation of the law, versus the lack of the same found in many modern families:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142-143:

“He will command his...household.” There would be no sinful neglect to restrain the evil propensities of his children, no weak, unwise, indulgent favoritism; no yielding of his conviction of duty to the claims of mistaken affection. Abraham would not only give right instruction, but *he would maintain the authority of just and righteous laws.*

How few there are in our day who follow this example! On the part of too many parents there is a blind and selfish sentimentalism, miscalled love, which is manifested in leaving children, with their unformed judgment and undisciplined passions, to the control of their own will. This is the veriest cruelty to the youth and a great wrong to the world. Parental indulgence causes disorder in families and in society. It confirms in the young the desire to follow inclination, instead of submitting to the divine requirements. Thus they grow up with a heart averse to doing God's will, and they transmit their irreligious, insubordinate spirit to their children and children's children. Like Abraham, parents should command their households after them. Let obedience to parental authority be taught and enforced as the first step in obedience to the authority of God.

The light esteem in which the law of God is held, even by religious leaders, has been productive of great evil. The teaching which has become so widespread, that the divine statutes are no longer binding upon men, is the same as idolatry in its effect upon the morals of the people. Those who seek to lessen the claims of God's holy law are striking directly at the foundation of the government of families and nations. Religious parents, failing to walk in His statutes, do not command their household to keep the way of the Lord. The law of God is not made the rule of life. The children, as they make homes of their own, feel under no obligation to teach their children what they themselves have

never been taught. And this is why there are so many godless families; this is why depravity is so deep and widespread.

Not until parents themselves walk in the law of the Lord with perfect hearts will they be prepared to command their children after them. A reformation in this respect is needed—a reformation which shall be deep and broad. Parents need to reform; ministers need to reform; they need God in their households. If they would see a different state of things, they must bring His word into their families and must make it their counselor. They must teach their children that it is the voice of God addressed to them, and is to be implicitly obeyed. They should patiently instruct their children, kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household are prepared to meet the sophistries of infidelity. They have accepted the Bible as the basis of their faith, and they have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of skepticism.

In the chapters of this book, the reader will gain a small glimpse into how Abraham would have maintained “the authority of just and righteous laws,” without using violence.

One last point, regarding the equality of God and His Law, it also bears mentioning that this never meant “equality of temporal possessions.”

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 535:

There are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have *an equal share* in the temporal blessings of God. But this was not the purpose of the Creator. A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character. Yet He intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.

So likewise in the family order, “equal rights” does not mean that the child has the same authority and decision-making power as the parent. Each have their sphere of authority. For the child,

its first sphere is to learn how to control and manage itself, take care of the body, help in the family, and learn to develop its faculties. There's a beautiful statement about how members of Abraham's household were treated:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:

His own example, the silent influence of his daily life, was a constant lesson. The unswerving integrity, the benevolence and unselfish courtesy, which had won the admiration of kings, were displayed in the home. There was a fragrance about the life, a nobility and loveliness of character, which revealed to all that he was connected with Heaven. He did not neglect the soul of the humblest servant. In his household there was not one law for the master and another for the servant; a royal way for the rich and another for the poor. All were treated with justice and compassion, as inheritors with him of the grace of life.

So there were masters and servants, rich and poor, within the household, but all were treated as equally valuable.

The Family Order

Signs of the Times, July 13, 1882:

At the beginning, the father was constituted priest and magistrate of his own family. Then came *the patriarchal rule, which was like that of the family*, but extended over a greater number. When Israel became a distinct people, the twelve tribes, springing from the twelve sons of Jacob, had each a leader. These leaders, or elders, were assembled whenever any matter that pertained to the general interest was to be settled. The high priest was the visible representative of Christ, the Redeemer of His people. When the Hebrews settled in Canaan, judges were appointed, who resembled governors. These rulers were invested with authority to declare war and proclaim peace for the nation; but God was still the recognized king of Israel, and he continued to reveal His will to these chosen leaders, and to manifest through them His power.

We have to imagine ourselves back in those days to picture it. The "sons of God" (the name of the faithful in that time period)

springing from Seth's line, generally lived separate from the "children of men" who came from Cain's line. They each had their own communities, and for a long time there was no intermingling with the unfaithful. This is somewhat different from our time, where it is getting rare for even a child to carry the faith of its parents when it is older, let alone grandchildren and great grandchildren. But these patriarchs must have had a great experience with God, in order to influence their families and extended families, to raise and keep them in the faith.

A question might be raised as to who it was that "constituted the father as priest and magistrate of his own family." Obviously God did, because He clearly said, after the fall,

Genesis 3

¹⁶ ...he [the man] shall rule over you [the woman].

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 58-59:

In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now *their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other*. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and *she was now placed in subjection to her husband*. Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though *growing out of the results of sin*, would have proved *a blessing to them*; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden.

In the New Testament time, Paul appealed back to this order when he said,

1 Corinthians 11

³ But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of

Christ is God.

So the patriarchal rule was just an extension of the family order, which God instituted after sin entered, when He made man the leader or “head” of the family. Therefore, it was given by God, as a measure to maintain unity in the family because of the entrance of sin. The Family Order is the original: the Patriarchal Order is an extension of it to accommodate larger family groups with extended relatives. Man was specifically made the head over woman, because of the entrance of sin.

Signs of the Times, Feb. 23, 1882:

A great responsibility rests upon the husband—house-band—to bind the household together, by the ties of kindness, love, and harmony. *In the patriarchal ages*, the husband and father was the priest of his own household. And *still it is his duty* to invoke in their behalf the divine blessing, and to instruct and guide them in the way of life. Alas that his influence should ever be exerted to lead them into folly and dissipation! When about to accompany his wife and children to the theater or the ball-room, let the professed Christian ask himself, Can I seek God’s blessing upon the scene of pleasure? Would my Master be a guest at such a place? Will angels minister to me there? Can I there let my light so shine before men, that they may be led to glorify God?

This statement makes clear that the role of the husband in the family has not changed since patriarchal times. He is still to be the priest (or spiritual leader and guide) of the family. This is fully in harmony with Andreas’ statement that the “spiritual principles” of the patriarchal order still apply to us.

When Jesus chose people to lead His church, He chose men. When the Deacons were chosen, men were selected. Later in history, the leading reformers that God chose were men. Although women had special roles (some were prophets), and were great witnesses for God, and remarkable characters through the grace of God, yet as long as this sinful flesh continues, the original or-

der that God instituted, of men leading in the family and in the church, remains in place.

Human Vessels

But in the Patriarchal Order, it is stated that the believers looked to the Patriarch as the “head.” Is this correct? Isn’t Christ the real Head of the Church?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

Abraham’s household comprised more than a thousand souls. Those who were led by his teachings to worship the one God, found a home in his encampment; and here, as in a school, they received such instruction as would prepare them to be representatives of the true faith. Thus a great responsibility rested upon him. He was training heads of families, and his methods of government would be carried out in the households over which they should preside.

In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. *His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head*, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God.

In the book, *Is God’s Church Organized?* Andreas makes the following comment to these two paragraphs:

“As is clearly pointed out in this quotation, the visible church on earth at this time was comprised of Abraham’s household. The organizational structure of this church is designated as the ‘patriarchal system,’ but one can easily see that *the same structure existed in heaven and in Eden*. In other words, this form of church organization *is not limited to the time of the patriarchs*.”

I’ve already mentioned that the administration of the civil government is no longer a matter for the community of the faithful: in civil matters they are subject to the governments of the nations

they live in. So what aspects of the Patriarchal System are still valid today?

1. Separation from the world (avoiding idolatry and training for missionary work);
2. Spiritual guidance through a God-appointed leader (or sometimes, through multiple God-appointed leaders, such as at Pentecost).

I could also mention Abraham's educational system, but that is covered in this book. In the time of the Patriarchs, the spiritual leadership was passed to the firstborn son, which mirrored the system in heaven, where Jesus was the spiritual leader, the "first-born" Son. This did not always mean the physical firstborn son, as it was a spiritual role, that required spiritual qualifications.

- Isaac was chosen instead of Ishmael, even though Ishmael was born first.
- Jacob (the younger of the twins) received the spiritual blessing instead of Esau, because Esau despised this part of the birthright.
- In Jacob's family, Joseph (the eleventh son) received the "double portion": the firstborn blessing; when his life revealed a remarkable early religious experience, and later, a large endowment of the Spirit of God.

To understand this better, think of the firstborn as not just a physical attribute, but a spiritual one. All Christians must be born again from above. Those who receive this new birth first, and cooperate with God in its growth, are pre-eminently qualified to be spiritual leaders.

But what about the statement that the Patriarch was looked to "as their head"? It's important not to insert words, which are not stated. It does NOT say,

"His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head
IN THE PLACE OF CHRIST."

Those capitalized words are *not there*, and we should not add them. Even before the fall, Adam was to stand at the *head* of the human race:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 236:

The relationship existing in the pure family of God in heaven was to exist in the family of God on earth. Under God, Adam was to stand *at the head of the earthly family* to maintain the principles of the heavenly family. This would have brought peace and happiness.

Was God building a papacy on Earth, even before sin entered? No, that is ridiculous! Adam was the representative. He would have the deepest experience and knowledge of God, and his children would naturally come to him to learn of God, and he would feel a responsibility over them to guide them in the right path. He was a head *under God*, not to replace God, but to show God's working and ways to those whom he had a responsibility towards. Eve would have been right by his side, sharing this responsibility as his most prized helper, since the name "Adam" applied to both of them:

Genesis 5

² Male and female He created them; and blessed them, and called *their name Adam*, in the day when they were created.

Another example is found in the apostle Paul:

Matthew 23

⁹ And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 4

¹⁵ For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many *fathers*: for in Christ Jesus *I have begotten you* through the gospel.

¹⁶ Wherefore I beseech you, *be followers of me*.

Was Paul building the papacy here? Was he disobeying the instruction of Christ, by calling himself a *father*, and telling people

to follow him (in the place of Christ)? Not at all. We must be careful to “rightly divide the word of truth.”⁶ In another verse, Paul clarifies:

1 Corinthians 11

¹ Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

And his role as father was simply to bring them the truth of the gospel, whereby Christ became their spiritual father. Like every true servant of God, he led people to Christ, their true father, and so became an “under-father” to them. In *Acts* 20:28, the term “overseer” is used:

Acts 20

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which *the Holy Ghost has made you overseers*, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

The word “bishop” has the same meaning. The word “pastor” comes from the Latin noun “pastor,” which means *shepherd* (“to tend a flock, to pasture it”; see *Jeremiah* 17:16). It appears also in *Ephesians* 4:11 as one of the gifts in the church.

Christ is the **Father** of the Church, but He also appoints *under-fathers* to be ministers through which He works.

Christ is the **True Shepherd**, but He also appoints *under-shepherds* or pastors, through which He works.

So, likewise, Christ is the **True Head**, but He also appoints *under-heads*, through which His mind is made known. This is seen as well in the statement comparing the husband and wife to the church and Christ:

Ephesians 5

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, *even as Christ is the head of the church*: and He is the saviour of the body.

⁶ 2 *Timothy* 2:5.

Christ works through these leaders, just as He wants to work through each church member, to make them ministers of His grace to the world. If we try to bypass these leaders, then we bypass Christ who works through them.

The difference between the true and false heads is determined by their character, and not simply by the word used to describe their position. E. J. Waggoner makes a beautiful point in the book, *The Everlasting Covenant*, a point well worth remembering. The papacy is man standing in the place of God; but God's true order is God working through a man. Here is his explanation:

It should be borne in mind that in a true theocracy it is God himself that rules, and not some person in the place of God. In the days of the first dominion, it was God that ruled through Adam, and not Adam who exercised God's power. *This is a most important distinction.* Christ, the second Adam, said,

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

John 14

¹⁰ The Father which dwells in me, He does the works.

There was a true theocracy. Even so it is with Christ's true followers:

Philippians 2

¹³ It is God which works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

In the Papacy we see a man professing to act *in the place of God*. The Pope does not profess to be opposed to God, but to be His regent, or, as he styles it, God's "vicegerent"—one who exercises God's power and authority *for Him*. But that very term shows that it is not God that is reigning in the Papacy, but a man instead of God. A man assumes the place of God! That is just what Lucifer attempted to do. It has ever been Satan's one purpose to usurp the place of God, and to claim power that belongs to God alone. Therefore in the Papacy we have not a theocracy, but a *demonocracy*, and the same thing exists in every case,

whether in nations or individuals, where God is not acknowledged as the sole and supreme ruler.⁷

God working through a man is not a system of “man over man.” Likewise, in heaven, where there are commanding angels, these angels are not implementing an “angel over angel” system. Instead, it is a system where God is working through an angel,—one who has more experience,—to direct those angels who have less experience. And this is how it was in Abraham’s family, and in the Patriarchal Order.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:

All were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven.

It does *not* say,

“All were taught that they were under the rule of Abraham”!

In fact, even in the early church, there were Apostles, Deacons, Prophets, and various other gifts. All did not have the same gifts. There were various gifts, and thus various positions of responsibility in the church. Every member, as it is in the human body, is precious and has its place; there is an equality of value in God’s sight. But all are not the mouth or the eyes, or the foot.

When the church met together to settle the dispute over the Gentiles and circumcision, it was not the whole church that met, but the apostles, and some other elders from the various churches. When the decision was made, and brought to the members of the churches, was this “man over man”? Shouldn’t the whole church have gotten together and everyone had a vote in the matter?! Not at all. God laid the responsibility of leadership on certain men, those men were recognized by the church body, and then those men acted for the whole church, in matters that concerned the whole church.

⁷E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, ch. 34 “Israel a Missionary People.”

So, how is this different from the patriarchal order? It is not. Men are appointed by God to lead His church, and to bring the gospel to the members, so they can likewise be prepared as witnesses to the world. It is the same order in the Old Testament as in the New. And this is exactly what was taught in the Gospel Order presentations.⁸

Prayer and the Outpouring of the Spirit

Yet one more accusation has been made against the Patriarchal Order, by misusing the following statement:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:

During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness. Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Spirit, that He might pour it upon His people.

Some people drew the conclusion that the reason why the Spirit was not poured out in its fullness in the patriarchal age, was because it was an imperfect system, that failed to produce the unity required. They reason that in the patriarchal system, only the patriarch would communicate to God via prayer, as the representative of the people; whereas in the times of the early rain, the united church prayed for the blessing.

There are two problems with this interpretation. First of all, there is no statement which says that *only* the Patriarch prayed. All were invited to the morning and evening sacrifice. And even the “roving Canaanites” received instruction from Abraham, and afterwards, repaired the altars they found, and “worshiped the living God,” which certainly would have involved prayer.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 128:

Wherever he [Abraham] pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling *all* within his encampment to the morn-

⁸ See the book, *Gospel Order*, by Andreas Dura.

ing and the evening sacrifice. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. In following years, there were those among the roving Canaanites who received instruction from Abraham; and whenever one of these came to that altar, he knew who had been there before him; and when he had pitched his tent, he repaired the altar, and there worshiped the living God.

These people who came under Abraham's influence knew enough to pray to the living God themselves. And God testified that He knew that Abraham would...

Genesis 18

¹⁹ ...command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.

How could they possibly keep the Lord's way without being taught to pray to Him? This verse alone shows that Abraham certainly taught his family and even others that came under his influence, to pray to the true God. Here is one example of just such a case:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 172:

Abraham committed the important matter to "his eldest servant" [Eliezer], a man of piety, experience, and sound judgment, who had rendered him long and faithful service...Remembering the words of Abraham, that God would send His angel with him, *he prayed earnestly* for positive guidance. In the family of his master he was accustomed to the constant exercise of kindness and hospitality, and he now asked that an act of courtesy might indicate the maiden whom God had chosen.

The second problem with this line of reasoning is that the outpouring of the Spirit does not *only* depend on the *prayers* of God's church, it also requires the *time* to be right. The outpouring of the Spirit upon the early church took place for a special reason: because Jesus had ascended, and officially begun His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. And now His church on Earth needed to give a powerful witness to the fact that there was a living Saviour who

had risen for their salvation. It was these two things that coincided:

1. Jesus' ascension, and the need to witness to it; and
2. The unity of the church, manifested in praying for the gift, so they could be those witnesses.

In the patriarchal time, Jesus had not yet come in the flesh, had not been crucified, and had not risen. So *the time* for that special outpouring *had not come*. This is clearly taught in the following verses:

John 7

³⁸ He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

³⁹ (But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for *the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*)

The same applies to the latter rain. It is not just a matter of the church praying for the gift, as the Pentecostal churches teach today, but the time must be right.

Zechariah 10

¹ Ask of the Lord rain *in the time of the latter rain*; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

In Abraham's day, the time had not come for the special outpouring of the Spirit upon the church, therefore no blame can be cast upon the Patriarchs for the lack thereof. But let's consider for a moment the tremendous experiences that those folks made, at least what little that is mentioned about them:

1. One of them [Enoch] achieved such a state of holiness that he was taken alive from the Earth, without seeing death.
2. Noah is singled out by Ezekiel (along with Daniel and Job) as being a pre-eminent example of holiness.⁹ He taught the gospel to

⁹ *Ezekiel 14:14, 20.*

a rebellious world for 120 years, while building the Ark according to God's exact specifications.

3. Abraham is styled as “the father of the faithful,”¹⁰ and his experience of righteousness by faith is singled out as the clearest example of the working of the gospel in the Old Testament. He was also called “the friend of God,”¹¹ and met and spoke with God (in Christ) a number of times.

All three of these men were eminently successful in passing the faith onto their children. And the lives and acts of all three of these men have a special lesson for those who live just before the second advent.

- Enoch reveals the perfect holiness that is required before a person can be translated;
- Noah shows how to remain faithful to God in delivering a final warning to a rebellious world; and
- Abraham shows what kind of sacrifice needs to be made to be part of the firstfruit offering.

It is popular among modern Protestants to downgrade Moses, in their attempts to minimize the Law that came from Sinai. They use verses such as:

John 1

¹⁷ The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,

–to convey the idea that Moses was just a representative of the Old Covenant, and therefore the Law which was given through him, can be safely disregarded.¹² But what do we now know about Moses? We have seen that he was the greatest saint of the Bible,

¹⁰ *Romans 4:11.*

¹¹ *James 2:23.*

¹² E. J. Waggoner wrote an excellent article showing the error of such a view, titled, “Christ and Moses,” from *Present Truth*, November 30, 1893. It is included in the book, *All About Jesus, vol. 1.*

and now occupies the highest place in heaven, next to Christ.¹³ What a different estimate does God place upon His ancient saints!

Patriarchal Order vs. “The Patriarchy”

When the term “Patriarchal Order” is mentioned, some confuse this with the modern sociological teaching about the “Patriarchy.” According to Google AI:

“Patriarchy is a social, political, and economic system where men hold primary power, dominating roles in political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. Derived from Greek for “rule of the father,” it establishes gender inequality by valuing masculine traits over feminine ones, often restricting women’s access to power and decision-making.”

There are a few things to bear in mind:

1. Christians have nothing to do with modern political systems, which only restrain sin. The job of Christians is to lead sinners to the fountain whereby the evil impulses that rule the heart can be cleansed away. This stops oppression at its very source.
2. The family order of a wife submitting to her husband as the head (in decisions where there were differences) was put in place by God after the fall, to maintain unity; but this stipulation was given to a Christian household. The nominal Christians and worldly people do not have the inner requirements to carry out this order without using some amount of oppression or coercion.
3. Christians do not need to concern themselves with inequalities or unfairness against themselves.

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God’s countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently.

¹³ See the book, *Gabriel: From the meekest to the Greatest*.

Again and again He was asked, “Why do you submit to such spiteful usage, even from your brothers?” “It is written,” He said,

Proverbs 3

¹ My son, forget not my law; but let your heart keep my commandments:

² For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to you.

³ Let not mercy and truth forsake you: bind them about your neck; write them upon the table of your heart:

⁴ So shall you find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

The principles of God’s Law concern self-control under God’s Spirit. Jesus accepted these trials as tests for Him to develop character, to become strong in doing the right, even when others do not. He trusted in God, regardless of what circumstances He was placed in. His faith in the love and care of His Father did not waver, no matter how it was tested.

On the other hand, contending for rights (by argument and fighting) began with Lucifer in heaven, who felt that God was not treating him fairly. Behind this claim was a desire for self-exaltation, and a spirit of envy and jealousy.¹⁴

Although Lucifer’s claims of mistreatment were imaginary, there are many cases of very real mistreatment of people on this sinful earth. True Christians will refuse to participate in such mistreatment, and will show mercy to those mistreated ones whenever possible. They will always trust God to solve the problem of the mistreatments which are handed out by sinners. The martyrs went to their graves being horribly abused, but their unyielding faith unto death, and refusal to disobey God, gave a convincing witness for God’s kingdom, which acted with a converting power on others. They will be especially honored in Heaven for having given up their lives for the truth while upon this Earth.¹⁵

¹⁴ See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35-37.

These two systems, the Patriarchal Order, and what is termed “The Patriarchy” are quite different, even though they seem to have some similar outward characteristics. To some extent, the male-dominated order stems from human nature: men are stronger, and therefore naturally take leading roles. And we have already mentioned that the family order of the husband being the head of the wife is a godly principle, based on the Bible, designed for protection and peace, not for abuse. But what happens to the Patriarchal Order when those practicing it lose their living experience with God? Usually the form is continued, but without the power. The Bible especially mentions this as a problem of “the last days”:

2 Timothy 3

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

So, when a charge is made against the Patriarchal Order, but the accusations made are actually addressing the bad behavior of men who occupy leadership roles, but who do not have a connection with God, then we need to be careful to make distinctions, so that the innocent and righteous are not condemned with the guilty and wicked, and so we do not inadvertently misrepresent God’s character and work.

Here is a list comparing the Patriarchal Order, which in its true sense, can only be established by real Christians; versus the Patriarchy, which is a system that copies the Patriarchal Order in some outward details (*i.e.* men are the rulers), but which is not under the direct control of God’s Spirit. I have drawn all the proof texts from the book of *Genesis*, when the Patriarchal Order was practiced by God’s people, and at the same time there was a carnal

¹⁵ **Early Writings, p. 18-19:** “As we were traveling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments.

system of men ruling among the heathen, which in some outward aspects, imitated the Patriarchal system.

The Patriarchal Order	The Patriarchy
Established by God Genesis 3:16; 12:1; 17:19	Established by Men Genesis 10:8-10; 11:4
God rules through it Genesis 26:24; 28:13-14	Men rule through it Genesis 17:20
A Spiritual Order Genesis 6:8; 15:6	A Carnal Order Genesis 17:20
No Oppression Genesis 26:12-22	Oppression and Strife Genesis 16:12; 21:9, 25
Leaders are Servants Genesis 18:3-5; 32:4, 18	Leaders are Masters Genesis 27:40; 36:15-43
Uphold & Teach God’s Law Genesis 26:5	Do Not Uphold & Teach God’s Law Genesis 34:2; 39:7-20
Leadership is a Gift of God Genesis 17:15-19	Leadership is Fought For Genesis 27:40
Trains Missionaries Genesis 12:3	Trains for Sports and Wars Genesis 6:11
God’s Kingdom on Earth Genesis 17:16; 32:28; 35:11	Man’s Kingdom on Earth Genesis 10:8-10; 11:4

Also, we should not be deceived by the modern feminist teachings which claim that if only women were given an equal share of the rulership, peace on earth would result. This cannot be, because both men and women are naturally born in sin, and peace does not come by strife, but by the humble plea, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”¹⁶ In the following statement, Ellen White explains how men have often abused their supremacy over women, but she also points out how women have missed the goal as well:

¹⁶ *Luke* 18:13.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 58-59:

Had the principles joined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but *man's abuse of the supremacy* thus given him has too often *rendered the lot of woman very bitter* and made her life a burden.

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. *In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing.* In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them.

Both men and women are affected by the desire for self-exaltation, and until this is healed, any shuffling of responsibilities and powers are simply legal attempts to produce righteousness, and will fail in the end.

The Bible Patriarchs were not cavemen, nor were they oppressors. They were instead people with powerful minds, who lived much longer, and were less corrupt, than the humanity of our time. They were men of great piety: Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham; men who were able to pass on the faith to their children, and whose influence extended for generations. They did not need the Law written on stone, or even in a book for that matter, for they carried it in their hearts, and passed it on faithfully from generation to generation. Although they, without the last generation, will not be made perfect (by receiving new bodies in the resurrection), neither will we be made perfect without embracing and building on the example and teachings of these Christian fathers.

Malachi 4

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the *fathers to the children*, and the heart of the *children to their fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

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1. Team Building I

Sabbath, January 13, 2018

I READ a book many years ago in the 1970's, called *Children: The Challenge* by Dr Rudolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz. It is a very interesting book which has always been in my mind, more or less—even when we were studying other topics. When we began our salutogenesis studies, it came back to mind. But we should study this together as a group, not just individually, because we want to understand the spiritual aspects of this subject.

The book itself is not spiritual, as such. But the authors came from spiritual households and many aspects in the book bear a direct relationship to the Bible. So I would like to study the book in the light of the Bible. Or, rather, I would like to use it as a guideline and we can see how the Bible confirms what is written in the book. This book is basically about child education, but it is more than that. It has an application to adults as well.

- How do we relate to each other?
- How can we have a community that promotes spiritual health?
- How can we be selfless and have a sense of community?
- How do we prepare for heaven?
- And how do we gain resilience—both as individuals and as a church?

The Challenges Children Face

Let's begin with an object lesson. Would all the children who are three years old or less come to me at the front now?

[The young children come forward. There is a small footstool which Andreas asks them to lift, one by one, beginning with the youngest. The children struggle to do it alone, and most are unable to lift it. Andreas encourages them to try again and he demonstrates how it can be done. Then he instructs two siblings to work together, which makes it easier to lift.]

It is easier to lift the stool when you work together. But I saw that some of you adults were laughing. Rahel, you were laughing and enjoyed watching the children; let's see what you can do! So I'll ask you to come up and try to move a bigger piece of furniture.

[Rahel, who is in her twenties, comes and moves the larger podium, with some difficulty.]

Wow, you're strong! Hannah, please come up and return the podium to where it was.

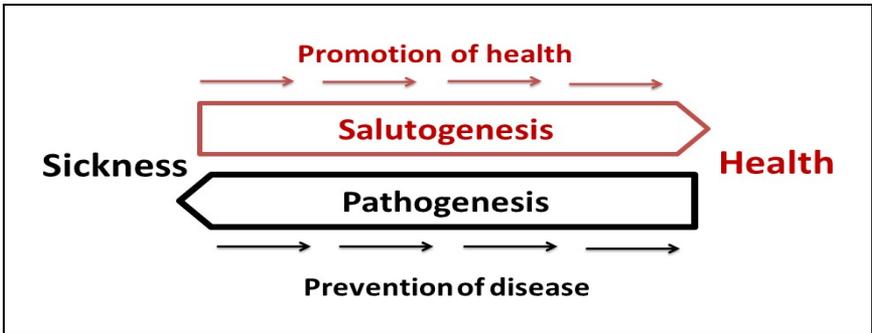
[Hannah, who is around 12 years old, tries to move the podium, but it barely budes. Andreas suggests that they move it together, and they manage to move it without difficulty.]

This was an object lesson: I wanted to show you how difficult it is for children to do things which adults find very easy. I can lift the stool with just two fingers. The children watch what I do and they want to do it as well, but they can't; they don't have the strength. They would actually like to participate in what the adults are doing; the adult world is miraculous to them. Adults can do so many things, and the children would like to do them as well.

In order for parents to understand children well, they must imagine being in the child's place. One psychologist actually invited parents to put themselves in their children's shoes. He did this by creating a giant-size table with giant chairs, plates, and utensils. The adults had to climb up on the chairs like children, and try to eat with the oversized utensils, which they could barely handle. They probably didn't enjoy their meal very much. They preferred the size which fit them. The psychologist did this experiment in order to help the parents understand how their children felt. Those are the challenges children face.

Salutogenesis and Pathogenesis

We want to go back to a story we read in a recent study,¹⁷ which is the fall into sin in Eden. Let's briefly repeat the main points of *salutogenesis* versus *pathogenesis*.



There is sickness on one side of our diagram, and health on the other side. Looking at the causes for health is called *salutogenesis*. It asks the question,

“How do we gain health?”

Whereas *pathogenesis* is looking for the causes of sickness. This is just a repetition of what we have studied recently. In order to work on salutogenesis, we look at what promotes health. In order to work against pathogenesis, we work on the prevention of disease—we need to work against something in this case. These are the two ways of working. We need to do both. We need to work for the promotion of health and we also need to work to prevent diseases.

The first question doctors ask themselves when a patient comes to their office is,

“What is the cause of the disease?”

They look at pathogenesis. That is automatically the first reaction. We could also turn the question around and ask why the

¹⁷To review this study, see: [Appendix: The Way to Health: Salutogenesis](#).

person is not healthy. What has prevented the person from being healthy? We need to look at both aspects. We need to look at pathogenesis in order to prevent disease, and we need to look at salutogenesis in order to promote health.

The idea of salutogenesis, and the promotion of health, is that it is a process. It is not achieved at one point in time. It is never fully achieved. We will always strive towards better health. That will be a constant battle. We will constantly look for what will promote health. What will promote health? Simultaneously, it is also important to prevent disease constantly.

The Fall of Man

We want to see how these two ideas are shown in the Bible. In order to do this, we will study *Genesis* 3:1-19, examining it verse by verse. We should remember that God created the world and humankind, with full knowledge of what would happen later. There is nothing hidden from God. Even though God knew that Adam would disobey Him, He created him perfect—in love and with everything he needed. Food was provided, and social needs were satisfied by providing a partner.

But then came that incident which we will read about now. We will begin with *Genesis* 3:1 and continue through the entire chapter.

Genesis 3

¹ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made...

“Cunning” is not a positive word in this context—other translations say “shrewder” or “more crafty.” It means that the serpent was tricky and knew how to deceive. Satan was behind it. He was more cunning than all the creatures. He knew how to trick someone into doing what he wanted. Today, this might be called propaganda or public relations. It is deceiving people into something.

¹ ...And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

He put what God had said into question. The fall into sin is normally described as merely eating a fruit—often an apple. We don't know what kind of fruit it was. But the problem wasn't eating the fruit; not at all. The fruit was not poisonous. The problem was the destruction of the relationship with God. That is what stands in question in this verse; that is the real problem.

“Has God indeed said that? Can you really rely on what God says?”

What God said is put into question; that was enough. The serpent didn't argue that God had not said it; he merely questioned it. That is a trick which is often used today. Something merely has to be put into question. When people begin to question the facts, they become confused.

These days there is much talk about fake news and fact checkers. People begin to wonder what is real and what is not, or what is true and what is false. Incidents are put into question, even when they happened in the light of day and were witnessed by many people. The question is asked whether it really happened; that is what occurred in Eden. The question was asked,

“Did God really say that?”

But of course God said it! And of course Eve knew it! The serpent knew it as well; Satan knew it very well. But the cunning trick was to question it.

Genesis 3

² And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden:

³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

Eve repeated God's words, but she didn't repeat them accurately. God did not say that they shouldn't touch the fruit, He simply said they should not eat it. I want to stress the fact that the fruit was not the problem. Touching it and eating it were not

the problem, even though that is what is emphasized by theologians today. They think the fruit might have been poisonous, but it wasn't. The actual problem was that the relationship with God was destroyed. It was a distraction for Eve to mention about touching the fruit. God did not say that they should not touch the fruit.¹⁸ Instead, Eve did what we often do: God gives a command and in order to make ourselves keep it, we create extra commands in addition to the original.

For example, God commanded that we should not labor on Sabbath. Then people make up additional commandments, such as not traveling more than a thousand steps on the Sabbath. They do this in order to make themselves obey the original command of not laboring on the Sabbath. They do so, because what God really said is no longer understood. Then they try to keep the commands in a legalistic way and they overdo it.

The real problem was the relationship with God. The fruit was not the problem. Eve gave the serpent an advantage then. He realized that the woman didn't understand the real issue of God's command. She showed she had missed it completely when she said they should not touch it.

Genesis 3

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die.

⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

What does this imply? It implies that God is selfish and wants something for himself, which He doesn't want to share with others. It is as if He were to say,

“This is my sphere, my privilege, and you must not touch it.”

This statement, spoken by the serpent, put the relationship between humankind and God into question. It was an attack on the sense of community. It was an attack on the sense of togetherness

¹⁸PP Editor's note: Please see the discussion about Eve's statement regarding touching the fruit in *Appendix 2: Touching the Fruit*.

and on the sense of “we.” Now it was “I” and “you.” It was not “we” anymore. In our object lesson at the beginning, it was much easier to lift the stool together than alone. It was difficult when one child tried to lift it alone. The same is true of moving the podium. It was very difficult for one person. We realize that the only way to work is with “we.” We know this from everyday experiences. Yet Satan wants to tell us that it is “you” and “I,” or “they” and “us.”

Genesis 3

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [which it was, without question], that it was pleasant to the eyes [which it also was, without question], and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

It was also a tree that made the partaker wise. Again, the problem was not the fruit. The problem was the relationship with God.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

We clearly see in this story that sin made life unmanageable. The pair had been happy. Everything was peaceful around them. But as soon as they did what God had said they should not do, and as soon as they lost the sense of community and togetherness with God, then they could no longer manage life. They realized that they were naked, and they felt the need to mend the situation quickly. The first thing they mended was sewing fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves. They didn't do it together with God; instead, God and the angels were now a “they.” Adam and Eve thought,

“They won't do it for us. We must do it. [Or, “I must do it.”] We can't do it together anymore.”

God's Approach to the Problem

Genesis 3

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you?

¹⁰ So he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.

But didn't they have fig leaf coverings now? Why did he say he was naked and that he hid himself? It was because he realized that the fig leaves wouldn't cover him. There was still a problem. The relationship between himself and God was not the same anymore. There was no togetherness between them. God was a "you" and Adam was an "I." He said,

"I am naked, so I had to hide myself. And you, God, see everything. Therefore, I must hide myself."

Genesis 3

¹¹ And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

God asked them questions which would challenge them to answer. But they couldn't answer those questions, because the sense of togetherness was not there anymore.

¹² Then the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.

In other words, not even Adam and Eve were together anymore. At first, there was "we" and "they." God and the angels were "those ones over there." Adam and Eve were thinking,

"They don't understand us. They don't do the best things for us."

But now it was “I” and “she.” Adam said,

“*She* gave me of the tree, and *I* would not have eaten of it except for her.”

Their sense of togetherness was completely broken up.

Genesis 3

¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

Again, it was “he” and “I.” This time the “he” was the serpent though. Now let’s see how God dealt with it.

¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

Is this an approach that uses salutogenesis or pathogenesis? Is it promotion of health or prevention of disease—in relation to Adam and Eve? The next verse connects with this question.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

Was this promotion of health or prevention of disease? It was primarily the promotion of health, because Adam and Eve were sick. The sense of community—the “we”—was broken. It was now an “I.” It was a selfish approach. And God was helping them back onto the path of “we” by putting enmity between them and the “I,” which is selfishness. When God said the serpent should crawl on its belly, He was not only speaking of the serpent itself. The serpent was a symbol for selfishness. It was a symbol of “I”—of the separation, of the destruction of the sense of commonness. That’s what the serpent stood for. That’s what God said should be cursed. That is what was to crawl on its belly. That is very clearly the promotion of health. It is the path back to health. That is how it goes. It is enmity.

Think about little children. Are they little devils or are they little saints? That is the big question when they come into the world. Some parents seem to think they are little devils, who need to be converted into saints. Other parents think they are little saints, who need to be prevented from becoming devils. What do you think?

According to the text we read, there is an enmity. It is an enmity against selfishness which God places in the heart of humans. This doesn't mean that babies are automatically born again when they come into the world; they still must be born again. But we need to understand that there is already enmity there. This means that they are not little devils who only want to destroy or ruin everything; that is not the case. On the other hand, we also realize that they are not safe. We also need to prevent them from becoming devils. We need to understand how to prevent that. First of all, though, we need to understand that there is enmity. And that enmity is a very great asset to the path of health.

Children naturally have a sense of togetherness. That's why I said earlier that children see a miraculous world when they look at adults. They think,

“Adults can do so many things and are responsible for so many things. They can handle everything and lift burdens. Wow! I want to belong in that world.”

They don't think that it's far too high for them and that they have nothing to do with it. No, they want to be a part of that world. That is why, for example, children climb on the table to help their mother when she comes home with the groceries. But if the children want to help unpack the eggs, for example, the mother usually tells them to stop: the eggs might break. Then the children realize they're not able to do it yet.

When the children tried to lift the stool earlier, I could have either encouraged them to keep trying, or I could have told them that they couldn't do it and that I would do it instead. Which did I

say? I told them to try again. That's a huge difference! When I told them to try again, I also showed them that since I could do it, they could too. We could do it together. But if I were to say that they couldn't do it, then I'm essentially telling them that I am a great man and they are just little children. It is "you" and "I." This works directly against togetherness. God said that He would put enmity in us. He puts enmity between us and the selfishness, which is the way of doing everything by ourselves. Instead, we can do it together. And God gave even more than this.

Genesis 3

¹⁶ To the woman He said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

Was this a path to health or prevention of disease? It is actually both. The sorrow and pain, prevent humans from becoming independent. We sense a need for help. Women sense a need for help from their husbands.

¹⁶ ...your desire shall be for your husband.

The husband also needs to have a sense of care for his wife. To rule over her doesn't mean that he oppressed her or is above her. That's how the word "rule" is often understood. It is not understood as togetherness, but rather separation of upper and lower classes. Men are thought to be an upper class, while women are a lower class. But that's not what God meant.

¹⁶ ...and he shall rule over you.

In that context, to "rule" means to care for and have responsibility for her. It means to promote the health of the woman, because she has pain and sorrow. It means to comfort her. They have a responsibility because of her pain. God created their togetherness again. It is salutogenesis. It is clearly the path to health. It is coming together again.

I'm reminded of my time working in the birth center in the Dominican Republic. It would have been very helpful if the fathers

had been there to comfort the mothers while they were giving birth. Instead, they are separated, and other men are there who don't even comfort them at all. Men don't understand what rulership means anymore. The women just get shouted at and told not to cry, to be quiet and that the birth will soon be over. That is not togetherness. The men don't feel the pain. It's not their pain, they think. But togetherness means that we feel the pain together with the other person. It means that we care.

Genesis 3

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

This is the same as above. It is mainly given to prevent falling further into sin. But it is also promotion of health.

How does this promote people being brought together? When the field is hard to work on, then it is not possible for one person to do everything. We need to work together. We need to cooperate. We have learned here that the farming work and medical work are basically the same. They are both medical missionary work. But we need to work together. It is not possible for one person to do it all alone. And it is not possible for the medical branch to do everything alone. It needs the agricultural work. It needs the production work. We need each other. That is because things have become hard. It's not easy. Hard labor and sweat are needed. They are absolutely essential. This very clearly promotes health.

We also know that exercise is a very important aspect. We speak much about food, but exercise is just as essential. I'm speaking of exercise which really makes us sweat and pant hard. It is absolutely necessary for the promotion of health, as well as

for the prevention of disease. It's almost always right to tell patients to change their diet and exercise. That promotes health, for sure.

Let's summarize the lessons we have learned from this chapter. First, we learned that sin makes life unmanageable. God made it manageable again by the promise of enmity, as well as by the pain, sweat, and thorns He gave us. Through these means He made life manageable again. Instead of looking at these as punishments, we should look at them as a model of salutogenesis. It is a model that helps us come back to health. That is what God wants us to see. This health is mainly the health of coming together—the sense of community which God wants to re-establish.

The Encouragement of God

Let's turn back to the subject of children now. Children want to belong to the world of adults. It is most painful for them to be left alone. When adults don't understand this, the children can react in two different ways. Adults have little idea of how difficult it is for children to do certain tasks, because they live in another world. Parents tell their children that they can't do this or that—the parents will do it instead. That is one way they handle the situation. And in fact this is a very common way of dealing with such situations. When I look at the parents here and consider the generation before you, I can see that this is the way you were educated. The further back we go, the more the education was done in that way.

“No, you can't do it.”

Think about this phrase. We will consider this more in future studies. That phrase is so often spoken. Children can react in two different ways when they are told they can't. One way is to keep trying again and again—not giving up trying to participate. Not many children persist like this, because they get frustrated after a while. Then they also start to say,

“No, I can't.”

That phrase gets established in them. They imagine they are different from others. This destroys the sense of community and the sense of being together.

What happens when a child tries to do something they really cannot do? For example, one of the smaller children could not lift the stool earlier. So what was the method used? They worked together. This could be with a sibling or someone else. It is not done with the thought that they are not able to do it. The child must be allowed to try alone first. If something breaks, that's a cost we have to bear. A belonging breaking is not as serious as a heart breaking. The sense of not being together—of being broken—creates greater damage than damage to anything that you own, whether it is in the house, or a car, or a toy we have bought for ourselves. Those are not as important as the mental damage that can be inflicted. So, let it happen.

When something is damaged, you can either complain about such a great catastrophe and say that it must never happen again, or else you can respond in such a way as to encourage them to do it better next time:

“Next time you will do it better.”

That is salutogenesis. You can also tell them that next time you can try to do it together. Let the children participate in your world. That is important.

I could have told Hannah to go away and that I would move the podium by myself. But it is normal that children try tasks for which they do not yet have the strength. That's perfectly normal. But you can tell them that you can do it together, and say confidently that you'll be successful. That's the point. The alternative is to tell them to go away and let you do it yourself, because they are too small or young.

This reminds me of *Jeremiah 1*.

Jeremiah 1

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

⁵ Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

⁶ Then said I [Jeremiah]: Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.

“I’m too small. I cannot do it.”

As a child, Jeremiah was probably often told that he was too young. So now he knew how to defend himself. This was his way of defense.

Jeremiah 1

⁷ But the Lord said to me: Do not say, I am a youth, [do not say, I am too young,] for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

That is participation. God told him,

“Don’t say you cannot, because we will do it together. You will be able to do it.”

The key is to encourage children to be able to do it.

⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

“We’ll do it together. I am with you. Don’t worry. We are in this together.”

⁹ Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

How can parents come to such a sense of togetherness with their children that they really promote this? The main point I can see, is that it happens when the parents see how they are to work together with God. When we individually see ourselves as “I” and God as “Him,” instead of our being together, then we’ll also see our children as separate from ourselves, instead of being together. The way we see ourselves cooperating with God, is how we will see ourselves cooperating with our children. Let’s read a few texts that make this point clear.

Matthew 6

¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Essentially, these verses say that we cannot be anxious for ourselves and have togetherness at the same time. If we are always doing things alone and having to bear heavy burdens by ourselves, then we will think that we must gain the muscles to do so. We are anxious. We collect many treasures for the time we may need them, instead of resting in the fact that we are cooperating with God.

²⁵ Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

²⁸ So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

²⁹ And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear?

³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

In other words, life is manageable. Worry is blind. It is blind and it makes us blind. It doesn't make us blind just for tomorrow. It also makes us blind for today. To worry is to behave as though we have to do everything alone—as though we have no partner who cares for us. But God is our partner who cares for us. Don't worry about these things.

Let's read another verse with the same message. God says,

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Don't worry. I will give you rest. We will do it together. That's the model of salutogenesis. It goes in this direction. That is the way it works. We need to learn to do it together. We have tried to do it alone for too long.

We often speak about teamwork. What breaks teamwork? Worry breaks it. Worry is trying to do it alone. It's this fear that we are not accepted, not recognized, and that we don't belong. That is worry, and that makes us blind.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Of course, the yoke that Christ places upon us is easy. It's light. It is,

“Come, we will do it together. Seek first my kingdom. Give yourselves fully into this cooperation model, and don't do it alone.”

In closing, let's turn back to *Jeremiah*.

Jeremiah 1

⁵ Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

In other words,

“You are not standing alone. I have called you and have been with you from the beginning.”

Jeremiah is very open about this. He could have been selective about what he mentioned. But he wasn't. The book of *Jeremiah* is public. We all read it. The people in his time read it too. It was like a confession that he made. He could have simply said,

“God called me. He formed me, even when I was a baby. He did everything for me and now I'm a wonderful man. Isn't that fantastic? I am your prophet.”

But instead he said,

⁶ Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.

In other words, even though God had said they would do it together, Jeremiah said,

“I can't do it alone.”

It was really a confession of his inability to belong.

Let's apply this to children and parents. Parents often don't understand that children want to participate and belong. That's why parents say,

“You can't do that. Do something else instead.”

They are not friends for their children. They are not like an older sibling. They don't rule over them in the right sense, but rather rule over them by suppressing and putting them aside. The children are often a disturbance for them, too. They disturb the parents' peace.

Imagine that a mother is concentrating intently on her book-keeping work at the kitchen table. Her child is also at the table working quietly on their homework. After a while the child begins to knock their foot against the table. Tap, tap, tap. The mother gets frustrated and says,

“Stop it.”

The child obediently stops and the mother focuses on her book-keeping again. After a while, the child begins again. Tap, tap, tap.

“I told you to stop it!”

It stops again. The mother continues to work. The child again starts tapping the table. Then the mother exclaims,

“I’ve told you to stop it! For the last time, I tell you, stop it now!”

The child stops. The mother can work again. But then the child begins to make a noise with the papers. The mother goes over and shakes the child.

“I told you to stop! I cannot work! Go to your room now, and stay there! Then I can work!”

What do you think about this? Why did the child knock against the table? It was not intentional. We must understand that children often do things without understanding why they are doing it. In our example, the child wanted to belong to the mother. The child wanted to be a part of her world. It wasn’t a conscious thought. If you were to ask the child why they did it, they wouldn’t know the answer; they might say their leg just did it automatically. But the real reason is that they wanted to belong to the world of adults. Yet the adult did not understand this message. That’s a problem.

Very often our children are educated to play in their own room, while the parents do their own thing. Sometimes the parents do spend time together with their children, but then they wonder

why it doesn't flow so smoothly. The parents go and play with the children, instead of the children participating in the parents' world. But we can see very clearly that God let Jeremiah participate in His world. He said,

“Don't say, I am too young. You can do it! Don't say, I am a youth.”

Jeremiah 1

⁷ But the Lord said to me: Do not say, I am a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

⁹ Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down.

Let's read a statement in this connection.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 110:

The first half of the prayer Jesus has taught us is in regard to the name and kingdom and will of God—that His name may be honored, His kingdom established, His will performed. When you have thus made God's service your first interest, you may ask with confidence that your own needs may be supplied. If you have renounced self and given yourself to Christ you are a member of the family of God, and everything in the Father's house is for you.

In other words, you are a member! Everything is for you when you are a member. Isn't that what we want—to be a member, to belong? That is what children want. They want to belong. That's the enmity that God has put into the heart. It is this desire to belong. When we want to belong to God's family, it is an expression of the enmity that God has placed there. And when you belong to the family, all things are yours.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 110:

All the treasures of God are opened to you, both the world that now is and that which is to come.

That is exactly what He said to Jeremiah: “You will break up, you will tear down, you can do everything. Nothing is impossible anymore.”

The ministry of angels, the gift of His Spirit, the labors of His servants—all are for you. The world, with everything in it, is yours so far as it can do you good. Even the enmity of the wicked will prove a blessing by disciplining you for heaven. If “you are Christ’s,” “all things are yours.” *1 Corinthians* 3:23, 21.

The desire to belong to the heavenly family is present within us. The problem is that our way of expressing it is sometimes wrong. At times we express our desire in a wrong way. Imagine a child wanting to belong. For example, the child who tapped on the table wanted to belong to the mother’s world. But was that the right way to express this desire to belong? Not exactly. It didn’t work. When I told the story, I was speaking from the side of the mother. But now consider the child’s side. The child was trying to say,

“I want to belong too.”

But that was expressed in a wrong way. A wise mother would have helped her child to express the desire to belong correctly. She could have said something like,

“You don’t need to tap on the table. Come over here and sit with me.”

It would have helped just to look at her child from time to time with a smile and recognition. She could also have said,

“I am happy that you are doing your homework here so quietly.”

That would have been enough. There’s no need to show belonging in the wrong way. When I show my desire to belong in a

wrong way, it's expressing nothing but a frustration. When we are frustrated that we don't belong to the family of heaven, then we don't cooperate. We do the opposite of cooperating. When we are not a team member, but instead work in the opposite direction, that's often nothing but a cry expressing,

“I really want to belong, but you won't let me!”

That's how it is. We have to translate the actions of people, because they do not always say exactly what they mean. That is especially the case with children. Often the children themselves don't even understand what they mean. It's the same with adults.

We want to encourage in the same way that God encourages—through togetherness. That must be our work—especially with children. We will continue studying this topic in the next few weeks. It will be a practical application of salutogenesis in the area of child education. We also want to understand how we can work better in a team together—in the important role of team member with God and the angels, as well as in the team of humans.



The Lord touches Jeremiah's mouth

2. Team Building II

Sabbath, January 20, 2018

WE ARE considering how to deal with children, as you can see from our introductory picture of a child refusing to eat his food. Our studies are giving us tools for relating to each other as well. The purpose is not to judge one another, but rather to serve each other. Through our studies, I hope we will understand more about relationships and feelings—especially those of children, as well as their tactics and actions which we observe firsthand. This is what we will look at today.

To begin, we want to establish the fact that we need a sense of community—a social sense—a sense of interest in our fellow man. That is something we need to learn from childhood on. As we saw last week, every human being has an interest in their fellow man. God has put it within us, as we read in *Genesis* 3:15. God said that He would put enmity between us and the serpent. The serpent represents egoism, or selfishness. He has placed enmity in us against that self-centeredness. Therefore, everyone has a sense of interest in others. But that interest in others is often destroyed very early in life by wrong habits. As a result, people become more and more self-centered.

God made it clear at creation that He wanted to place an interest for others into the heart of man from the beginning. Let's read this.

Genesis 2

¹⁸ And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.

God's statement is not only about marriage. Many think that this verse means it is not good to be unmarried. But that is not what God is saying. God's statement is that it's not good for man to be alone. That's why God put him into a society. At the beginning, there was no one else except the woman who was created for the man. But God wanted to give man social skills and a social

interest in others right from the start. And that is why He said it is not good for man to be alone.

In the following verses we read that Adam named all the animals, but that there was no helper comparable to himself. In other words, Adam began to realize his social need. He wanted to belong to something, to somebody. But didn't he have God? Wasn't he comparable to God? Wasn't man created in the image of God? We can't count that, as we will read in the following text.

1 John 4

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

²⁰ If someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar...

In other words, if a person has no social interest in their fellow beings, then they have no interest in God either. That is the point. If we have no interest in our fellow man, then we have no interest in God.

²⁰ ...for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

It is not possible to be devoid of social skills, yet to have love towards God. It's simply impossible. The two belong together. And that is why God gave man a companion, instead of leaving him alone on earth. Today, that is why He has given us a church, a society, and the family we come from.

We can read about this social skill in *1 Corinthians 13*. It gives us the true meaning of "social skill." Let's read it now.

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

⁵ Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

⁶ Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

⁷ Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This is what needs to be trained in the education of children:

- Longsuffering;
- Kindness;
- Not having enmity;
- Not parading oneself;
- Not being puffed up;
- Not behaving rudely;
- Not self-seeking;
- Not being provoked and not thinking evil;
- Not rejoicing in iniquity, but rejoicing in truth.

All of these attributes need to be trained. The purpose of our study is to understand how these can be trained. That is the aim. Those are the social skills we are speaking of. That is love, to put it in one word.

In order to train these attributes, we first need to understand the minds of our children. In order to have an interest in another person we must understand them. And vice versa—in order to understand a person we must take an interest in them. This is what Jesus made very clear in the Golden Rule, which we'll read now.

Matthew 7

¹² Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

The Golden Rule is that we are to do to others what we want them to do to us. This rule cannot be kept unless we understand others. When we put ourselves in their position, when we try to imagine what they think and what their needs are, and when we really grasp it, that's when we will be able to do to them what we wish to be done to us—but only then. An interest in the other person and an understanding of them go together. We must understand our children and what they need.

Understanding the other person means to understand ourselves. And to understand ourselves is to understand others. That is be-

cause we are similar. We are comparable, as we have read. God made man a partner comparable with himself. The two can be compared because they are similar. They are not exactly equal, but they are similar. That is also confirmed by Paul in the New Testament.

Ephesians 5

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

This statement clearly shows that there are two people who belong to the same entity. If one hates the other, they really hate themselves. If they love the other, then they love themselves. That is the simple fact. This means the two belong together. They cannot be separated. If they are separated, it would be like saying that they hate the other but love themselves, or that they love the other and hate themselves. That's impossible because they are one. You either love the whole package or you hate it. It is not possible to separate the two.

The same is true of our children. We either love our children and love ourselves, or we hate our children and hate ourselves. It's one package. That is what God wants to establish in us. It is a sense of belonging together—a sense of oneness. That is what our children need to learn. They need to learn to be interested in one another.

The interest in our fellow man which creates a sense of belonging is true unity. The education of children is the basis of unity in the church. That's how we can describe it. If the children have an interest in others and if they have a sense of belonging, then all of us growing up in this way will have a sense of belonging to one another. And no one hates their own flesh, as Paul writes.

The community spirit is very well described in the New Testament church. That is the aim. Let's read about it.

Acts 2

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

They all had everything in common. No one said that anything was their own. This is also described in the following text.

Acts 4

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

They always thought in terms of “we.” They had a sense of interest in each other. The interest in self was always bound up with the interest for the others. They never had interest in themselves first and others second.

Just imagine having interest in self first and giving the others what is left over. What will happen if we think in these terms? The interest for others will die out. Our social skills will die out eventually. We must set priorities. Our priority is interest in others. And if we have interest in others, then we also have interest in ourselves. That is because we must function in order to serve. We are bound together in the web of social community. It is a sense of commonness. That is something which pervaded the early church. That is the aim. That is true unity.

In this spirit, we must also understand that we are a family in the church. We are also a family in our relationship to God. But many people do not behave as though they are part of this family. Instead, they behave as though they are employees, or servants—someone who works for wages. It is a system of working a certain amount of time, for a certain rate of pay. The person doesn’t work more than that, though, because they will not be paid more. They feel a need of receiving their due wages and feel that the other person owes them that. That is working as an employee or a servant. But if we are members of the family, we will work and be-

have in a different way. We will not be working a certain amount in exchange for a certain wage. Instead, everything belongs to us already. What's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine. That is essentially a family situation. We will study more about this later, when we go into more detail about the principles of child education. But we must first establish this fact. In true unity, there is a family relationship, not a relationship of employee and employer. That is a big difference.

Let's turn to a few texts which confirm this.

John 8

³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Jesus clearly makes a difference between a slave and a son. A slave is only there for a time and then the relationship is over. But a son is there forever. Are we slaves or are we sons in the church? None of us would say we are slaves. But what about employers and employees? Are you an employee or are you a son? What is your position? And what is your position in the family? That is the question.

We'll read another text which confirms this thought.

Galatians 4

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

⁵ To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father!

⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The word "Abba" is a name for a father to whom you are very close. It's like the word "daddy." We can say "Daddy" to God. We are to call Him "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4

⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

A son behaves completely differently from a slave.

When we go into details later, we will see that we often treat our children as employees rather than children. And in turn, our children often behave as our employees, rather than as our children. It happens very quickly.

Since we are looking at the privilege we have in the new covenant, we can also consider Jesus, our great Example. Let's read about this.

Mark 14

³⁶ And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.

These are Jesus' words. He was a Son. He prayed as a Son. The aim is true unity—a true relationship, a true sense of community, a true interest in others. How do we achieve this aim? There are essentially two different models of how to go about it.

The first model is that everyone follows a leader. There is a strong leader in the family and everyone follows that person. That can happen either through force or voluntarily. The strong leader may force everyone to follow him, as he promotes unity. Or, the members may follow him voluntarily.

The method of force is called dictatorship. Of course, we recognize that unity under a dictatorship is not true unity. As soon as the dictator is gone, the unity will break down again.

The Patriarchal System

How is it when a strong leader is followed voluntarily? That is called the patriarchal system. Almost every big movement had a patriarch at its inception. Martin Luther was the patriarch of the Lutheran church. He had a strong personality and people fol-

lowed him. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist church. He also had a strong personality and people followed him voluntarily. These men were not dictators and nobody was forced to follow them. It was a patriarchal system. Abraham is another example. He also had a strong personality. There were thousands of people in his family, who followed him. Let's read about this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

Abraham's household comprised more than a thousand souls. Those who were led by his teachings to worship the one God, found a home in his encampment; and here, as in a school, they received such instruction as would prepare them to be representatives of the true faith. Thus a great responsibility rested upon him. He was training heads of families, and his methods of government would be carried out in the households over which they should preside.

Next we will read about how the patriarchal system functioned.

In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God. It was necessary to bind the members of the household together, in order to build up a barrier against the idolatry that had become so widespread and so deep-seated. Abraham sought by every means in his power to guard the inmates of his encampment against mingling with the heathen and witnessing their idolatrous practices, for he knew that familiarity with evil would insensibly corrupt the principles. The greatest care was exercised to shut out every form of false religion and to impress the mind with the majesty and glory of the living God as the true object of worship.

The patriarchal system had the purpose of binding the members of the household together. The aim was unity. Why did they need unity? It was a barrier against idolatry. There is no barrier against idolatry in a family without unity. One reason that children leave

the truth is that there is no barrier against idolatry. Unity is that barrier. So, there is a lack of unity in such families.

In the patriarchal system the father had authority over his children—even after they had families of their own. He was still the priest and ruler.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

Abraham endeavored to perpetuate [the patriarchal system], as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God.

Preserving the knowledge of God is also a barrier against idolatry. Of course, there are various ways to be a patriarch. But is this the only model?

In early times the father was the ruler and priest.

The phraseology “in early times” indicates that in our present day, the situation is different. It sounds strange to us for the father to have authority over the family even after the children had families of their own. What happens today when a young family lives in the same house as their parents? There is a mingling of interests. There’s a fight over who is responsible for educating the children and who has more experience. It is strange for us to think of the parents still having authority after the children have families of their own. This would mean that your children actually belonged to your parents, so to speak.

Is the patriarchal system of government obsolete, then? What shall we choose? In Abraham’s day, the family was taught to look to him as their head. There is another system which is followed these days. We don’t generally use the patriarchal system anymore. How could we describe the situation today? What is your ideal picture in modern times? Would it be the same? Today we have equal rights; children have rights by law, as well. If a parent abuses their child, they get punished by law. They can’t do what they want with their children anymore. This is the environment and culture in our society—at least in western countries. Children

have definite rights in our countries. Those rights are respected. They must be respected. The children know this too.

When I was a child, I had a pair of felt shoes for indoors at school. My friends and I liked to run and slide down the hallways at school. The teacher thought we were getting a little too wild, so she wanted to stop us. She grabbed me by the hair as I was sliding by, and it skidded me to a stop. It hurt, so I said, “Ouch!” very loudly. The teacher felt sorry and apologized. I was happy that she said sorry, so then I cried loudly to make her feel even sorrier.

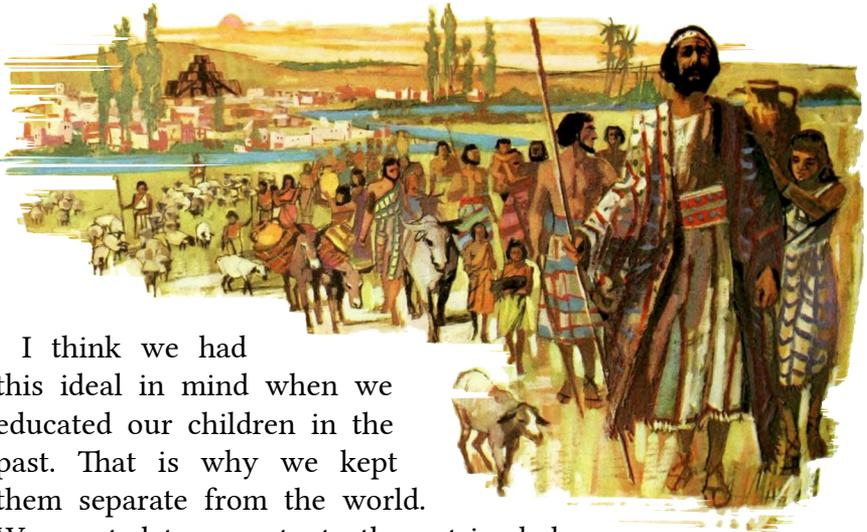
Today, children have more rights than in the past. They have equal rights. Even parents apologize when they hurt their children. And teachers are not the ultimate authority anymore. Rather, they now consider the students to be partners. This is in contrast to earlier times. In the past, teachers had absolute authority. What they said was law for all students. But nowadays there is another law which both teachers and students have to obey. One part of that law is that the teachers may not hit their students. When I was in first grade, the teachers were still allowed to hit our hands with a cane. It hurt. We wouldn’t disobey again—or at least we would be careful not to be caught—because the punishment hurt. Today corporal punishment is no longer allowed. The teacher would be punished if they hit a student. We live in different times.

There was a patriarchal system in the past. Today we have a democratic system. Since the children sense that and are growing up in this culture, they also behave differently. If we tried to perpetuate the patriarchal system as described in the statement we read, there would be a real clash when our children came in contact with the outside world. There would be two possibilities in that case. We could continue being the absolute authority for our children, by keeping them close to us and never letting them see the outside culture, or, we could allow them to go out and they would turn away from our old-fashioned system.

The patriarchal system was given by God. We can read this in the next paragraphs.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

It was a wise arrangement, which God himself had made, to cut off His people, so far as possible, from connection with the heathen, making them a people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations. He had separated Abraham from his idolatrous kindred, that the patriarch might train and educate his family apart from the seductive influences which would have surrounded them in Mesopotamia, and that the true faith might be preserved in its purity by his descendants from generation to generation.



I think we had this ideal in mind when we educated our children in the past. That is why we kept them separate from the world.

We wanted to perpetuate the patriarchal system. But we found that it did not work. We must be honest about that. It simply didn't work. We failed to realize that the surrounding culture was different. The surrounding culture is one of equal rights. The man is no longer the absolute authority in the family. The woman now has equal rights. And the children have equal rights.¹⁹ What should we do? Should we leave this world? Should we isolate ourselves further?

¹⁹PP Editor's note: These statements about "equal rights" can be misunderstood. For a deeper consideration, see the Foreword.

Let's look more deeply into the way that Abraham exercised his authority. That is also important. It helps us to get an idea of how we can handle our situation.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:

Abraham's affection for his children and his household led him to guard their religious faith, to impart to them a knowledge of the divine statutes, as the most precious legacy he could transmit to them, and through them to the world. All were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven. There was to be no oppression on the part of parents and no disobedience on the part of children. God's law had appointed to each his duties, and only in obedience to it could any secure happiness or prosperity.

That is the key. First of all, affection is spoken about. It was Abraham's affection, or his love for his household, which led him to impart to them the precious legacy of the knowledge of God's law. The important point is that there was to be no oppression on the part of the parents and no disobedience on the part of the children. Interestingly, the oppression on the part of the parents is mentioned first. There was to be no oppression on the part of the parents. At first we don't think that we are oppressors. But I will relate some examples later, which show that we can be oppressors much more quickly than we imagine.

There was no oppression on the part of the parents in Abraham's family. They were all under the rule of the God of heaven. That is the important point. There was an order. Each person had their duties. Happiness could be secured only as they were faithful to those duties. Everyone was to look to and keep the order. Abraham was not the standard for that order. The order was above and beyond Abraham. Abraham himself and his children were to be obedient to that system.

The patriarchal system was not one of Abraham being first. God was first. It was not Abraham's unlimited authority, it was God's authority. Abraham was merely maintaining the order that God had given, that's all. The key is to maintain the order God

has given, no matter what that order is. It's not so important what the order looks like in detail. It may be differ slightly at different ages. But it is an order. And a society which has no order cannot function. We must understand this. The important point is that there was to be no oppression on the part of the parents and no disobedience on the part of the children. Each person had their appointed duty.

This is in perfect harmony with our system today, as well as with the ideals of our culture. The ideals of our culture are not so bad. Those ideals say that each person has the same rights. There shall be no oppression on the part of parents towards their children. The children also have limits. These are all ideals of our society today. Our constitution gives everyone equal rights. It's not a bad constitution. Of course it's not! It's a good constitution. One which gives everyone freedom is a good constitution. The question is whether we implement and teach an order. We will study more about this later. But for now, we want to see that it is very important to have a system.

Abraham's patriarchal system shows that there was a rule by love, rather than by dominion. That is exactly how our present system can function as well. It can function where the ruling is by love, instead of by dominion. In Abraham's time, it was up to him to live that out and not to rule by oppression. In our day, there are also civil laws that restrict parents from ruling by oppression.²⁰ Even though the law decrees it, it is still possible to rule by force. It's quite possible, even in our culture. Many people actually do that.

An Exercise in Pathogenesis

We want to perform an exercise now in closing. We will use pathogenesis. We want to look at the way children act.

²⁰ PP Editor's note: The civil laws only restrict the outward behavior. The law of God ruling in the heart will also restrict any thoughts of violence, anger, or revenge.

First of all, children have a desire in their hearts to belong to the family and the church. That is in their hearts. This desire can be either strengthened or destroyed. We also need to understand that children are born into certain circumstances, which are affected by factors such as their birth order in the family, whether they are an only child, and so on. Everything makes a difference.

Children are very good observers. They observe everything—even things we don't recognize. They observe dominion much sooner than we do, for example. They also observe, much faster than we do, whether they get attention or not. For instance, I can just look at a child or say one word to them and they will remember it. I'm sure that the children will never forget the day we played with the Lego during the study a few weeks ago. That will stick in their minds. They are very good observers.

When firstborn children are born they have two wonderful servants—their father and mother—who care for them day and night. Whenever anything happens, they are there. The parents can be relied upon—provided they are good parents of course. It's perfect! But then the second child comes. Suddenly the attention is divided. The firstborn child is older and is expected to sleep through the night, while the younger child gets the parents' attention during the night. The older child doesn't like that. So what does that child do in order to belong to the family again? They feel a need to get the attention. That is where attention seeking comes in. This illustrates that the position, or birth order, within the family is very important. The child observes everything very closely and reacts to the circumstances.

At this point, I want to mention that we must give people the freedom to adapt to their circumstances. When we see someone who is disabled or disadvantaged, our heart goes out to them. We want to take away the handicap. We want to do everything so that the person no longer has it. But actually, when children have a disability, it can help them to become even stronger. That is called compensation. Children can compensate very well. That

means adaptation to their circumstances. It's like a pendulum. It starts on one side and then swings to the other side, not stopping in the middle. In other words, they may even over-compensate.

There is a story of a young boy who had a muscle weakness. He was behind in his development. But he made extra efforts to compensate for this. He went to sports classes and did exercises every day. Eventually the disability was overcome. As a result, he actually became one of the best athletes in the school. That was because he compensated. People could have pitied him, or given him crutches, or suchlike. But that wouldn't have helped.

There is another story of a boy who was partially blind in one eye. He was always taken care of because of that weakness. He therefore always needed assistance when he was older too. He thought he needed help because he was nearly blind. That is another way for a person to react to their circumstances.

We need to encourage our children to react positively to their circumstances—whatever they are. Let's think about compensation and over-compensation. It will help us deal with people in difficult situations. We should encourage them to compensate. That helps them more than if we were to take away whatever that they don't like.

We have children here in our congregation. They want to belong to their parents. But they feel there is a danger. They fear. They feel they need to call attention to themselves. Why is that? It is because the parents are concentrating on the study, instead of on the children. The children don't like that. They want the attention. We need to understand what the children want. They want attention. They want to belong to the family and they fear that it is slipping away from them.

What happens next? What happens when children don't get the attention that they seek? They may become louder, but that is still attention seeking. It's possible to seek attention quietly at first, but then to get louder and wriggle around. The next stage,

though, is for the parents to go out with the child. I will demonstrate this.

[Andreas takes Johannes, who is in his twenties, sternly by the hand and tries to lead him out of the room. Johannes drags his feet and tries to remain.]

What happens in a situation like this? A power struggle starts. In our demonstration, Johannes is actually stronger than I am. He was successful in keeping me from going out. But as long as the parents are stronger than the children, they will be successful in taking them out of the room. You wonder if this is oppression. It can be, but not necessarily. What is oppression? Oppression is when the parent forces his will upon the child. They say,

“You must do what I tell you.”

That is oppression. Ruling by oppression is in contrast to our culture. It won't work in the world. The children will come to the point where they realize they don't have to be dragged out of the room. For instance, they may think that one day the parents will be told not to take them out of the room and then they will have won.

This is a power struggle. Since the parents are stronger, it seems that they win the struggle. But in reality, it's the children who win. Just think of all the embarrassment they can cause their parents through the struggle. It is a tremendous embarrassment. The parents may be out of the room, but they are totally defeated. They stand before the church as failures, so to speak. They cannot control their children. They don't know how it works. So who won the battle? The children did. That method doesn't work.

Children have a tendency to call attention to themselves. They also tend to trigger a power struggle when calling attention doesn't work. That power struggle becomes very real when the parents join in.

I said that taking the child out of the room is not necessarily ruling by dominion or oppression. That is because there is another possibility, which is having a simple rule that must be obeyed by both parents and children. Both of them need to go out of the room. Then it's not a matter of the child being the naughty one. And it's not the parent who forces their will on the children. Instead, it is simply the rule in the situation. And if the child is loud, they must go out. This method encourages a sense of commonness and a sense of unity. But if we tell the children that they must go out because they are naughty, and if we drag them out, then it's a power struggle. And the children will always win the power struggle, with certainty. That is always the case. The parents may think they sometimes win, but no, the children always win. They are more clever than we are.

What will be the next tactic when the power struggle doesn't achieve its aim and the children get punished over and over? It will be revenge. That is an increased and accelerated power struggle. It is also called retaliation. When retaliation and revenge don't work, the next step will be a demonstration of complete inadequacy. That is the final stage. It is when they say,

“I can't do it anyway. I'm always so naughty.”

When we, as parents, find ourselves complaining that the children never obey, we can realize that they are in that state of feeling totally inadequate. That is how they are feeling, when we think like this. It may be the case, true. But there was much that went wrong before that stage.

These are the wrong aims for children, which we must understand. We need to understand children. We will consider how to deal with all this in our next few studies.

- How can we deal with a power struggle?
- How can we deal with revenge?
- How can we deal with a feeling of inadequacy?

- And how can we deal with the children trying to gain undue attention?

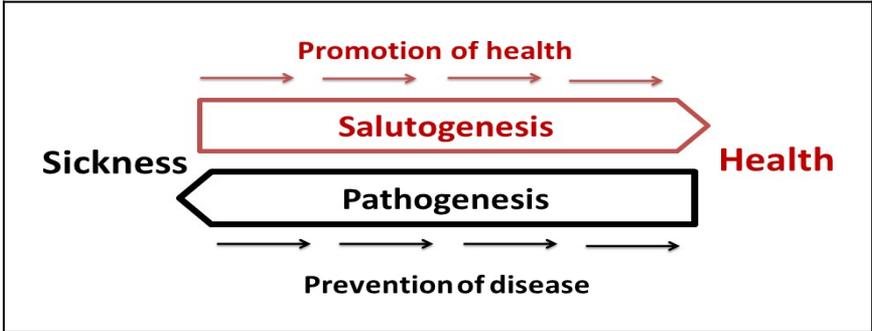
With the question of how to deal with undue attention, one thing is sure. The more undue attention is given, the more it will become a habit to call for attention. We must differentiate between when attention is justified and when it is undue. When it is undue, we should simply not give it. But it must be given when it is due. That difference needs to be made. The children will learn by themselves that they will receive attention when it is due, and that they won't receive it when it is undue. Parents need to make this difference.

We must not enter into power struggles. We must keep the law. But when we feel anger in our hearts, we are already in the midst of a power struggle. We have lost our true authority. The answer is simple in relation to revenge as well. It is just magnified.

3. Encouragement

Sabbath, January 27, 2018

WE WANT to study about encouragement. We will begin by looking at our main diagram from the topic of salutogenesis.²¹



On one side of the diagram is sickness. On the other side is health. We have learned that salutogenesis means that we are always on a path to health. Of course, this can all be seen from another perspective, which is that we are always on a path to sickness. We may think that the older we get, the sicker we will be. We can view our lives from one of these two perspectives. This becomes evident when we speak to other people. Some people say that they are getting older and have this or that affliction. Other people say that they are getting healthier and healthier. It is a difference in the way of thinking about life.

Salutogenesis is the way to health. As we live in harmony with God’s laws, we will be able to become healthier. We start with a spoiled lifestyle, being very sick, and then we become healthier and healthier. Again, the way to health is salutogenesis. On the other hand, a pathogenic approach is the way of preventing disease.

²¹ PP Editor’s note: The study that originally introduced the topic of “salutogenesis” is included in the Appendix, for those who have not heard it before.

Encouragement in Child Education

What is salutogenesis in child education? It is encouragement, which is our topic today. Encouragement is a salutogenic concept. In contrast to that, what is the pathogenic approach, where we try to fight against constantly becoming sicker? That approach is rebuke. Of course, it is important to rebuke from time to time. But if the entire education concentrates on giving rebukes, then it is purely pathogenic. On the other hand, a salutogenic approach means that we will think about and encourage whatever leads to the improvement of character. Rebuking is to criticize what is going wrong, whereas encouragement is to strengthen what is going well. Our natural approach is much too pathogenic. We are constantly trying to prevent the bad. That is always the case. We don't see the powerful tool that we have in encouragement.

Every person needs encouragement. We need it every day, just as plants need water. Parents need it, as well as the children. When parents think they are failures themselves and that they are incapable, the family cannot function. Everyone needs encouragement, especially children. We must realize that a disobedient or badly-behaved child is always a discouraged child. Try to see the situation with this understanding. Similarly, a soul-sick person is a discouraged person.

There are two points which we want to clarify at the beginning of this study. First, God educates us according to the principles of salutogenesis. When we look in the Bible, we can see the principles of salutogenesis. We will read several of those texts today. And if we, as parents, could just educate as God educates us, we would be perfect. To learn how to educate, we must look to God. We can look at how God deals with us. That is the solution.

The second point I want to emphasize is that no number of skills we learn to use in education will be effective, if we don't have the right character. We need not only tools, to know how we can encourage; we also need to have a character of encourage-

ment. If we, as parents, are discouraged, then no matter how many tools we use, they will avail nothing.

Encouraging and Discouraging Phrases

Here are a few sample phrases parents sometimes use. Let's determine whether they are encouraging or discouraging.

"You're still too little. You can't do it yet."

That's unmistakably discouraging.

"I'm sorry that it didn't work out."

That is encouragement. Sometimes things don't work out. It is encouraging to give sympathy that it didn't work and to encourage them to attempt it again. So,

"Try it again,"

–is also encouraging.

"You are too slow. Let me do it."

That is discouraging.

"Stop! You've put your shoe on the wrong foot! That's the wrong way!"

This is clearly discouragement too.

"Please don't do it. You'll ruin everything!"

"You've messed everything up again!"

"That's still too heavy for you,"

–when the child is trying to pick something up. That's also discouragement. These are just a few examples. But we can see that there is a lot behind our daily speech. It can be either encouraging or discouraging. Our children grow up accordingly. We also behave accordingly.

We want to look at the different ways of discouragement now.

The first way we discourage, is by not recognizing the genuine efforts of the child. It is discouraging when there is a lack of recognition for genuine effort. When I was a child, I was lazy about writing. I didn't like to write. But one day I thought I would do something very special for my mother, which would make her extremely happy. So I wrote an entire page full of one particular letter of the alphabet. I wrote F's all over the page, from top to bottom. But my mother came and told me that it was not nice. That was the end for me. I didn't want to write anymore. It is discouraging not to recognize the efforts of the child—especially when they put in extra effort.

Examples of God's Encouragement

When we look to God, we can see that He encourages us. There are many texts that show this. We will read one of them now.

Matthew 25

²³ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

That is exactly the point. The lord encouraged the effort of the servant.

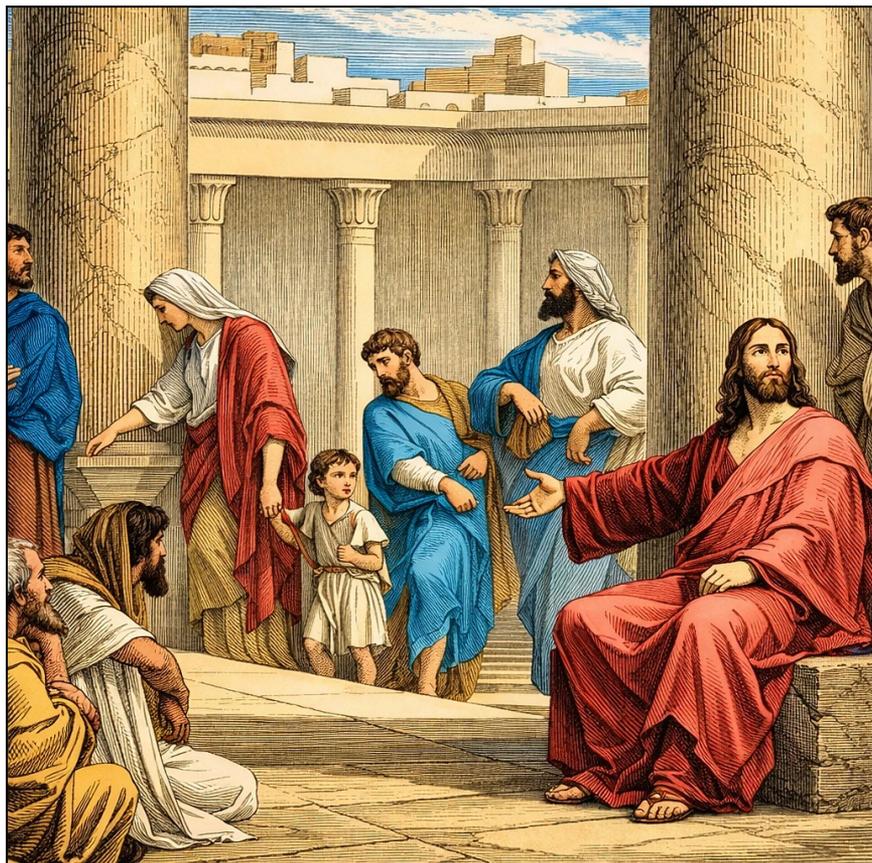
Another discouragement is simply to overlook the successes that are really there. A child may succeed at something, but no one notices. That is discouraging. We will read a few texts about this as well. The first is the story of the widow who gave the two mites.

Mark 12

⁴¹ Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.

⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

⁴³ So He called His disciples to himself and said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury.



Jesus calls attention to the Widow's selfless act

The widow gave more than all the others. She did something successful, which Christ confirmed. She would not have seen it herself. The others wouldn't have either, because they were too preoccupied with their own tasks. That is the problem. We are too concerned with our own successes and we completely miss the successes of the children.

We will also consider the Samaritan woman. Jesus encouraged her too, by acknowledging the small success that she had—namely, the fact that she could draw water from the well. Jesus affirmed that by asking her for a drink.

The adulteress who was about to be stoned is another example. Jesus said that He didn't condemn her. Thereby, He showed the success of forgiveness.

Ways of Discouraging Children

It is discouraging when we either fail to recognize efforts, or when we do not see the successes. But there are other points as well.

It seems like encouragement when we try to protect children from the schools of life, but it is actually discouragement. Let's consider this in the case of young children. Imagine that a small child falls down and grazes their knee, causing it to bleed a little. What do the parents do? They begin by having fear that something serious has happened to their child.

It's not only our words which make a difference, our actions do too. Our actions are determined by our thoughts. We may react correctly in word, but we won't be successful in encouragement if our behavior doesn't match.

Once more, imagine that the child falls and gets a graze. If we are fearful, our behavior will be discouraging. The result will be that we treat the wound with unwarranted worry. The child will be discouraged. They will always seek similar comfort whenever they have a minor accident. They will be dependent and will feel the need for help whenever the slightest injury happens to them. They can't be more self-reliant, free, and courageous in those situations. They will always need a comforter.

It must be clear to us that pity is one of the most dangerous attitudes a parent can have. I'm not referring to reasonable sympathy. We can have empathy. But excessive or undue sympathy is really dangerous, because it doesn't trust the child to withstand the schools of life. That is the problem.

When I was a child, my mother was quite fearful. I am also a relatively fearful person. For instance, when I see children running around, I imagine every possible danger. I would like to pro-

tect them, so I tell them not to do this or that. My father told me that I never was afraid of dogs as a child. But I learned that fear over the course of my life. I couldn't tolerate dogs. I fought against that fear though, thanks to my wife who had no fear of dogs. In that sense, I'm also happy for the challenge.

Generally speaking, there are many situations where something could happen to a child. When we are fearful and try to protect them from every situation, we don't trust the child to withstand the school of life, and that is discouragement.

The Trust God Puts in Us

We can see that God trusts us with a lot. He sends us into every possible circumstance and trusts us to withstand them. Just think about everything God trusts us with! That is encouraging. We will read a few texts about this.

Psalm 32

⁶ For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him.

⁷ You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye.

In other words, God says He will not keep us from difficulties such as floods of water, or fear. They will come. But He will be with us. He will guide us with His eye. That is what children must understand. There is someone beside them through the schools of life—someone who will step in when it gets too bad—but not someone who will step in at the smallest incident and take away the opportunity to learn without giving trust.

Let's read another verse in this connection.

Ezekiel 2

¹ And He said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.

² Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

³ And He said to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.

⁴ For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God.

⁵ As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Would you like to go into a situation like that? God told Ezekiel from the beginning that it would not be easy, but He sent him anyway.

⁶ And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

God doesn't spare His children from any circumstances—neither His prophets nor us today. He doesn't protect us from difficult circumstances. He allows them. Isaiah says,

Isaiah 6

⁸ Here I am, send me.

God simply said he should go, and warned him that he would preach but no one would listen. Isaiah asked how long that would happen, and God replied that it would be for a long time. But God said there would be a remnant. In other words, it wasn't in vain. Isaiah should go.

God encourages us to stand when we find ourselves in difficult situations. He doesn't take the difficult situations away. And we should not do that for children either. Of course, I'm not referring to dangerous situations, such as a child running across a busy street; to allow that would obviously be inappropriate. But the

problem is our attitude of fearfulness, and our acting upon that fear to try to safeguard the children.

More Ways of Discouraging Children

Another discouragement is when we don't trust the child to be alone sometimes. I thought of showing an image of items such as a baby monitor, security camera, and so on. We have a lot of technology today that enables us to leave children alone, without their really being alone; in essence, they are still with us. And if the baby makes the smallest peep, then we quickly run into their room to comfort them.

There's a story of a little girl named Betty. She wants to have attention. So every night when she is put to bed, she will be quiet for only for a few moments before starting to cry. Her mother runs in to check on what she needs. Betty replies that she can't sleep, so the mother encourages her to sleep, gives her a kiss, and leaves again. A few moments later, Betty starts to cry again and the mother comes in again. And so it continues. Does the mother work in an encouraging manner? She gives kisses and says the child can sleep. But her entire behavior shows discouragement. She basically says,

“You can't sleep. I must come to you immediately. You can't be alone. I need to come.”

In this aspect I believe I was raised well. I somehow learned to occupy myself. I didn't need to have someone tell me what should be done, for example. I like being around people; but I can also be content to be alone. Other people can't bear to be alone, because they were never trained to occupy themselves and to be alone. That is a problem.

The Fall into Sin

We will consider again how God deals with us, by looking at the example of the fall into sin, found in *Genesis* 3. God gave man a special time to have communion with Him, which was in the evening. The rest of the day, God trusted the couple to be alone.

Of course, they weren't completely alone, because God is always there. He is omnipresent. But He was not visible. Similarly, He is not visible today, although He is there. Parents should also be there, but not visibly. So maybe the baby monitor is not so bad. But the question is, how do we react?

What did Adam and Eve do when God left them alone all day? They had a lot to do. They named the plants and animals. They made dwellings out of the plants. They were very busy with deep scientific work. They were constantly making discoveries. That was their work. God also gave them the freedom to go to the tree of knowledge, which they did. They fell. Then the rebukes came, right? They did something wrong. God could have said,

“What did you do?!”

Did He react that way? No. Instead, He asked why they had hidden. When we become discouraged as they did, then we hide. They hid because they had sinned, not because God had discouraged them.

God called them out of hiding, and then He simply asked them if they had eaten from the tree. He didn't rebuke them. Adam knew that what he did was wrong. He admitted it, but then he blamed the woman. God didn't rebuke him for blaming the woman. Instead, He turned to the woman and asked her why she'd eaten the fruit. Instead of taking responsibility for her actions, the woman blamed the serpent. God didn't rebuke her for avoiding responsibility either. Instead, He turned to the serpent. What did He say? He said that He would create enmity. It was a promise, and encouragement. It was salutogenesis. That's how God handled the situation. Then after all of this was dealt with, He also clearly told the pair of the consequences of their actions. It would take great effort for them to work, and so on. The entire approach was salutogenesis. He encouraged them to come out of the hole they were in and not stay in it.

Praise vs. Encouragement

Another way we discourage is by giving praise. Why is that discouraging? It is because people become dependent on praise very quickly. A child, who is constantly praised, will become dependent on such praise and so will be crushed by discouragement when they no longer receive that praise. They always want to be praised.

Praise can really be discouraging. That is why Jesus said:

Luke 17

⁷ And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, Come at once and sit down to eat?

⁸ But will he not rather say to him, Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?

⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.

Jesus is basically saying,

“Be happy that you can do the work. You are part of the work because you contributed to it. That’s what you really want.”

When we are sons, not slaves, everything belongs to us anyway. We don’t need to have a reward to drive us to do what’s right. Everything belongs to us already. We will do what’s right because we are part of the work. That is the reward. That is what God wants. If we use rewards to pay others, we ultimately say that they are servants, not owners.

What is the difference between giving praise and giving encouragement? When we give praise we are trying to point out or emphasize a result which pleases us. When we encourage, then we are bolstering the sincere efforts of the child. That is the difference.

For example, imagine a child comes home with excellent grades. We could say,

“Oh, that’s great! Your grades are excellent!”

Is that encouragement or praise? It is praise. What would encouragement be like? We could say,

“I am happy that you have learned. Keep learning.”

One case shows pride in our child’s good grades. In the second case, we encourage them to go in the right way.

Another aspect of discouragement is comparison to others—for instance, comparing children with others, or particularly with their siblings. A parents might say,

“Look at how well your brother or sister does that!”

The firstborn child can already do many things by the time the second child is born. The second child can’t do anything at first. So the parents may try to push the second child forward, by saying things such as,

“Look at how your brother can already do that!”

But the second child realizes they can’t do it anyway, so they become discouraged. Let’s look at a biblical example of this, which is the parable of the talents.

Matthew 25

¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.

²¹ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

This is true encouragement. Now we will read about someone with only two talents. He had less than the first man.

Matthew 25

²² He also who had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.

²³ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

Did the man with two talents get less recognition than the man with five talents? No, they received exactly the same recognition. No difference was made. There was no comparison between them. Instead, they were both told that they had done well. It was appropriate recognition. Don't compare if you want to avoid discouraging—this is an important point.

Encouragement When Something Goes Wrong

When something goes wrong, which does often happen, how can we encourage children? Shouldn't we stop encouraging them then? Won't we be encouraging in the wrong direction? We can't encourage what is not correct, right? Actually, children need the most encouragement precisely when something is going wrong. But that is exactly when we want to give it the least. Yet that's when they need it.

So what should we do when something is going wrong? The first point is that we are not to triumph. Parents often have the tendency to triumph. They say or think,

“See, I told you so. Now you've learned your lesson.”

This attitude of triumphing is so dangerous. It discourages. It is an attitude that we may not even express. Although it is quite possible that we may say,

“See I told you so!”

That is a typically discouraging situation. It is especially bad when something is going wrong.

Another important point is that we should never make fun of the child. That's not so common, but some parents have the tendency to laugh at their children when something doesn't go well. Sometimes they will embarrass them in front of other people. Parents often speak about their children in front of others. That is very problematic. What does God do when something goes wrong? He encourages us. He knows that we need encouragement at exactly that moment, and that is when He encourages us the most.

We want to take a look at the chapter headings in *The Ministry of Healing*. The first chapters are about Jesus. Then comes the work of the physician, with chapters such as "The Co-working of the Divine and the Human," "The Physician, an Educator," and "Teaching and Healing." Then we come to the chapters "Helping the Tempted," and "Working for the Intemperate." The main content of these chapters is encouragement. The tempted need help especially when they are tempted. Yesterday I gave some of you the task of reading these chapters. Perhaps you can share with us what you gleaned from them. It is important to understand that people need encouragement especially when they are tempted, such as when they have difficulties with appetite—food, smoking, or other issues. They need encouragement and not rebuke.

In order to distinguish between whom we can encourage and whom we must rebuke, it is important to differentiate between the action of a person and the value of a person. That is critical. God always sees us as valuable, no matter what we do. In His eyes, we are always valuable. We can't emphasize that enough. Even when we are at rock bottom and completely rejected by society, we are still jewels in God's eyes. We still are valuable. He loves us just as much as He loves His own Son—unconditionally. It is hard for us to see it like this.

When a child is disobedient, or badly behaved, it is not so easy to see them as valuable. But we must. We need to realize that no matter how badly behaved a child may be, they are still valuable. We must differentiate between what the person does and what they are. The value of a person must never be put into question.

We want to think about courage now. In German, the words for courage, encouragement, and humiliation are all very similar. Humiliation means that we reveal a person's mistakes in front of others. That is the opposite of building courage. On the other hand, courage doesn't damage self-worth, even when the person does something wrong. That is courage. Usually, when we do something wrong, we think that we can't do anything right and that we are bad parents, for instance. That is the opposite of courage.

Courage means to stand up again when we've fallen. Courage means to understand that God loves us, even when we've made mistakes. That is courage. And we must educate children to have such courage. Courage means to be brave enough to be imperfect. This doesn't mean that we don't want to be perfect: not at all. But it is to have courage, even when things don't work out. That is true courage. Courage does not mean to be brave when we are getting recognition, when things are going well, and when we have no problems. Instead, courage is there when recognition is gone. Courage is there when we have made mistakes. That is the concept of salutogenesis.

Continual Improvement

Salutogenesis doesn't mean that we are perfect. Rather, it means that we are on the path to perfection. Our aim is not to be able to say one day that we are perfect. Instead, our aim is to continue to improve ourselves. That is the aim.

Paul describes this well:

Philippians 3

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

He says, “I’m not perfect. I have the courage to say that.” Which of us has the courage to say that—without getting frustrated or losing our self-worth?

Philippians 3

¹² Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

“I’m not perfect, but I’m chasing after perfection.” That is the motto. And that is courage. When someone lacks the courage to make mistakes, how will they react when they do make mistakes?

- Firstly, they will defend themselves.
- Secondly, they will hide.
- Thirdly, they will deny.

That is the process we go through. I must honestly say that all of the hiding, half-truths and outright lies expressed sometimes are nothing other than a lack of courage. We must see it in this way. Courage is lacking—courage to make a mistake, courage to take responsibility for the mistakes made. It isn’t evil—it’s a lack of courage. A badly-behaved child is always faint-hearted and lacking courage. That must be clear to us.

Parents also need courage. They need courage to say that they are not perfect but that they are chasing after the goal of perfection. They will admit they have made mistakes, but they won’t give up. Why not? Because God is with them.

We have considered the case of a child making a mistake. Mistakes do happen. Jesus never rebuked mistakes. But what about a situation where the child does something that is unjust, or really bad. Should they be rebuked then? I’m referring to something

that is really evil, rebellious, self-willed, or lying. One problem is that parents often add insult to the wrong that the child did. They think that they can bring the child out of their wrong way by affronting or offending them. The child needs great courage to be able to bear that insult and then to change! In most cases the child will give up. They think they are evil and decide to remain evil. That happens in most cases. Only in the most seldom case does an insult lead to an actual change. An insult always means not to respect or appreciate the person.

Encouragement means that we give the child the freedom to become better—when they are being stubborn, when they have lied, or in other situations. Certain consequences must indeed happen. But those consequences should not happen with an attitude of triumph, saying,

“I told you so!”

That is revenge, not education. Encouragement means that the child is given certain consequences. But they must also understand those consequences. The consequences are essentially the result of the freedom that the child has to choose something else. When they are stubborn, then let them be stubborn, if that is their choice. When they have lied, then let them bear the choice and the associated consequences. Allow it to happen. But also give them the possibility and the prospect and vision of how everything can be completely different again, when they come back from that way. It is important to give them hope or a better outlook.

How God Deals with Strife

God certainly does that. We will to read about it now. The context of the following verses is strife, which is something evil. The children are fighting, so to speak. How can we deal with that? How did Jesus deal with it?

Luke 22

²⁴ Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

²⁵ And He said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors.

²⁶ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

²⁷ For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

²⁸ But you are those who have continued with me in my trials.

²⁹ And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one upon me...

Now Jesus speaks especially to Peter.

³¹ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me [German: when you are converted], strengthen your brethren.

The context of these verses is that there was strife. The disciples were disputing. So Jesus spoke to them after they had been disputing. He knew what the strife would cause. He knew that this attitude would cause Peter to deny Him. Jesus knew this all perfectly well. And what did He say? He said that He prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. "When you are converted..." In other words,

"You're not converted yet. There is strife. You will deny me."

Peter answered that he would not deny Jesus, but Christ confirmed that he would. That was not discouragement. It was encouragement. He said,

"You will be converted from it."

That was the vision, the prospect. Jesus had to show Peter that his situation was not good. He couldn't praise him. He couldn't say,

"You are such a great guy. You'll manage it just fine."

Jesus could not do that. But He could say to Peter,

"You will be converted. Then you will be free. Then strengthen your brethren."

There was a real prospect before him. That is encouragement. I'd like to read a very interesting story now. It is a story about Ellen White.

Ellen G. White Biographies, vol. 4, p. 142-143:

While many families suffered severely during the financial panic, not all were in the same circumstances. In early May, Ellen White, with another worker or two, visited the Radley family living near Castle Hill. They were just taking their stand for the message. The Radleys owned a large, well-established orchard of orange, lemon, and other fruit trees. At the time of the visit the wife was keeping the Sabbath, and from all appearances the husband and children would soon follow. But Ellen White was told that Mr. Radley, not fully having taken his stand, slipped back. As she recounted the experience at the General Conference session in 1901, she described him as a reading man. "In the night season," she said, "the angel of the Lord seemed to stand by me, saying, "Go to Brother Radley, place your books before him, and this will save his soul."

To summarize, the father of this family was inclined to the truth at first, but then turned away again. No one knew that, but Ellen White was shown it by God in a vision. How she dealt with the situation is described in the next paragraphs by Ellen White herself.

Ellen G. White Biographies, vol. 4, p. 142-143:

I visited with him, taking with me a few of my large books. I talked with him just as though he were with us. I talked of his

responsibilities. I said, "You have great responsibilities, my brother. Here are your neighbors all around you. You are accountable for every one of them. You have a knowledge of the truth, and if you love the truth, and stand in your integrity, you will win souls for Christ."

He looked at me in a queer way, as much as to say, "I do not think you know that I have given up the truth, that I have allowed my girls to go to dances, and the Sunday School, that we do not keep the Sabbath." But I did know it. However, I talked to him just as though he were with us.

"Now," I said, "we are going to help you to begin to work for your neighbors. I want to make you a present of some books."

He said, "We have a library, from which we draw books."

I said, "I do not see any books here. Perhaps you feel delicate about drawing from the library. I have come to give you these books, so that your children can read them, and this will be a strength to you."

I knelt down and prayed with him, and when we rose, the tears were rolling down his face as he said, "I am glad you came to see me. I thank you for the books."

As she recounted the experience, she spoke of the fruitage of the work: The next time I visited him, he told me that he had read part of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. He said, "There is not one syllable I could change. Every paragraph speaks right to my soul."

I asked Brother Radley which of my large books he considered the most important. He said, "I lend them all to my neighbors, and the hotel-keeper thinks that *Great Controversy* is the best. But," he said, while his lips quivered, "I think that *Patriarchs and Prophets* is best. It is that which pulled me out of the mire."

This story really shows us how we can deal with disobedient children. We must first understand that they are discouraged. We must see what's behind their actions. Often, our wrong reaction to the underlying issues drives them more deeply into discouragement, which in turn leads them to even worse behavior. That is the reason why we are learning this now. I want to emphasize

again that we are to find our pattern and example in the way that God leads us.

Encouraging Promises

I have looked at many promises, and in each one I see an encouragement. Let's read one of them now. We will just read a few verses, but I encourage you to read the entire chapter, which is about the choice between life and death. God describes all that will happen to His people if they choose death, which did in fact happen. But we read:

Deuteronomy 30

¹¹ For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.

¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?

¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?

¹⁴ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

That is encouragement!

¹⁵ See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,

¹⁶ In that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away...

Next God describes the results of choosing the disobedient way. In previous verses, He gives the following promise, which Daniel claimed during the captivity in Babylon.

⁴ If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

⁵ Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

God told the Israelites the consequences of their choices. But He didn't triumph over them saying, "I told you so." Instead, He constantly left the door open for them to return. He would bring them back to the land of their fathers. I recommend that you read the entire chapter—in the context of dealing with disobedient children. After all, Israel was a disobedient child.

We will read one more text together in closing:

Messages to Young People, p. 96:

On the other hand, every resistance of temptation makes resistance more easy. Every denial of self makes self-denial easier. Every victory gained prepares the way for a fresh victory. Each resistance of temptation, each self-denial, each triumph over sin, is a seed sown unto eternal life. Every unselfish action gives new strength to spirituality. No one can try to be like Christ without growing more noble and more true.

That is encouraging. It's not just the words that are encouraging. The fact that is described here is encouraging. Every resistance of temptation makes the battle easier; every self-denial makes the next one easier; every victory won prepares us for the next. Those are the results that we need to recognize. For our children, that is what God recognizes, and that is what we need to recognize with each other. We have not reached perfection already, but each victory makes the next one easier. Those are the successes, the blessings, that should be counted; that is what enables us to educate our children.

Encouragement is the most important part of child education. We need to learn much in that area. I'm sure that we can see many things that we have done wrong, but let's not be discouraged because of that. This is not a criticism; rather, it is an opportunity to learn—on the way to perfection.

4. Rewards

Sabbath, February 3, 2018

WE LOOKED at the importance of encouragement for a child. Now we want to investigate the topic of rewarding children. These two subjects are quite similar; encouraging and rewarding may even appear to be the same thing. We will come back to this. Let's begin by reading the following statement from last week:

Messages to Young People, p. 96:

On the other hand, every resistance of temptation makes resistance more easy. Every denial of self makes self-denial easier. Every victory gained prepares the way for a fresh victory. Each resistance of temptation, each self-denial, each triumph over sin, is a seed sown unto eternal life. Every unselfish action gives new strength to spirituality. No one can try to be like Christ without growing more noble and more true.

This was the final statement about encouragement we read last time. We saw that encouragement happens through the action itself. In other words, if what we do reaches the aim, then that is encouraging already—we don't need extra encouragement. Today, instead of encouragement, we will look at rewarding.

The Relationship Between Parents and Children

But first we'll look at the relationship that exists between parents and children. There are two very different possibilities for a relationship between them. One relationship we would describe as a master/servant relationship, or employer/employee relationship. The second option is a parent/child relationship. Both are possible within a family. Even if we never call it a master/servant relationship, as such, it often is like master and servant.

Let us look at what the difference is, from the Bible. We will read what Jesus says about it.

John 8

³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Here Jesus makes a clear difference between the son and a slave. The difference is that one abides forever and the other does not.

Let's consider the relationship between an employer and employee. It's the same difference as in a master/servant relationship. If you have an employee, you know he will not stay forever. If he is not a good employee you realize,

“I can always change my employee by hiring another one.”

Particular work times must be observed, but beyond that the employee is free to come and go. Similarly, the employee is able to say,

“I can leave this company at any time.”

Conversely, he may also fear that at any time he may lose his job for one reason or another. Whereas the son can never be fired. He is always part of the company—he is always part of the family. And that is basically the difference. The son abides forever, but the servant is only temporary.

Let's look at another difference that is made very clear in the following verses.

Galatians 4

¹ Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,

² But is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

⁵ To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father!

⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The comparison is made again between servants and sons. The main difference is the closeness of the relationship. The son is much closer than a servant. The other difference is that the son is the heir and inherits everything. Everything belongs to him, whereas the servant is given only food, and an employee just gets wages. But everything belongs to the son right from the beginning. If he receives anything, it is only a part of the inheritance which already belongs to him in full. This is a very important difference that we should remember.

Let's read another text which explains how these two relationships differ.

Job 38

⁷ When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy...

The sons shouted for joy. We can't imagine servants or employees shouting for joy when the business has a success. But the sons do shout, because it belongs to them. This verse describes what happened when our world was created, as well as what happened when redemption was accomplished at the death of Christ. It will happen again when the redeemed come to heaven. We have a real interest in the cause of the Father, which is expressed in this tremendous shout of joy that the angels give. The interest of the father, or parent, and the child are the same. That is essentially the relationship that is described in this verse.

We will read one final text in this connection.

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

In what way is God's will done in heaven and in what way do we pray that it will be done on earth? This is very nicely described:

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed,

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

Just imagine if the angels had been given a reward for their obedience, although they had been obedient to the law before they even knew it existed. How would they have reacted? They would have said,

“What's this? Why are we being rewarded?”

What is a reward? A reward is something received as a result of an accomplishment. For example, good grades in school or sports medals are rewards. A reward is something you did not have before, something earned by extraordinary deeds. That's normally how we understand rewards. Praise can also be a reward, although it is not a material one.

It needs to be clear that the relationship between a parent and child excludes reward giving, which is not the case with masters and servants. Otherwise, it would be like giving the angels a reward for their obedience. That was absolutely unthought of. Why is that? It is because everything belongs to the children already. They are heirs. To give them a reward would be to make them into a servant. Also, every good deed we do and every obedient act we perform is done by the grace of Christ, not our own

strength. We really need to understand that rewarding children changes the relationship between them and their parents. It changes the relationship into master and servant. And when the relationship changes from parent-and-child to master-and-servant, then giving a reward essentially declares,

“I am giving you a reward for being a good servant.”

We need to understand that giving a reward changes the relationship—whether we intend it to or not. It is implied. We may have good intentions of encouraging the child, but we are actually changing our relationship with them.

Heavenly vs. Earthly Rewards

However, it is true that the Bible does speak of rewards. We’ll read a couple of examples of this.

Matthew 6

¹ Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

This speaks of a reward that our Father gives us. You can also look up other texts about rewards. We will read just one more together.

Hebrews 11

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

“He looked to the reward.” That means he expected a reward. So, doesn’t rewarding have a place? And is praising a child a reward, or an encouragement?

[Naomi]: It depends on whether you are praising the effort or the result. If you praise outcomes, it’s a discouragement. But if you praise efforts, then it can be an encouragement to recognize what they have done.

That’s a good differentiation. Let’s think about the reward that is expected in *Hebrews 11*, as well as the reward that the Father in

heaven gives. It must be a different kind of reward—one that doesn't change the relationship. As you have said already, it depends on what you praise in the child. But it also makes a difference what kind of reward you give to the child. Do you give the child a reward that fulfills the following three conditions?

1. It must recognize that everything belongs to the child anyway. It must be very clear that the reward is not given as a payoff. Rather, it is part of what belongs to the child anyway.
2. The reward given must not exalt the child. It must exalt God. That's another very important aspect.
3. It must not create a distance between parent and child.

If all of these conditions are fulfilled, then the reward would be of the right order. Is there such a reward and how can you give such a reward? In order to understand this better, let us come back to the text that we read earlier in *Matthew 6*, where Jesus makes a difference between the two kinds of rewards. We need to understand them now.

In the first verse we read,

Matthew 6

¹ Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

In other words, you expect to get a reward from your Father in heaven and you will get one. But it will not be the reward you are expecting.

² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

They have their reward—that's interesting isn't it?

Matthew 6

³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴ That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly.

The word “openly” was added by the translators to this version of the text later, so it’s not relevant for us now. The difference is made again between the reward that the Father gives and another reward that we receive when we trumpet our good deeds in front of people. What kind of reward do we get when we trumpet our good deeds? What do people give? They give praise, adoration, applause, a higher position, acknowledgment, attention, fame and so on. What is lacking in all these rewards? A relationship to the people is lacking. In other words, they may praise you today and cast you off tomorrow.

A good example of this fact is the story of Paul and Barnabas when they preached and healed at Lystra. The people were so enthusiastic about the miracle of healing that they wanted to proclaim them as gods. Paul and Barnabas had a difficult time trying to stop this popular movement. When the people finally calmed down, another movement arose. The same people wanted to kill them by stoning them. We can see that the relationship was not a very good one.

In our day, we know that someone who is awarded as the best one day, may be forgotten the next. Often such people sink into despair. The relationships are not so good, with that kind of reward. An athlete, for example, may win many gold medals today, but not receive any more rewards tomorrow. It is a kind of reward that definitely exalts the person and not God. It is a reward that is lent. It’s not something that is given forever. Remember that the child remains in the house forever. If we receive a reward from people by trumpeting our good deeds before them, it will definitely not last forever.

The following verses speak about prayer. We find the same principle here.

Matthew 6

⁵ And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

It is *their reward*, so it's another kind of reward.

⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The Father gives a very different kind of reward from what the people give when you are seen by them.

⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

In the next verses, Jesus instructs us how to pray.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done,...

–and so on. Then He says,

¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This shows how temporary the reward is that we are seeking here on earth. It is definitely not everlasting. The same is true about fasting. When we fast before men, Jesus says,

¹⁶ ...I say to you, they have their reward,

We have it already; we can't get another: the wrong reward excludes the right reward. Therefore, if we are seeking the wrong reward we will miss out on the right reward, which is from the Father. This text very clearly shows the two different kinds of rewards.

Let us now look at the text about the talents, that shows the difference between the two rewards.

Matthew 25

²¹ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

²² He also who had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.

²³ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.



We can clearly see the difference that Naomi made previously in our study. Jesus does not reward or praise the accomplishment. He does not say,

“It’s good that you have ten talents!”

–or,

“It’s good that you have four talents!”

Instead, He commends the effort. We know this because He makes no difference between the servant with the four talents and the one with the ten talents. He treats them equally, and in this way He actually commends their efforts instead of the results of their work.

Furthermore, it may not be necessary to say much at all. The work itself has a reward. In other words, if I see that the five talents have multiplied to ten talents, then the result of the work is the reward, without any extra praise being given. Seeing the result of the work brings satisfaction and the inherent reward. It’s unnatural to give another reward as well. It’s not wanted.

The Work Well Done Is the Reward

Let’s think again about the angels before they were aware that there was a law. Obedience to the law was so natural to them that they would not even think of receiving a reward. Their reward was their happiness. They were overjoyed to be able to do what their master wanted. Good work brings its own reward, so that we want to continue the same work. That is an encouragement.

What can a parent do to give their child a reward like that? Obviously, they must give them the opportunity to experience success. In other words, if you give a child a task which accomplishes something good, perhaps you can give a little acknowledgment of success at the beginning, but you shouldn’t give too much. Otherwise they will become dependent upon such recognition. If they see that their work is successful, they will not need extra acknowledgment for it, because the work itself will bring its own satisfaction—its own reward. Then the child will want to continue with that work.

That is how God works with us. When we have accomplished something good, God doesn’t praise us on a job well done. Rather, we see the result of the work and such results make us happy. The same is true about the commendation,

“Well done, good and faithful servant.”

It is not so much the words that play a role, but rather the result. When we enter heaven and continue the same work that we have received here on earth it is exactly the reward that we are looking for. That brings satisfaction. We are happy to do it, especially if it is work for others—especially if it is a work that will make other people happy. Let’s read two statements in this connection.

The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2, p. 212:

Those things which seem to the Christian most grievous to be borne often prove his greatest blessing. Reproach and falsehood have ever followed those who were faithful in the discharge of duty. A righteous character, though blackened in reputation by slander and falsehood, will preserve the purity of its virtue and excellence. Trampled in the mire, or exalted to heaven, the Christian’s life should be the same, and the proud consciousness of innocence is its own reward. The persecution of enemies tests the foundation upon which the reputation really rests. Sooner or later it is revealed to the world whether or not the evil reports were true, or were the poisoned shafts of malice and revenge. Constancy in serving God is the only safe manner of settling such questions. Jesus would have his people use great care to give the enemies of his cause no ground to condemn their holy faith. No wrong action should cast a stigma upon its purity. When all arguments fail, the slanderers frequently open their galling fire upon the besieged servants of God; but their lying tongues eventually bring curses upon themselves. God will finally vindicate the right, honor the guiltless, and hide them in the secret of his pavilion from the strife of tongues.

The important point here is that the consciousness of innocence will bring its own reward. You don’t need another confirmation, because the consciousness of innocence is its own reward. This is what gives you peace and rest. The outward circumstances might be quite the opposite. Instead of recognition, you are trampled in the mire—instead of being exalted, you are put down. But it would be the same, even if you were exalted. It would make no

difference, because you are not dependent on an external reward. You are just looking for the internal reward, which is the reward of the thing itself, which in this case is the consciousness of innocence.

We'll read one other interesting commentary about this now.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1089:

With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit's power we could, become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. We would take it by force, as did Jacob. Then our message would be the power of God unto salvation. Our supplications would be full of earnestness, full of a sense of our great need; and we would not be denied. The truth would be expressed by life and character, and by lips touched with the living coal from off God's altar. When this experience is ours, we shall be lifted out of our poor, cheap selves, that we have cherished so tenderly. We shall empty our hearts of the corroding power of selfishness, and shall be filled with praise and gratitude to God. We shall magnify the Lord, the God of all grace, who has magnified Christ. And He will reveal His power through us, making us as sharp sickles in the harvest field.

What kind of reward does such spiritual violence bring? It is described here. It is earnestness and a sense of our need. It is lips that are touched by the living coal from off the altar. It is when we are "lifted up out of our poor, cheap selves, that we have cherished so tenderly," when we "empty our hearts of the corroding power of selfishness," and when we are "filled with praise and gratitude to God." This is the reward that we get. This is the reward of the spiritual violence. There is no need of another person saying,

"You have done very well. Great effort!"

It is not necessary. It's really important for us not to become dependent on outward rewards. That makes us very weak, and we

will make our children very weak in the same way. It will change our relationship to them. It makes them so weak when we give them too many outward rewards.

Encouragement is different. The purpose of encouragement is to push the person forward in the right way, and to help them understand that this is the reward. In other words, it is encouragement to urge them not to be dependent on outward reward. But if we constantly give them external praise, then that is actually discouragement. Why? It is because withholding that praise just once can be devastating. And you may not even know when you are withholding it. For instance, you may not be aware of a great accomplishment your child has achieved. I told you last week about a time I wrote a page full of one particular letter. I expected praise from my mother, but she did not give it to me. A child who is dependent on praise will be devastated in such situations. It's not good to depend on outward rewards like this. It should not have taken place—it should not have happened. The reward is in the accomplishment itself.

Rewards and Punishments

This brings us to the topic of punishment, which we want to study next time. Withholding reward is a form of punishment. If there is generally no reward given for accomplishments, then withholding that non-existent reward is no punishment at all. When children do not expect a reward, they cannot be punished by any withholding of reward. Similarly, when the angels did not expect a reward for obeying the law, they could not be punished by withholding any reward when they did not obey the law. It's not possible.

Is it a disadvantage for us not to have methods of punishment, such as withholding reward? Certainly it's a disadvantage for those who are building on the wrong principle—that of reward

and punishment. Jesus was neither elated by reward, nor dejected by punishment.²²

If the reward is natural and not artificial extra praise given for good achievement, then the punishment must also be natural—not the withholding of a reward. In other words, just as a good deed brings its own reward, similarly, a bad deed brings its own punishment. It will be a natural consequence, rather than an artificial punishment. Therefore, it will be clear that the punishment does not come from God or the parent. Instead, it is the natural consequence of one's own choice of action. The child needs to understand that. In this way, punishment becomes part of the school of life. We want to study more about this next time.

Today, we wanted to focus on the aspect of reward. We simply wanted to show how often parents think they can encourage children with reward—for example, receiving candy after cleaning up the kitchen. That kind of reward is counterproductive, because it causes the person to have no reward from the doing of the duty itself—in seeing the kitchen clean, for instance. It is done only in order to get the reward. When they become so dependent on the reward, it makes the child a servant rather than an heir of the house. This is something that parents really need to understand if they educate their children with rewards.

Animals are educated this way. It is called conditioning. When a horse does something good, it is given a sugar cube. It is thereby conditioned to do certain things. But that is not how children are to be educated. Children are partners rather than servants and this is how they should be treated, so that they grow up as strong people who are not dependent on rewards.

²² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 330: “He [Jesus] was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment.”

5. True Obedience

Sabbath, February 10, 2018

OUR topic is still child education, or child training. Last time, we considered the fact that children should not be rewarded. If they are rewarded, then they are like employees—who merely work for wages—instead of being heirs of the house. We made that differentiation. We also looked at the fact that punishment is not the right way to train a child either. Rewards and punishment must not come from the parents. That is the important point. Instead, rewards and punishment come through the circumstances, which is the school of life.

Sowing and Reaping

The Bible speaks of reward and punishment, but not in the context of God applying them. If the text sounds as if He does, we need to understand that is because God takes responsibility for the circumstances. This is an important factor, which we will consider today. But first, we want to state that reward and punishment come from the deeds themselves. In other words, good deeds bring their own rewards with them. Additional rewards aren't given. The deeds themselves bring the rewards. Similarly, bad deeds bring their own punishment with them. It is not necessary to apply an external punishment, even if the natural punishment is very delayed. That may be a problem, which we will look at later.

Let's read a few Bible verses in this context. The first two verses will be quoted from the *New Jerusalem Bible*, which explains the point in clear language.

Proverbs 11 [NJB]

¹⁷ Faithful love brings its own reward, the inflexible injure their own selves.

Faithful love brings its own reward already. Nothing needs to be added to it. Likewise, the inflexible injure their own selves. Their inflexibility is an injury, in itself. *The Voice* translation reads,

Proverbs 11 [Voice]

¹⁷ Kindness is its own reward, but cruelty is a self-inflicted wound.

There are many similar verses in the Bible. We will read several others. *Isaiah 58* is a well-known text about fasting.

Isaiah 58 [NJB]

¹ Shout for all you are worth, do not hold back, raise your voice like a trumpet...

² They seek for me day after day, they long to know my ways, like a nation that has acted uprightly and not forsaken the law of its God. They ask me for laws that are upright, they long to be near God:

³ Why have we fasted, if you do not see, why mortify ourselves if you never notice? Look, you seek your own pleasure on your fast-days and you exploit all your workmen;

⁴ Look, the only purpose of your fasting is to quarrel and squabble and strike viciously with your fist. Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high.

This text says,

“You fast because you want a reward. But you don’t get a reward.”

Why is that? They tried so hard, but didn’t get a reward. It reminds me of my childhood. The more I tried to get a reward, the less I got one. I was so disappointed. The next verses tell the reason why fasting brought no reward. But then God tells them how they could get a reward.

⁶ Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes?

⁷ Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?

⁸ Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice will go ahead of you and Yahweh’s glory come behind you.

⁹ Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; you will call and he will say, I am here. If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,

¹⁰ If you deprive yourself for the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like noon.

This clearly says that when the conditions are fulfilled, then the results will happen. Light will blaze forth, and so on. In other words, the deeds done will have their own rewards. It will happen. It is a law of cause and effect. If the right cause is implemented, then the results will come. That is what God clearly says.

The following verse is taken from *Young's Literal Translation*. We will read Daniel's excellent counsel to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4 [YLT]

²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and your sins by righteousness break off, and your perversity by pitying the poor, lo, it is a lengthening of your ease.

What is it that will lengthen his ease? It is for him to let go of his sins by righteousness and to pity the poor. That is how he would get lengthening of his ease. This literal translation may be a little difficult to understand, so we can also read the *Contemporary English Version*:

Daniel 4 [CEV]

²⁷ Your Majesty, please be willing to do what I say. Turn from your sins and start living right; have mercy on those who are mistreated. Then all will go well with you for a long time.

If we read it in the *New King James Version*, as usual, it says,

Daniel 4 [NKJV]

²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.

But the word “perhaps” is questionable here. That is why we chose the literal translation, which uses “lo,” meaning “for sure.” Breaking off your sins by righteousness and showing mercy to the poor will bring its own reward. It is certain when you do that. It is a lengthening of your prosperity. So it is. That is a reward in itself.

Jesus also said the same thing, which we can read in the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

This verse doesn't say,

“I will reward them. I will pay them well, because they are merciful.”

No! They shall obtain mercy, because they are merciful. Being merciful has its own reward. It brings its own result. All of the Beatitudes are similar, as well as the entire Sermon on the Mount. For now, let's turn to Paul's writings.

2 Corinthians 9

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

This is very plain. What we sow, we will reap. That is a law of cause and effect. If we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully. If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. It doesn't say,

“When you sow bountifully, I will give you a lot in return. But if you sow sparingly, I will hold back and not give you much.”

No, that's not what is said here. Instead, it is simply a law of cause and effect. Similarly, Paul says to the Philippians:

Philippians 4

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

In other words, Paul was not seeking a special gift from them or to be paid by them. He was not looking for a reward for all of his labor. He didn't say to them,

“I have done so much for you and need to be paid.”

Rather, he wanted to see the result—the natural fruit. He also said that it was for their account. It was not for his sake, but for their benefit. But it was the natural fruit.

Romans 6

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This says very clearly that death is the wages of sin, not the wages of God. That is a huge difference. God doesn't pay death. It is sin which pays death. Likewise, eternal life is the gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. We will return to the important subject of the gift later.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ What fruit did you have then...?

Fruit is the result—the reward. What reward did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? When reading Bible texts, look for words like “fruit” or “result.” Then you will see what a “reward” is really like. The reward is the natural outgrowth of righteousness. But it is not arbitrarily given to you by God for complying with His wishes. That is a vast difference. To summarize so far, we see that when a reward comes, it is through circumstances.

Handling an Evil Harvest

The question is, how do parents react to the circumstances—whether they come as reward or punishment? How do parents usually react when circumstances punish their child? They react either by protecting, or by triumphing. If they triumph, they think they now have evidence to prove they are right. It is as if it were a power struggle between them and their children. Now they have the last word and are confirmed. That is not a good reaction. It is not good to say,

“I told you so!”

How does God react when we bear the results of our own unrighteousness? What is His attitude? Is He happy? Certainly not and absolutely not! He knows that our sins bring their fruits. But He is not happy at all when those fruits come. Let’s read about this.

Isaiah 63

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.

He was afflicted in their affliction. He didn’t take away the affliction—the result of sin. That is what parents often do. They don’t allow the consequences to come. They take them away because they themselves can’t bear the consequences. In contrast, God allows it to happen. But He is in no way happy about it. Instead, He himself is afflicted. This context helps us to understand the sacrifice of Jesus better and why He became man. He did that in order to feel with us. He feels the results of sin. He felt the results of sin on the cross. He didn’t stand triumphantly saying,

“I told you so!”

No! He was so afflicted that He came to this earth and took the punishment upon himself.

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted.

He didn't take the affliction away. But He was afflicted with them. That's a good idea, isn't it? Imagine if we bore the punishment with our children. What do you think about that? Would the parents be willing to do that? Imagine, if your children are punished, then you bear the punishment with them. That is exactly what God did. That is a way to show your children that you are not happy with the results and outcome. You suffer with them and you want the situation to be changed. Then, for sure, they will want the situation to be changed too.

Let's read one more text which describes God's attitude.

Ezekiel 33

¹¹ Say to them: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?

This verse shows God's sincere pleading. He says,

“Please turn. Why should you die?”

He pleaded with them as long as He could. Sometimes there is no possibility of pleading with people who go away, because there is no desire even to escape the consequences of sin. But God is not triumphant at all when we suffer. Parents should not be either.

Handling a Good Harvest

What do parents often do when rewards come to their children, as a result of good deeds? One wrong reaction is to praise the children for their accomplishment. We will see later how wrong that is. The other wrong reaction is to make no comment at all. In actual fact, those situations are an opportunity to encourage the child. How can we encourage them when they bear the fruit of good deeds? How can we encourage them to go in the right direction?

[Audience]: We can do that by showing them the connection between cause and effect.

That would be one way. When children suffer because of wrong deeds, we suffer with them. So when the children rejoice as a result of righteousness, what should we do? We should rejoice with them. That's all; it's very simple. It is being happy about the good outcome, just as they are. In this way, we reap the results of disobedience together with them, as well as the joy of obedience together with them. That is real togetherness. If we do it together with them, they will be strengthened and encouraged by it. They will see your joy and it will strengthen their joy.

Let's read what Jesus says in this connection.

Luke 15

⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.



There is tremendous joy in heaven. Everyone is joyful together with the person who is delivered from the slavery of sin. There is real togetherness.

Heart Obedience

Our next question is important and we need to think about it. How do we train or educate a child to become a child who truly neither seeks reward, nor has fear of punishment? That is the great problem. Many children have a real fear of punishment. That is why they obey. But once the fear is gone, they will not obey anymore. Similarly, many children are constantly seeking reward. The question is, how can we educate them to avoid going into either of these ruts?

First of all, let's consider what true obedience is. How is it defined? We'll read a statement about it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 97:

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.

Doing what is right because it is right—that, and nothing else—is true obedience. The big question is, what kind of obedience do our children have? We must look at that very closely. What kind of obedience is there? Is it obedience in order to get a reward, or, out of fear of punishment? Or is it doing right, because it is right?

Many people who don't do right because it is right are actually obeying only for show. They behave as though they are righteous. Their outward lives appear quite nice. But beneath the nice exterior, it is not in the heart. That is the reason children leave the truth at one point or another. They leave the parents' way because it is not within them. It is not a part of them.

In the last conflict, their eyes will be opened. Let's read this.

The Great Controversy, p. 655:

Ministers and people see that they have not sustained the right relation to God.

All of the show which was put up now collapses. They see that their righteousness was not true. They had told themselves that they were righteous, were doing the right things, and were even better than others. But now they see that they have not sustained the right relation to God—they have rebelled against Him, and so on.

They see that they have rebelled against the Author of all just and righteous law...No language can express the longing which the disobedient and disloyal feel for that which they have lost forever—eternal life.

We could imagine that such people would apologize to God and ask Him to give them eternal life, because they see the results and want to choose differently. But they don't do that. Why not? It is because they see that their fate is the result of their actions. It is not an arbitrary act of God; He is not handing out something arbitrary; rather, they are reaping what they have sown. That will become obvious in the final battle. If we try to put on a big show of righteousness, it won't work. We will still reap the result of disobedience, because we have no true obedience in our hearts.

We wanted to consider how to train our children to have true obedience. That is our great question. To answer this, we want to look at how Jesus educated His disciples to have true obedience. We'll read about this in *Matthew* 19. A rich, young ruler had come to Jesus asking what to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus counseled him to sell everything he had and to follow Him. The ruler went sadly away. Then Jesus told the disciples that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

In reply, Peter said,

Matthew 19

²⁷ See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?

In other words, he asked what their reward would be.

“What do we get for doing all that?”

What do you think about such a question? It shows that true obedience was not yet there. This question revealed to Jesus, that Peter didn't have true obedience yet. It doesn't mean that the disciples were wicked people or hypocrites. That was not the case. Often we reveal a mixture, because our motives are not quite pure yet. That fact comes out in situations like this one. The disciples' motives were not entirely pure. Jesus needed to help them have a different spirit—the spirit of someone who was truly obedient.

What kind of person would ask the question,

“What reward do I get?”

Servants, employees, or hirelings would ask that question. That is what we read in *Christ's Object Lessons*. It was the spirit of a hireling. How did Jesus deal with that question? It is actually a wonderful opportunity when a problem like that reveals itself. As I mentioned, you must jealously watch whether your children have true obedience or not. Occasionally issues like this come out. It did so here. How did Jesus deal with it? That is our question. When we know the answer, then we, as parents, will also know how to deal with it.

Firstly, Jesus spoke to the disciples about rewards. It even seemed to strengthen that spirit. He told them,

Matthew 19

²⁸ Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

Wonderful! Of course, righteousness brings rewards. That is what Jesus said. He essentially told them,

“If you establish the right causes, then you will reap the right results. As you sow, you will reap.”

But then, Jesus added a statement which corrected the spirit of a hireling. It was corrected with just one sentence.

Matthew 19

³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

What did He mean by that sentence? We can see the answer in the following chapter of *Matthew*.

Matthew 20

¹ For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

² Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

⁴ And said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. So they went.

⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

He said he would give them whatever was right. He basically told them not to worry about what they would receive. They should just work.

⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, Why have you been standing here idle all day?

⁷ They said to him, Because no one hired us. He said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.

He didn't say this to the workers at the first hour. He told them exactly what they would receive—one denarius. Which of these workers were the servants and which were the sons? The workers

at the first hour were servants. They asked what they would receive and worked for that amount. The others came like sons. They didn't worry about what they would receive. They appreciated the work itself. The key is to do what is right because it is right.

Matthew 20

⁸ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.

⁹ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

¹⁰ But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

¹¹ And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

¹² Saying, These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.

¹³ But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?

¹⁴ Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.

“The last will be first, and the first last.” That is the summary. There was a little competition happening. There is always competition when a person has an attitude of reward and punishment. There is always a striving for “me first.” Selfishness is always involved in the wrong kind of obedience. They both go together, for sure.

Trust is the first lesson Jesus was teaching in the parable of the laborers. The spirit of a son is trust. The spirit of the servant is reckoning, rather than trust. A servant asks,

“How much will I get?”

Righteousness by faith is righteousness by trust. Let's read this together.

Romans 4

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

³ For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

Here we see the real difference between a son and a servant. A servant works for wages, with works. But a son works with grace.

² For if Abraham was justified by works [reward and punishment], he has something to boast about [something to claim], but not before God.

If he had something to boast about, it would be like Abraham saying he had a claim to the Promised Land or to new life because he was so good. He would think that was his reward. But this was not the case. He simply trusted. He didn't say that he deserved heaven or the Promised Land. Not at all! Rather, he was simply grateful that he received it. It was by faith.

⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

His faith is accounted for righteousness.

Hebrews 10

³⁸ The just shall live by faith.

They live by faith, by trust—by trusting their Father. The relationship of a son is a relationship of trust.

What Is the Motivation?

The motivation is very important. We'll read a statement about it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 402:

It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals. He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do.

This statement confirms that it is important not to look upon the results when we educate children—praising good results, such as grades, for example. Instead, we should look to the little things that were accomplished in sincerity, self-sacrifice, and self-forgetfulness.

Sometimes we look at the meager results of our work and we wish that many people could hear the gospel. We want to preach to them, and so on. But God doesn't look at these aspects. He looks more at the self-forgetfulness and sincerity with which we do the little work we do. In the end, that will have a greater result than if we were to preach to thousands. This is something we need to remember. And this is the way we can encourage children to have the right kind of obedience.

We said that we can also encourage children by rejoicing with them when they get the right results. That is exactly what Jesus does again and again. Let's read about this in the story of when Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman. He had not eaten anything for a long time.

John 4

³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?

³⁴ Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work.

He didn't do it for a reward or out of fear of punishment. That was His food. His food was right-doing because it was right; that

was His food; He didn't need anything else. We will return to the topic of food a little later in our study. The table is also a very important training ground.

Let's read one more verse written by Paul. He was writing about his imprisonment. He even sang while he was imprisoned.

Philippians 2

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul was essentially saying that he liked to do that job. This was also the reason he could tell them,

Philippians 4

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

In other words,

“Rejoice in the work you are doing—even if it causes persecution, and even if you are bullied. Rejoice! I am rejoicing with you.”

We want to understand better how we can encourage a child not to be a hireling or a servant, but rather to be a son. It is not the great accomplishments that we should commend or encourage. Instead, it is the motive.

There are many who do not have much of an opportunity for a great work. That is what Ellen White writes. And it seems that we do very little for Him. But what are the things that need to be encouraged in a child? What exactly is it that we need to focus on, watch, and encourage? It is the daily surrender of self. It is every temptation resisted. If the child resists a temptation, then encourage it. Tell the child that the victory is a great accomplishment.

In my childhood, my mother always emphasized a certain attitude in me, which she called “Einsicht.” That is a German word which doesn't have a truly accurate translation into English. It

means something like a combination of remorse, repentance, or insight. It really means to see your sin and to acknowledge it and change your attitude—not to just be compliant. To have *Einsicht*, was more important to my mother than any great accomplishment. It was a good thing. And today, we need to watch and encourage our children to have *Einsicht*. It is possible to be compliant when you fear punishment or when you have hope of a reward. But *Einsicht* is much deeper. It is a change of attitude.

What to Encourage in Children

What needs to be encouraged in children? First, pureness of thought needs to be encouraged. Sometimes children criticize their parents for not being consistent. The parents then become embarrassed and they begin to hide, for instance. When this starts, they have lost. But when the children do this, we need to understand that it is often because of pureness of thought. They can't bear a contradiction. They can't bear for their parents to say one thing and do another. We should appreciate pureness of thought, and say,

“That’s wonderful.”

Meekness under provocation is a great victory. This needs to be encouraged too. Fidelity also needs to be encouraged. And the little victories gained every day need to be encouraged. Then you will be training the child to true obedience. That is the secret. Let’s read about this in the book *Christ’s Object Lessons*.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 403:

There are many who have given themselves to Christ, yet who see no opportunity of doing a large work or making great sacrifices in His service. These may find comfort in the thought that it is not necessarily the martyr’s self-surrender which is most acceptable to God; it may not be the missionary who has daily faced danger and death that stands highest in heaven’s records. The Christian who is such in his private life, in the daily surrender of self, in sincerity of purpose and purity of thought, in meekness under provocation, in faith and piety, in fidelity in that

which is least, the one who in the home life represents the character of Christ—such a one may in the sight of God be more precious than even the world-renowned missionary or martyr.

This is the spirit—the understanding—that our children really need to have. Let's read on.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 403-404:

Oh, how different are the standards by which God and men measure character. God sees many temptations resisted of which the world and even near friends never know—temptations in the home, in the heart. He sees the soul's humility in view of its own weakness; the sincere repentance over even a thought that is evil. He sees the wholehearted devotion to His service. He has noted the hours of hard battle with self—battle that won the victory. All this God and angels know. A book of remembrance is written before Him for them that fear the Lord and that think upon His name.

Not in our learning, not in our position, not in our numbers or entrusted talents, not in the will of man, is to be found the secret of success. Feeling our inefficiency we are to contemplate Christ, and through Him who is the strength of all strength, the thought of all thought, the willing and obedient will gain victory after victory.

This is also the way that children are educated in righteousness by faith. It is because we depend on God for these things. Instead of looking at good grades, being better than fellow students, or suchlike, let's look at the little victories gained by trust in God.

Giving Choices

Another aspect of training children to be sons, not servants, is to give them the choice of right-doing. Let's turn to the Old Testament to see an example of this in the time of Israel. These were the words of Joshua to the people of Israel.

Joshua 24

¹⁴ Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!

¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

In other words, if it seems evil to you, or if you don't like it, you have a choice. If you don't like it, you are free to choose for yourselves.

Joshua 24

¹⁵ ...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.

You can choose this way, or you can choose that way. Both ways are before you. Of course, both ways have their consequences, which you need to understand. Both choices have their reward or their punishment. But you can choose. Give your children a choice. If you don't give them a choice, obedience will never be a part of their inner self. They must have a choice.

It's interesting how the people reacted. They answered with one voice,

¹⁶ Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods;

¹⁷ For the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

You can trust your children too, to make the right choice, if you give them the option. If parents don't trust their children, they won't give them an option. Treat them as partners. Give them a choice. The question is, of course, how do we give little children a choice? Some parents overdo it. They give their children too many options. We have seen this in our shop. The children are confused by all these questions, because it's too difficult for them to decide—especially if they are not familiar with the products. For instance, they may want to choose one ice cream, but they worry that they may pick the wrong one and that another one is better. Situations like this happen and when they become adults, they will still have trouble making choices.

That is not the kind of choice to which we are referring. The choice we mean is choosing between two ways—the way of obedience and the way of disobedience. How can we educate little children in this?

Let's consider the meal table now. Children are educated at the table from an early age. Last time we spoke about nursing mothers and the fact that some mothers feed their babies whenever they begin to cry. Other mothers keep to a strict schedule. Which method is better? The second is better. But there's a third way, which is to let the infant determine when to nurse. That means not to breastfeed them at every whimper or cry, but only when they are truly hungry. Then you will find that the child makes the right choice. They will eat in an interval that is healthy. You have to understand the child. That's not easy. But you give the child a choice. This is exactly what God did. Let's read about it.

Deuteronomy 8

² And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Jesus said to seek and we will find, ask and it will be given. Only when we seek we find, and only when we ask will it be given. God could give to us all the time, but He wants us to ask. In other words, He gives us the possibility of a choice. He says,

“I'll give it to you, if you really want it. Do you really want it? Then you'll get it. But if you are unsure, then you won't get it.”

Sometimes I'll be asked if I want a certain food and I'll reply in a wishy-washy way,

“Oh well, if nobody else wants it.”

Maybe I shouldn't get the food then. The point is that when we ask, we must ask definitely. We have to be really clear.

“This is what I want.”

When you educate your children to be clear in their questions, then they will do the right thing. You trust that God is educating your child.

What did God do? First of all, He tested Israel to know what was in their heart and whether they had true obedience. Secondly, He allowed them to hunger. Why did He allow them to hunger? It was so that they would cry for food. They would cry to God and He would give them manna. Similarly, it is good to give our children an opportunity to feel hungry, and then to give them a choice, as to whether or not they want to eat in an orderly way. To give children a choice is very important for instilling true obedience into them.

With these thoughts I would like to close. I think we understand a little more about how to educate children now—not by the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, but by doing the right thing because it is right. Doing right because it is right is something we ourselves want and need to do. We can do it, if we consider these rules which God has given us and take these opportunities of education in the schools of life.

6. Logical and Natural Consequences

Sabbath, February 17, 2018

WE STUDIED about the fact that obedience is a matter of the heart. We do what we do because it is right, not because we fear punishment or hope for reward. That is the only way. It means that in the education of children, the will of the child must be enlisted. That is the aim, the most important point. Let's read a statement which describes last week's study.

The Desire of Ages, p. 480:

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him.

This is the only way of obedience. It is not through the fear of punishment, or the hope of any reward. Here we read that it is not the hope of an everlasting reward that leads the disciples to follow Christ. Only heart obedience is satisfactory in the end.

The Consequences of Misbehavior

God wants to take away fear, because fear will always lead to a wrong kind of obedience. I checked how many times "Do not fear" appears in the German *Luther Bible*. It is written 63 times. And in the *New King James Version*, this expression appears 51 times. Because it's repeated so often, we know it's a very important message.

There are two basic ways to take away fear. One way is to remove the consequences of misbehavior. A person will no longer fear, if there are no consequences for misbehavior. That's the reason that so many people take risks today. They have not experienced any bad consequences from their risky behavior, so they repeat it again and again. That may also be the reason that

younger people tend to be at greater risk. They haven't experienced the consequences of their risky behavior. Older people have more experience, and the more scars or broken bones they have, the more careful they are. I doubt if the young ones would go through life unscathed. The main point is that we need to realize that taking away the consequences also takes away fear. Does God work in this way? Certainly not!

The other way to take away fear is described in the following verses.

1 John 4

¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

The opposite of fear is boldness. Love drives out fear and imparts boldness, as we read. In other words, we can have boldness in the time of judgment. Of course, there is another kind of boldness, which is the boldness of the sinner who does not experience any consequences for sin. They become very bold in doing what they are doing. The German word for "bold" is not as negative as it may be in English. But in any case, boldness is the opposite of fear. Or other versions of the Bible say "confidence." We may have boldness or confidence in the time of judgment.

God sometimes delays His judgments, as we can read in the Bible.²³ In addition, He sometimes takes away the consequences. Let's take a look at an example.

²³ *Ecclesiastes 8:11; 1 Peter 3:20.*

Isaiah 53

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

“He” refers to Christ, or God. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The punishment, or the chastisement, was upon Him. But by His stripes we are healed. The consequences were upon Him.

Isaiah 53

⁵ ...by His stripes we are healed.

It is true that Jesus took upon himself the consequences of our sin.

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1085:

The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, “Let the punishment fall on me. I will stand in man’s place. He shall have another chance.”

UNAVOIDABLE CONSEQUENCES

Although He did this, ultimately the consequences will come. In other words, a delay is described, but it is not a complete removal of consequences. You can read more about this in *Genesis 3*. There it describes that mankind would die, that they would bear the burden—by giving birth in pain, tilling the soil by the sweat of their brow, and so on.

There are several places in the Bible where we read of consequences. For example:

Romans 6

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Another word for “wages” is *consequences*. The consequence of sin is death. There is no exception to this. That’s the consequence; that is the result. There are many texts which really show the connection between cause and effect.

Nature also shows this connection. When you sow a bad seed, the result will be a bad crop. If you sow thistles and thorns, you won’t get grain or good vegetables. It’s impossible, as is written,

Galatians 6

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

There are consequences, and we must not deceive ourselves into the thinking that there aren’t any with God. There are consequences for our actions, and God clearly tells us that.

“Be not deceived.”

How can we be deceived about whether or not there are consequences for our actions? We can be deceived for two reasons. One reason is that others try to deceive us and tell us that there aren’t any consequences. They say we can do whatever we want to, for as long as we accept God and Jesus it won’t matter. That is the kind of gospel taught in many modern churches. This is also described precisely in the Bible:

1 Thessalonians 5

³ For when they say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

People teach “peace and safety” at the exact time there is none. In other words, they will say,

“Don’t worry. Don’t fear. All will be well.”

That is one way to drive out fear. But it only delays the problem. It never solves the problem.

There are many similar texts. In Jeremiah’s day, when the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, were threatening to conquer Judea, what did the Israelites do? They looked for alliances and partnerships. They found a partner in Egypt; they thought Egypt could defend them. Then they hired prophets who would say,

“It’s all fine. You’re doing well. Continue doing what you are doing.”

But they were deceived. All was not well. They were actually to be soon overtaken by Chaldea or Babylon. Let’s read about this.

Jeremiah 37

⁷ Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land.

⁸ And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.

⁹ Thus says the Lord: Do not deceive yourselves.

That’s another way to be deceived. In a sense, they were deceived by prophets. But they hired prophets who would tell them what they wanted to hear. That was customary in those days. So, actually, they deceived themselves. On one hand, it is possible for other people to try to deceive us into thinking that there are no consequences. But a worse danger is that we deceive ourselves into thinking that there are no consequences for our actions. As it says,

“Do not deceive yourselves.”

This kind of self-deception is also described in a New Testament parable which Jesus told. There was a man who collected every-

thing for himself, not taking others into consideration. He gathered everything to himself, and said,

Luke 12

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.

²⁰ But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?

What profit is there in all this collecting? God called him a fool. In other words, it's not just wickedness or selfishness. It's also foolish to act like this. Why is he a fool? He's a fool because he says to his own soul,

“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink,”

–and so forth. Paul talks about people who thought like that man. In his day they were called the Epicureans. It's quite plainly self-deception. God wants to save us from such self-deception.

CONSEQUENCES DELAYED

On the other hand, it is true that God does not want the consequences of our choices to hit us. He delays the consequences, because they would destroy us. If we were to bear the full consequences of our actions immediately, we would probably die. We are all here because God delays the consequences of our actions. Are we aware of this? We are in a time of mercy.

This is described in many places. Let's look at God's attitude towards us. It's in the book of *Nahum* who was an Old Testament prophet.

Nahum 1

³ The Lord is slow to anger,...

Slow. In other words, He hesitates. He does not want consequences to come. When it talks about anger, it does not mean that

He has a spirit of revenge. We will see this. It simply means He is slow to allow the consequences to come.

Nahum 1

³ ...and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.

The consequences will come, even though He is slow. They will come. But because He is slow, people are emboldened to go a wrong way. Let's read about this.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 177:

The world has become bold in transgression of God's law. Because of His long forbearance, men have trampled upon His authority. They have strengthened one another in oppression and cruelty toward His heritage, saying,

Psalms 73

¹¹ How does God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?

But there is a line beyond which they cannot pass. The time is near when they will have reached the prescribed limit. Even now they have almost exceeded the bounds of the long-suffering of God, the limits of His grace, the limits of His mercy. The Lord will interpose to vindicate His own honor, to deliver His people, and to repress the swellings of unrighteousness.

We will understand more of this paragraph soon. But we can see that the world has become bold in transgression of God's law. Why is that? It is because He delays His judgments. Yet even though God delays the judgments for our sakes, eventually we will bear the consequences. He does this in order to be able ultimately to save us out of sin—to make us obedient, not out of fear of the consequences, but because we love the right and do it because it is right. That's where He wants to lead us. In order to do this, He doesn't let the full punishment come upon us. However, eventually, the consequences will come. Even when we turn away from sin, we will bear certain consequences.

This is made very clear in a statement in *Jeremiah*.

Jeremiah 30

¹¹ For I am with you, says the Lord, to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.

The Lord says,

“I will save you.”

This is exactly what we read in *Genesis 3*. God wants to save us. He says,

“The consequences will come, but I will not make a complete end of you. I will correct you.”

Correction is the word. We’ll come back to this word “correction.” He says,

“I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.”

There is a certain punishment or consequence from the action. Why? Correction is needed in order to implant in the heart that spirit which obeys God—not because it is our duty, but because we love Him and love what is right.

Summary

Let us summarize what we have studied so far.

First of all, we need to warn a child of the consequences to come. In the end, we can’t take away fear by not warning them of the consequences to come. That is not the way. It will only delay the process. To avoid warning them will not take away fear altogether. It’s not a sustainable solution. A truly sustainable solution requires that we warn people of the consequences to come. That must be very clear.

Secondly, we must allow consequences to happen, in order to implant the right spirit. These are the methods God uses. Warn of the consequences to come and allow consequences to happen. But

when God allows the consequences to happen, He does not immediately allow the full consequences to come. He allows them to happen in such a way that we can bear it, in order for us to make necessary changes.

Thirdly, God does not have a spirit of triumph when He allows the consequences to come. He doesn't tell us that He told us so, and He is not vengeful. He is very sad when such consequences happen—very sad.

And fourthly, God suffers with us when these consequences fall upon us. He bears the full hit of that punishment.

These four points are basically a very good guideline for parents. But this is only the beginning of our study.

Love and Justice

We now want to consider how to remove fear. How do we take away fear—fear that is the wrong motive for obedience, service, right behavior, righteous actions, and so on? What is the right motive for such behavior? It's definitely not fear. Let's read about this now.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 106:

The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart that hardens under reproof will melt under the love of Christ.

Do you like that statement? Some of you say, "Yes." Do you really? Which would you rather be? Do you want to be the representative of the court of justice, or of those who bear the sword—a policeman for example? Or do you want to be a loving missionary? You all say you want to be loving missionaries. It would be nice if everyone was a loving missionary, wouldn't it? Do we want to strike terror, or do we want to win hearts? We want to win hearts, of course. So, terror striking is out of the question,

isn't it? No. Terror striking is necessary. But for whom is it necessary? It is necessary for the law breaker. Our children are not law breakers, are they? We don't want our children to be law breakers. After all, we have prayed for their rebirth. So, we don't strike terror to them, do we? That would lead to a wrong kind of obedience, wouldn't it?

Terror is another word for fear. It is a pejorative word in our day. We need to understand that terror is necessary, but the loving missionary can do more. But what does the loving missionary do? That is the big question. Shouldn't the loving missionary warn about the coming consequences? Let's remember that the consequences affect not only the transgressor, but others as well.

We recently had the privilege of visiting with a policeman. We asked him what happens in day-to-day traffic, and whether people commonly drink and drive. He said that the problem with alcohol is less and less. But the problem now is that people drive under the influence of drugs. We could say that those drivers should bear their own consequences. But those consequences don't just affect themselves; they affect others too. We must be aware of that.

Consequences are borne not only by the transgressor. They are also borne by others affected by the transgressor's law breaking. We often don't think about that. When our children are misbehaving, it's not just their problem; it is a problem for others as well. Firstly, it's the parents' problem, because they are embarrassed; but that is a minor issue. The greater problem is the consequences that happen in the long run, and the influences that these children have on others.

THE FLOOD

We need to understand that love, as well as justice, require that consequences or judgments come. This is well described in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, in the story of the flood.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 98-100:

Mercy had ceased its pleadings for the guilty race. The beasts of the field and the birds of the air had entered the place of refuge. Noah and his household were within the ark, “and the Lord shut him in.” A flash of dazzling light was seen, and a cloud of glory more vivid than the lightning descended from heaven and hovered before the entrance of the ark. The massive door, which it was impossible for those within to close, was slowly swung to its place by unseen hands. Noah was shut in, and the rejecters of God’s mercy were shut out. The seal of Heaven was on that door; God had shut it, and God alone could open it. So when Christ shall cease His intercession for guilty men, before His coming in the clouds of heaven, the door of mercy will be shut.

This is from the verse in *Revelation*,

Revelation 3

⁷ He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.

Then divine grace will no longer restrain the wicked, and Satan will have full control of those who have rejected mercy. They will endeavor to destroy God’s people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be shielded by divine power.

For seven days after Noah and his family entered the ark, there appeared no sign of the coming storm. During this period their faith was tested. It was a time of triumph to the world without. The apparent delay confirmed them in the belief that Noah’s message was a delusion, and that the Flood would never come. Notwithstanding the solemn scenes which they had witnessed—the beasts and birds entering the ark, and the angel of God closing the door—they still continued their sport and revelry, even making a jest of these signal manifestations of God’s power. They gathered in crowds about the ark, deriding its inmates with a daring violence which they had never ventured upon before.

But upon the eighth day dark clouds overspread the heavens. There followed the muttering of thunder and the flash of lightning. Soon large drops of rain began to fall. The world had never witnessed anything like this, and the hearts of men were struck with fear. All were secretly inquiring, “Can it be that Noah was

in the right, and that the world is doomed to destruction?” Darker and darker grew the heavens, and faster came the falling rain. The beasts were roaming about in the wildest terror, and their discordant cries seemed to moan out their own destiny and the fate of man. Then “the fountains of the great deep” were “broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” Water appeared to come from the clouds in mighty cataracts. Rivers broke away from their boundaries, and overflowed the valleys. Jets of water burst from the earth with indescribable force, throwing massive rocks hundreds of feet into the air, and these, in falling, buried themselves deep in the ground.

The people first beheld the destruction of the works of their own hands. Their splendid buildings, and the beautiful gardens and groves where they had placed their idols, were destroyed by lightning from heaven, and the ruins were scattered far and wide. The altars on which human sacrifices had been offered were torn down, and the worshipers were made to tremble at the power of the living God, and to know that it was their corruption and idolatry which had called down their destruction.

As the violence of the storm increased, trees, buildings, rocks, and earth were hurled in every direction. The terror of man and beast was beyond description. Above the roar of the tempest was heard the wailing of a people that had despised the authority of God. Satan himself, who was compelled to remain in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence. He had delighted to control so powerful a race, and desired them to live to practice their abominations and continue their rebellion against the Ruler of heaven. He now uttered imprecations against God, charging Him with injustice and cruelty. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God, and had they been able, they would have torn Him from the throne of power. Others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark and pleading for admittance. But their entreaties were in vain. Conscience was at last aroused to know that there is a God who rules in the heavens. They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. In that terrible hour they saw that the transgression of God’s law had caused their ruin. Yet while, through fear of punishment, they acknowledged their sin, they felt no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. They would have returned to their

defiance of Heaven, had the judgment been removed. So when God's judgments shall fall upon the earth before its deluge by fire, the impenitent will know just where and what their sin is—the despising of His holy law. Yet they will have no more true repentance than did the old-world sinners.

Some in their desperation endeavored to break into the ark, but the firm-made structure withstood their efforts. Some clung to the ark until they were borne away by the surging waters, or their hold was broken by collision with rocks and trees. The massive ark trembled in every fiber as it was beaten by the merciless winds and flung from billow to billow. The cries of the beasts within expressed their fear and pain. But amid the warring elements it continued to ride safely. Angels that excel in strength were commissioned to preserve it.

The beasts, exposed to the tempest, rushed toward man, as though expecting help from him. Some of the people bound their children and themselves upon powerful animals, knowing that these were tenacious of life, and would climb to the highest points to escape the rising waters. Some fastened themselves to lofty trees on the summit of hills or mountains; but the trees were uprooted, and with their burden of living beings were hurled into the seething billows. One spot after another that promised safety was abandoned. As the waters rose higher and higher, the people fled for refuge to the loftiest mountains. Often man and beast would struggle together for a foothold, until both were swept away.

From the highest peaks men looked abroad upon a shoreless ocean. The solemn warnings of God's servant no longer seemed a subject for ridicule and scorning. How those doomed sinners longed for the opportunities which they had slighted! How they pleaded for one hour's probation, one more privilege of mercy, one call from the lips of Noah! But the sweet voice of mercy was no more to be heard by them. Love, no less than justice, demanded that God's judgments should put a check on sin. The avenging waters swept over the last retreat, and the despisers of God perished in the black depths.

That's a very vivid description. It really shows us the consequences. It also says that love, no less than justice, demands

God's judgments. Remember that the loving missionary can do more—a loving missionary. But love demanded consequences. That's very clear. Anything which denies the consequences of wrong actions is not love: definitely not. That must be clear, once and for all.

THE CROSS OF CALVARY

Nothing reveals more clearly that love requires consequences, than the cross of Calvary. To see this, we will open *The Great Controversy*.

The Great Controversy, p. 652:

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive.

Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father."

There was fear. But that which filled us with fear before, now seems beautiful and attractive. We understand the title, "Our Father." That is what a loving missionary builds on.

We've already mentioned that Christ stepped in before the final destruction came. At the very moment that man first transgressed God's law, they should have died. But Christ stepped in between and asked that the punishment should fall on Him. He would bear the guilt of the transgressor. He said this at that very moment. But that didn't mean that we don't have to bear any consequences, as we can see if we read on in *The Great Controversy*. The following chapter describes the death of everyone on earth. The fact is that the consequences are still there, even though they are delayed. People become bold because they are delayed.

RESTRAINING CHILDREN

What can we do with children in order to prevent them from experiencing the worst consequences? We can use the example of a

child who wants to run across a busy street. What do you do? You grab them and hold them. You won't let them run into the traffic. That's force, isn't it? But you are actually saving them from the worst consequences of their own choice—at least for the moment. When they are older, they will make their own decision about whether they want to run into traffic. But for the moment, you can save them from the worst consequences.

This saving from worse consequences is really allowing smaller consequences to happen. For example, in *Genesis 3*, the immediate consequence of Adam and Eve's fall would have been death. But Christ stepped in. He did allow other consequences to come, though. Some of those consequences are that women would bear children in pain, that men would work hard in the field, that fields would not yield crops so easily, as well as eventual death. These are described in *Genesis 3*. Yet all of these consequences are better than eternal death. They help people to make the right choices.

Logical Consequences

Logical consequences, as we can call them, are different from natural consequences. We need to make that differentiation. What is a logical consequence? These are consequences which parents either allow or cause to happen. A natural consequence is one which the parents can no longer influence. They will finally come and destroy the child.

Let's consider a practical example of this. There are children here in this meeting room. When one starts to make a noise, what do the parents do? Imagine that the child is making a lot of noise with papers, pencils, and so on. The noise is so disturbing that neither you, the parent, nor the others can pay attention to the study anymore. You say that you would take the child out. Is that a natural consequence?

[Audience]: The natural consequence would probably be that no one else can concentrate on the study, although the child may

be happy. But it cannot be like that. So we have to go out for the moment.

You could also think that the child is just bored and decide that next time you will bring a more interesting and quieter toy for them—maybe a teddy bear. But that’s not the solution. There must be a consequence. The consequence is that when the child can’t be quiet, then you will take them out. It is a logical consequence—one that you bring about. *Sometimes consequences have to be made by the parents.* They may not happen by themselves. They must be made. I hope you understand this very clearly.

ACTION AND CONSEQUENCE MUST BE CONNECTED

There are two necessary factors when you make consequences for children. The first factor is that there must be a clear connection between the child’s action and the consequence. It must be clear and logical. That is why we call them logical consequences. For instance, if a child is noisy during worship, you would only make it worse if you started to shout at them. We would have to stop our meeting. The point is clear. The consequence must be connected to what is happening. If it is not connected, the child wouldn’t understand why it is happening.

When I was young, I liked to run and slide down the hallway at school. The teacher got upset with me for being so wild one day. She stopped me by pulling my hair as I was sliding by. It was tough, and it hurt. She got scared at that moment. I couldn’t see a logical connection between her pulling my hair and my sliding on the floor. I thought that my sliding was just innocent exercise and I couldn’t see why she would pull my hair for that. I didn’t think it was just. She apologized to me and I felt vindicated. I thought I was right. In my mind, there was no logical connection between me sliding on the floor and her pulling my hair. There must be a clear connection between what you, the adult, do and what the child does.

A PROSPECT OF CHANGE

The second factor is that there must be a prospect of change when the child changes. For example, if you go out of the room with a child, you should make it clear to them that they will be able to go back in as soon as they can be quiet. It must be quite plain that there is a prospect for change. That is a logical consequence. This gives the child a clear choice as to whether they want to be quiet or not, for instance—whether they want to behave correctly or not. In contrast to this are the arbitrary demands of parents and teachers, which are made only so that they can have their rest, peace, and comfort, or else because they are just annoyed with the children. Such demands are not logical consequences. They are arbitrary punishments. But consequences are not arbitrary, but are necessities.

THE CORRECTION OF LOVE

We need to understand that when we allow logical consequences to happen, or when we make them, then that is an action of love. We have several excellent Bible texts which show this. Let's read a few of them.

Proverbs 3

¹¹ My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction;

¹² For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

Correction in love is important. We can say, correction is love—though not everything that is called correction is really love. For example, there are correctional facilities, which are prisons. But the main purpose is not correction in those facilities. Instead, the main purpose is revenge. People think that since the prisoners have harmed society, then society must take revenge on them. That is despite the fact that the facilities are called correction centers. But of course, the approach to correctional facilities may

vary from country to country.²⁴

Whom the Lord loves, He corrects. In other words, only when there is love can there be correction. And only when there is correction is there love. An uncorrected child is one who is not loved. That is also clear when we read the next verse:

Proverbs 13

²⁴ He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

If we do not correct our children, then we hate them. But a loving missionary can do more. Do you think that you are a loving missionary and that you have been a loving missionary to your children? We want to be, don't we? But have we been so, when we spared the rod? Have we been loving missionaries when we spared the consequences? This doesn't mean that we should beat the children; it simply means that we should allow logical consequences to come. How often have we refused such consequences?

²⁴ He...disciplines him promptly.

That means immediately. This is done for two reasons. Firstly, there is then a clear connection between cause and effect. The child will understand that it is a logical consequence. Secondly, there is also a possibility for change, when the attitude changes. So if the child wants to choose another way, then the situation will be different. It must be clear that the consequence happens only on condition.

There are many examples of prompt punishment in the Bible. Let's read one now.

²⁴PP Editor's note: In general, "Countries imprison lawbreakers to fulfill several key societal, legal, and safety functions, primarily focusing on punishment, public safety, deterrence, and rehabilitation. While the specific goals can vary by country—ranging from punitive approaches to focus on rehabilitation—the overarching aim is to enforce the rule of law." (Google AI) So, "rehabilitation" is an aspect of many prison systems.

Matthew 16

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

This was immediately after Peter had told Christ,

²² Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you.

It seemed as if Peter had said something very good. Jesus had spoken of His own death and Peter had said that it should not happen. Wasn't that a wonderful spirit that Peter had? He was wishing all the best to Jesus. But then He received such a sharp response:

²³ Get behind me, Satan!

Jesus knew that Peter's statement contained a refusal of Jesus' selfless service. Peter received a prompt response—which was a rebuke. It was immediate—prompt. Why did Jesus give Peter such a prompt response? It was because He loved him. It was given in order to save Peter from the round of self-pity, which would have destroyed him completely. Self-pity had to be stopped straight away. And it was stopped naturally by the rebuke. Who would be so daring as to let these consequences come? Jesus was. Why was that? It was because He loved His disciple. The rebuke was a logical consequence.

We will read a story about such promptness from the Old Testament as well.

1 Kings 13

⁴ So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, Arrest him! Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself.

⁵ The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

⁶ Then the king answered and said to the man of God, Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me. So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before.

⁷ Then the king said to the man of God, Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.

The consequence happened promptly. And Jeroboam immediately changed his attitude. Then the situation changed again. This shows a logical consequence. The king first decided to go against the prophet. But then he had a very different attitude towards the prophet afterwards, and he was restored.

Another very interesting story, of which you are probably aware, is when Peter approached Jesus on the water. Let's read about this in *The Desire of Ages*.

The Desire of Ages, p. 381:

Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour. The wind is boisterous. The waves roll high, and come directly between him and the Master; and he is afraid. For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and fixing them upon Jesus, cries, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, "O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?"

The consequences came immediately, and as soon as Peter's attitude changed, the salvation came. This is interesting. Here's what happened. First,

...in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat...

Second,

...his eyes are turned from the Saviour,

—and immediately a consequence followed. Why did Jesus let it happen? He allowed it because He loved Peter. There is a lot of love in all of these stories. We need to understand that.

Logical consequences are necessary in order to avoid the first natural consequence. We must always remember that the consequences are not just for the child. They are for others as well.

Punishment Compared to Logical Consequences

In conclusion, we will make a list which shows the difference between punishment and logical consequences. On one side of our list we have punishment, which we studied last week. Often we obey because of fear of punishment. On the other side of our list we have logical consequences.

1. REVENGE VS. PREVENTION

The first point under punishment is revenge. That is the main purpose of punishment. Punishment says,

“You have done something to me, so I will do something back to you. Tit for tat.”

But logical consequences help to avoid worse consequences. The punishment of revenge creates fear. But what do the natural consequences create? They create obedience, which leads to Christ, which then leads to boldness in the time of judgment.

2. ARBITRARY VS. LOGICAL

Punishment is often arbitrary: the recipient may not see the logical connection between their act and the punishment. But the natural consequences are logical. What does logical mean? It means that the children have their own choice. That’s very important. The consequences are understandable and the children understand that they have their own choice. They do it only if they want to; they can choose this or that.

3. NO PROSPECT OF CHANGE VS. A WAY OUT

Punishment gives no prospect of change, whereas logical consequences does give a prospect of change. They show the way out.

4. UNHOLY ANGER VS. HOLY ANGER

Punishment is unholy anger and hate. We could study this point in more depth, but we won't do that here. Logical consequences include holy anger. What is holy anger? Holy anger hates sin, but loves the sinner. It is clear that you love the child. That is called parental care, or motherly care. It's an expression of love and it is clear for the child. That's the reason why it does not create fear in children. Rather, it is clear for them that they make their own choice about which way to go.

Punishment	Logical Consequences
Revenge → Fear	Prevention → Obedience
Arbitrary	Logical (Understandable)
No Prospect of Change (Shut Door)	A Prospect of Change (Open Door)
Unholy Anger	Holy Anger

So these are the differences between punishment and logical consequences. Of course, when we allow logical consequences to happen, we are leading the children to make their own choice. At the same time, we want to encourage them in good behavior—not just for ourselves, but for their own sake and the sake of others. We want to enlist the will of the child. That is all connected with applying logical consequences.

With this list of differences, we will close our study today. We can think about it and study this theme further. We are not finished yet and will consider much more on this topic. I hope that the importance of allowing consequences, for the sake of the child, has become clearer. If we love the child, we will allow consequences to happen. If we don't love the child—if we hate them—then we love ourselves, because we want to avoid conflict. But this is nothing more than loving self and hating the child.

7. Firmness

Sabbath, February 24, 2018

WE WANT to continue looking at how we can best educate our children and ourselves as well. One of the most important ways we educate our children to be disobedient is when we are not firm—when we say something, but that word doesn't count. If you do it once, twice, or three times, the children will know exactly that your word doesn't count. And then your word truly won't count anymore.

There are various reasons why our word doesn't count. One reason is that we get tired of saying the same thing over and over again. Another is that we forget what we have said. Yet another reason maybe that we think that what we've said was a bit too hard. Or maybe the child cries so much that we cannot bring ourselves to do what we said we would. But when these situations happen, we have to understand that the children have learned that they can act differently from what the parents tell them.

Let Your "Yes" Be "Yes"

Firmness is one of the most important principles. Let's read what Jesus says about it.

Matthew 5

³³ Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.

³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;

³⁵ Nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.

³⁷ But let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

I hope we understand what Jesus meant. Some people understand this to mean that it's best not to say anything other than

“Yes,” or “No.” That would be one way of interpreting this text, but that is not what Jesus meant. Obviously, it implies that if you mean “Yes,” then say “Yes,” and if you mean “No,” then say “No.” Don’t say “Yes,” if you mean “No,” and don’t say “No,” if you really mean “Yes.” That is the context and the meaning of this text. Otherwise, Christ would have said,

“Don’t say anything besides Yes, or No.”

But that is not what is written here. Rather, the point is to say “Yes,” when we really mean “Yes,” and “No,” when we mean “No.” Stick to your word!

Also, there was a custom in those days to use many of words in order to strengthen one’s credibility. That is a problem that many parents have too. They use a lot of words in order to confirm their credibility or trustworthiness. They feel it is not enough simply to say “Yes,” or “No.” It has to be repeated over and over. For instance, parents say,

“Do that. Do it now. I said, Do it now, before!”

Or,

“I told you not to do that. How often do I have to tell you not to do that? I’ve had to tell you a thousand times not to do it!”

That’s more than a “Yes,” or a “No,” isn’t it? The “Yes” is no longer a “Yes,” and the “No,” is no longer a “No.” It is an inflation of words. And that is the reason children don’t listen. It is because the “Yes” is not really a “Yes,” and the “No” is not a “No.”

As we said, it was the custom back then to use a lot of words to reaffirm a person’s credibility. It was referred to as swearing, or taking an oath. We are familiar with these phrases today as well. We are speaking here of swearing in a figurative sense. Parents often swear, or give oaths, in a figurative way. It happens frequently. They try to achieve with words what they cannot achieve otherwise. That is swearing. It is using many words. And Jesus

said not to do that. Instead, He said to let our “Yes” just be “Yes,” and our “No” be “No.” That’s enough.

The same is true with self-education. If we want to educate ourselves, then it is important for us to stick to what we say. How often have we heard people make a promise but not keep it! The Bible says it is better not to make a vow, than to make a vow but not keep it. It is much better to say nothing, rather than to say “Yes,” but not follow through.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Let’s read a parable about this, which is the story of the two sons.

Matthew 21

²⁸ But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go, work today in my vineyard.

²⁹ He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he regretted it and went.

³⁰ Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, but he did not go.

³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, The first. Jesus said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

Jesus wasn’t saying that it’s good to say “No.” Instead, He was saying that the decisive point is what we do. In other words, our actions have to show the importance of sticking to what we say. The first son was sorry and regretted his decision. In other words, he was converted—he turned around. But the decisive point is what he did. The son who said, “I go,” but did not go, was the one who lost out. It is all about doing what we say.

God is our example. And we can see that He absolutely holds to His word. When we, as parents, need encouragement for educating our children in obedience, then we must look to God. If we can truly keep our word, then our children will also be obedient. That will be the case. The only reason they are educated to disobedience is because our word doesn’t count.

Let’s look at God’s example in several texts now.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or *shadow* of turning.

The German *Luther* translation does not include the word “shadow.” But we want to emphasize this word. There is no shadow of turning. This means that there is not even a hint of turning or change—

James 1 [NET]

¹⁷ ...there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.

God stays on course so completely that there is not even a faint shadow of change. Not the least hint. It is 100% clear. Another German translation uses the word “trace.” There is not even a trace of change. That is how God is.

BALAAM

One biblical example stands out in this connection. That is the story of Balaam. The prophet Balaam wanted to curse Israel. He was being paid to do so by the enemy king, Balak. And so it was Balaam’s aim. Balaam was a prophet and he could speak curses. He was getting paid to do that, after all. But could he do that in this case? Let’s read about it to find the answer. The context of these verses is that Balaam went up to the top of a mountain in order to curse Israel. King Balak was standing next to him, anxiously awaiting the curse. He believed that once the curse was spoken, the Israelites would indeed be cursed. One might think that Balaam would be wise to speak a random curse against Israel and be done with the issue. But no, it didn’t work. He had to say what he did.

Numbers 23

¹⁸ Then he took up his oracle and said: Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor!

Balaam was telling the king to listen to him.

Numbers 23

¹⁹ God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

In other words,

“You can try as much as you like, but you won’t twist God’s arm to change Him. Do what you like. Jump up and down, go here or there. It won’t do you any good. Absolutely none! God is not a man. There is not even the slightest hint of changing with Him.”

There are many Bible texts which show that God’s word stands. When God says “Yes,” then He means “Yes.” When He says “No,” then He means “No.”

Isaiah 31

² Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster, and will not call back His words, but will arise against the house of evildoers, and against the help of those who work iniquity.

We could read many texts which tell that God’s word is reliable. If that were not the case, then His promises would not have power. The reason we can rely so much upon His promises is because God keeps His word so reliably. There need be no doubt—not even the faintest shadow of doubt. He keeps His word. What God promises, He will do.

How can we, as parents, keep our word just as reliably as God, without dominating our children? In other words, is it possible for us never to need to revise what we say? Of course, we have to revise our words! It would really be a problem if we were so firm that we’d never revise or correct our own words.

CONDITIONAL PROMISES

Let’s read one more text about God’s firmness.

1 Samuel 15

²⁸ So Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is

better than you.

²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.



The judgment was firm. Saul begged and begged for a change in the following verses. Samuel had planned to bring a sacrifice to offer. But Saul was impatient and didn't wait, so he brought one himself. When Samuel came, Saul tried to hide what he'd done. Samuel clearly rebuked Saul and told him that the kingdom would be taken from him. Then Saul started to argue, just as children often do. But Samuel said very plainly that God doesn't change His position. What He said would stand. It was very clear. That's how it would be: full stop.

In the following verses, Saul repents and confesses. He was scared of losing what he loved so much. But God didn't change His position. Later on, though, we read the following.

1 Samuel 15

³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.

³⁵ And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

What? We just read that the Lord doesn't relent or regret. He's not like man. His word stands. Yet here we read that the Lord regretted something. It seems like a contradiction. But it's not a contradiction when we understand the true meaning. In order to understand it, let's read another text about the repentance of God.

Genesis 6

⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

⁶ And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

⁷ So the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.

⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

This text also speaks of regret, or repentance. What does repentance mean? When we speak of it in reference to people, we are speaking of conversion. It is a genuine sorrow about a wrong way that we have gone, and a turning from that way. Does God have wrong ways of which He has to repent? Of course not! Therefore, repentance must mean something different when referring to God. That is truly the case, and it is very well described in the following paragraph.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 630:

God's repentance is not like man's repentance.

1 Samuel 15

²⁹ The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent.

Man's repentance implies a change of mind. God's repentance implies a change of circumstances and relations. Man may change his relation to God by complying with the conditions upon which he may be brought into the divine favor, or he may, by his own action, place himself outside the favoring condition; but the Lord is the same "yesterday, and today, and forever." *Hebrews* 13:8. Saul's disobedience changed his relation to God; but the conditions of acceptance with God were unaltered—God's requirements were still the same, for with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

This describes the repentance of God very well. It means a change of circumstances, not a change of God's mind or attitude. The change of circumstances can also be a change of relations.

When circumstances change, we, as parents, must also realize that what we said no longer applies. In other words, God's prediction and prophecies are dependent on conditions. It is also important for us to understand that our words to our children are also dependent on conditions. We can't make a promise and go through with it, when the conditions are not fulfilled, just because we have promised. Every promise is connected with conditions. We must understand this, and so must our children. When the circumstances change, then we must also change accordingly.

Of course, other circumstances may change. It may not be a matter of the children not fulfilling the conditions. For example, maybe we have promised to take a trip, but a critical circumstance comes up. We may want to travel, but we are no longer able to. The circumstances have changed. And children will be able to understand that if we communicate it to them, making it clear that it is not merely a change of our mood. The circumstances have actually changed.

And on the other hand, we may tell a child that they are not allowed to do something. We should stick to that word. But when the limiting conditions change, and the child would be able to do it, then we can tell them that they are now allowed to do so, because the conditions have changed. It is the worst thing possible

for us to insist on keeping to what we have said, merely because we have said it.

MISTAKEN COMMANDS

There is a second reason why we may need to change our word. The first reason is if the circumstances have changed. The second reason doesn't happen with God, but it does happen with us, humans. It is when we have made a mistake. God doesn't make mistakes, but we do. It is critical for us, as parents, to understand that we can err. We must not stick to our error just because we want to protect our authority. That is a firmness which dominates and is domineering. We think our word must stand firm. That is domineering.

We can read an example of this, which is actually from the life of Saul again. It seems that Saul was quite a domineering king. We can see this in the following verses. The story is about a wonderful victory won by Saul's son, Jonathan. The Philistines were conquered and everyone was rejoicing about it. But before the victory, Saul had made a command that no one was allowed to eat anything until the Philistines were conquered. Jonathan hadn't heard about the command, though, and he ate a little honey to give himself strength for the battle. Later, Saul found out that Jonathan had eaten honey against the king's command. Saul's answer was that Jonathan must die.

1 Samuel 14

⁴⁴ Saul answered, God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan.

Saul's own word was more important to him than the life of his son. In fact, it was his own pride that was more important to him. It was stubbornness and an inability to admit that he had made a mistake. That is a real problem with people—to admit that we are wrong, or that we've made a mistake. That is the case in relation to children, to other people, and to ourselves. But admitting our mistakes is our only hope for having a government which is really good.

Again, I want to emphasize that it is possible for us to try to educate our children by always keeping our word. But if we can't admit that we can err, and if our pride forbids us from ever changing our word, then we will be educating our children to obey only slavishly. They may obey in the sense of doing what we say, but they will not be truly free. They won't be free to do what's right because it is right. That will always be a difficulty for them. Let's read a paragraph about this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 624:

During the day's battle Jonathan, who had not heard of the king's command, unwittingly offended by eating a little honey as he passed through a wood. Saul learned of this at evening. He had declared that the violation of his edict should be punished with death; and though Jonathan had not been guilty of a willful sin, though God had miraculously preserved his life and had wrought deliverance through him, the king declared that the sentence must be executed. To spare the life of his son would have been an acknowledgment on the part of Saul that he had sinned in making so rash a vow. This would have been humiliating to his pride. "God do so, and more also," was his terrible sentence: "you shall surely die, Jonathan."

We can see here very plainly that it was about pride. Saul didn't have the desire to do what was right for his son and the people. Firmness is important. But it should not be dominance. Those are two completely different attributes. Yet they are so often confused.

When we understand that we must admit our mistakes and errors, it is also important for us to communicate that with the children. We need to say that we have made a mistake. Yet one matter remains the same. Our word stands and counts, if it rests on the word of God. A word stands if it fulfills that condition. That is to say, we place the word of God above our own word. God's word is more important. That is what is decisive.

Words and Actions

Let's come back to the point of using too many words. We know that we learn from experience much more than by words that we hear or speak. This sermon, for example, is a speech. You can hear or read it and agree with it at the end. Yet you will not have learned anything yet. Nothing at all. You will only learn it when you apply it. This must be clear. What we have in our brains is not really in us yet. It's only really in us when it is in our hands. What we do is really in us.

Children learn what they experience themselves. They don't learn the things that are merely preached to them. If we want children to do what's right because it is right, we must also allow them to either enjoy or suffer the fruits of their actions, depending on if their actions are positive or negative. When we give them a free choice and decision, we must also leave it with them. But parents often have a problem with this.

We can illustrate it with an example. Just imagine that a mother and daughter go shopping for a new outfit. The child is told that she can choose her new clothing. She picks out garments which are very unbecoming for her. The mother tells her to look for something else. But the daughter really wants the outfit she has picked out. After much discussion, the mother tells her daughter that the purchase would just be wasted and she chooses another outfit to buy.

Has this happened to any of you? The mother knows that the outfit will eventually go to waste because it doesn't suit her daughter. She knows her child better than the girl knows herself. The mother already knows what will happen and is trying to protect her daughter from the consequences. But that is a word which doesn't count. She had said that her daughter could choose the outfit. Yet her word didn't stand.

Before we say something, we must consider whether we really mean it. Do we really mean what we're going to say? When par-

ents say something, they must consider it well. Can our words be carried through to the end?

Children learn from experience. If the clothing really wasn't a good choice, the daughter would have learned by experience. Next time, she would choose something different. But parents often don't let it come to that point. They want to control everything for their children until they reach adulthood.

It is very important to stick to what we say—whether we have allowed or not allowed something. Our words and actions belong together. Let's read another text about this.

James 1

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

²⁴ For he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

We hear everything and say “Yes” to it. Then we don't do it, and don't apply it. We forget it again. That is like a person who looks in the mirror, but then forgets what they look like. How often this happens! How many principles we have studied without applying them in our lives! We forget them again. This is the reason why the seed which is sown doesn't sprout or bring forth fruit. One seed of grain can produce about 100 seeds at harvest. That is the harvest which God has promised, if we fulfill the conditions—not merely by hearing, but also by putting into practice. We can read this principle in the story of the two sons too.

For this reason, Jesus sent out the disciples and let them have their own experiences. He sent out the twelve disciples and then the seventy later on. They had all kinds of experiences—both happy and sad. They experienced difficulties as well. Jesus could have explained everything theoretically. He could have told them what would happen, step by step. He could have told them to follow Him and just observe, in order to grasp everything. But no, He sent them out so that they could learn by doing it themselves; that was much more effective than teaching only through words.

The Sermon on the Mount was a preparation for their going out. But actually, going out was more important than the sermon that Jesus gave them.

After their missionary tour, the disciples returned and told Jesus everything they had experienced. He worked through it all with them, which was also important. We must understand that speaking is not as important as doing. And when we say something without doing it, then it is really bad.

We can let children experience many things. For instance, if the child really wants a piece of clothing that doesn't suit them very well, it can be a valuable experience. We can enter it into our journal as being valuable, even if it was a mistake.

But there are other experiences which we cannot call valuable. For example, if a child puts themselves in danger by running into the street, of course we must hold them back. Another example is that of getting sun-burnt, which can easily happen in the warmer months—especially if we have fair skin. Our skin never forgets a sunburn, even to the end of our lives. Every sunburn adds to the skin damage, and increases the risk of skin cancer. Our immune systems weaken when we are older and that is when cancers can appear. There are many people with skin cancer today! People think that it's nice to get a tan, especially if they are fair skinned, but it is not good; it is actually a serious danger. And our very young children, who know nothing of the dangers of sunburn, will not understand if we tell them not to go out in the sun without skin protection. They can't understand our warnings, because they have never experienced the results. So, should we just let them experience it? Should we let them experience the sunburn, the itching, and the peeling? It will last a few days and then they will listen to us the second time. But later, when they are older and suffering from skin cancer, they will wonder why their parents didn't stop them.

What should we do then? We must follow through with our command for them not to go out in the sun. We must allow logi-

cal consequences. If the child doesn't listen and won't put on a hat, for instance, then they have to stay inside; they can't deal with the situation yet. And there must be some consequence which will protect them from greater harm. It is most important that the word stands.

When our children are older, we are able to give the decision to them and let them choose whether to take our counsel or not. When they are older, they can understand. For instance, they can understand what skin cancer is. Then we can let them make their own decision. But when the child is young and doesn't even know what sunburn is, then we must do something in such a situation. These were the points I wanted to mention about saying and doing.

Saying "No" for the Child's Sake

At the close of our study I'd like to discuss one other point. Why is it so important for a "No" to remain a "No"? It is not easy to say "No." It is much easier to be able to say "Yes." For example, if our child wants to go out and we are able to say "Yes," then it makes the child very happy. We are also happy because it's nice outside and they will be able to play. We are both happy. But when we tell them "No," for whatever reason, it is difficult for us to say. It is even harder if the child begs and whines and complains, pushing on the pity buttons. It's very hard for us to say "No" then. But it is important for us to stick with that decision—*for the child's sake*. It is so difficult for some parents that they ultimately don't stick to their word. Their "No" is not a "No," and their "Yes" is not a "Yes."

We read a text from *Galatians* last week. We focused on the last part of the verse, but today we will look at the first part of it.

Galatians 6

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked.

In other words, we can't play with God. We can't act as if we could twist God's arm, thinking that we'll finally get Him to do what we want.

As a child, I somehow had the idea that I would eventually get whatever I wanted. I don't know why that was. Maybe it was because I didn't mind giving up my way, or maybe it was because my parents gave in to my wishes. I'm not sure exactly. But in any case, I had a very optimistic outlook, thinking that my parents would always do what I wanted. I always achieved what I wanted. Even if it took a while, I'd achieve it.

But God is not mocked. We can't manipulate Him. You can try to twist His arm as much as you like, but it will not work. He sticks to His word. His "Yes" is a real "Yes," and His "No" is a "No." That is very good for us.

If we consider the story of creation, we would see that God stuck to His word there as well. He said that man must die if they ate the forbidden fruit. We don't know what kind of a fruit it was. But it wasn't poisonous. It might even be a fruit that we have today—we don't know. The point is that the fruit was not the problem. Rather, it was the fact that God had told Adam and Eve not to go to the Tree of Knowledge. That was the place where the tempter was. That was where Satan tried to get man on his side. God told man not to go there. But when Eve went where God had explicitly told them not to go, mankind had to bear the consequences. There was no way around it, no matter how much they begged and pleaded. It was impossible. Humans would bear children in pain, and till the field with sweat, until they'd eventually die. They no longer had access to the tree of life, which was guarded by the cherubim. Begging and pleading would not make any difference.

God made the decision to let mankind bear the consequences, not because He wanted to be right, personally. Instead, He allowed it because it was best for humans, themselves. That was the only reason. It was love for us that made God say "No." We must understand that we should not say "No" for our own sake. Saul made decisions for his own sake, such as the command that no one was to eat anything before fighting the Philistines. Such an

unreasonable vow rested alone on his authority, and alone on the fact that he wanted to rule and dominate. We should never say “No,” just because we want to be right. We should only do so when it is best for the child, and best for the other person.

Let’s read one more verse about this.

Proverbs 3

¹¹ My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction;

¹² For whom the Lord loves He corrects.

It must be from love, not rulership. Love means selflessness. It means that we don’t think about ourselves, but that we think of others. Love means that we really understand what is best for the other person, not just looking for our own good. The reason we don’t have obedient children, is either because our word doesn’t count, or because our words come from a spirit of rulership instead of that of a loving father.

¹² Whom the Lord loves He corrects.

Our children will understand this when we do it, and when it is in our hearts. They will understand it. Then obedience will not be something unpleasant. Rather, they will think,

“My father loves me. That’s why he says this to me.”

The same principle which is spoken of as applying to God, also applies to earthly parents in the following verse:

Proverbs 13

²⁴ He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

So today we looked at the principle that it is important to be firm, without being dominating.

8. Respect

Sabbath, March 3, 2018

THIS study is primarily directed to parents, in order to help them educate their children. But it is also for children, so that they can know how to be educated. After all, we are all children. And so, it is really directed to everyone, in general. The way we deal with children is how we deal with each other. There is essentially no difference. For that reason, this study is for all of us. When we speak about the education of children, you need to understand that this is also transferable to our daily actions.

A scripture that often comes to mind when we think of child education, is one that tends to make parents feel proud.

Psalm 127

³ Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.

⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

That is quite a statement. Do you like this promise? Children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward, like arrows in the hand of a warrior. We see ourselves as the warrior and the arrows are what we can really hit our enemies with to make them quiet. Parents may think,

“We are alone in the world because of our faith. Everyone is against us. But we will show them that our family works and is different.”

They think that it will be an argument which no one can gain-say—like arrows. If we see children in this light, then they are simply tools to give the parents prestige. Parents want this fame, or recognition from the world, and it is embarrassing when their children don't quite live up to that. When there is conflict, or strife, we try to hide or ignore the problem, so that the world

won't know. We want our children to be arrows in our full quiver. The more arrows we have, the better it is, because we can hit our enemies more. That is one way to view children. It is a very self-ish approach. It makes children into a tool for our own recognition.

We really need to think about where we still have this attitude. It is very easy to think in such a way. It causes us to correct the child constantly, because it is important that they do not do anything wrong. They must be arrows, after all. We don't allow the children to have their own experience. They must do exactly what we tell them. We give them the impression that they can't do anything by themselves—that they can do only what we tell them, because they are stupid and incapable on their own. Maybe we don't actually think this way, but that is the impression given to the children. In some cases, we lose our patience and even make fun of the weaknesses of the child.

A story is told of one child who was always very good at school. He had top grades, played the piano perfectly, and excelled in sports. He was top notch in every respect. Yet he chewed his finger nails, had nightmares, and other problems. So what was the issue? It was that the parents always expected the child to be top in everything. This boy did not want to disappoint his parents, but he felt unhappy with such pressure. That resulted in bad dreams and various other problems. The parents essentially told the child,

“You are responsible for our prestige. When you are good, we are good. Then we can show the world what a good family we are.”

That was at the root of the problem.

Our subject today is respect. We are looking at respect for the child. This means, first of all, that we accept the child as an equal human being. Do we consider our children as equals to ourselves? That means to accept the children as they are. It also means to be-

lieve in the abilities of each child—that they are able. And it means that the child can make their own choices. This is one of the most fundamental principles of the gospel—that we are capable and that God lets us make our own choices.

But if the children are merely a means for gaining prestige, then there is not much room for choice, because then the prestige of the parents would be gone. We read that children are a heritage from the Lord. It is interesting that they belong to the Lord and are given to us only on loan. That is something which parents often overlook. They just see the arrows in their quiver, and they want to shoot. This is a real problem.

Respect to the child can be expressed—we can find it in the Bible. Does the Bible speak about children being respected as equal human beings? Certainly!

Mark 10

¹³ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

¹⁶ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

It's interesting how Jesus showed affection. He took the little ones in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. We find such close affection in Jesus, the great Teacher. Where do we read that children need to be respected? It's quite obvious.

“Let them come—let them—let the little children come to me.”

In other words,

“They want to come, so let them. Respect their desire to come to me.”

Jesus tells the parents,

“Your children can have a personal relationship with me and you are to respect that.”

We’ll read a few paragraphs about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 512:

Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. . . . Even the babe in its mother’s arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments.

The Holy Spirit is molding them. He is working on them. And when the Holy Spirit is doing a work for them, they need to be respected. It is also a matter of respect towards this work of God.

The Desire of Ages, p. 515:

Fathers and mothers should look upon their children as younger members of the Lord’s family, committed to them to educate for heaven. The lessons that we ourselves learn from Christ we should give to our children, as the young minds can receive them, little by little opening to them the beauty of the principles of heaven. Thus the Christian home becomes a school, where the parents serve as under teachers, while Christ himself is the chief instructor.

There is a very important statement in this quotation. It says that children are members of the Lord’s family—even though they are younger. They are still members. There’s no hierarchy in the church, with different classes of people. No, we are all members of the Lord’s family. Children are our equals, as human beings. As such, they need to be respected.

Jesus was the pattern for children, and He was also the father’s example. He spoke as one having authority and His word was with power; yet in all His intercourse with rude and violent men

He did not use one unkind or discourteous expression. The grace of Christ in the heart will impart a heaven-born dignity and sense of propriety. It will soften whatever is harsh, and subdue all that is coarse and unkind. It will lead fathers and mothers to treat their children as intelligent beings, as they themselves would like to be treated.

We are to treat children as intelligent beings; not as little dummies who don't know much. We are to treat them as intelligent beings. In other words, we are to treat them as we ourselves would like to be treated. When I look at how parents often treat children, I often wonder what it would be like if the roles were reversed. But the above statement clearly says to treat them as intelligent beings, as we would like to be treated.

This paragraph also speaks of kindness. Some children seem to be a little bit more difficult to educate than others—especially when mistakes were made in their earlier life. How should parents deal with those mistakes? There is never an excuse for unkindness.

The Desire of Ages, p. 515:

...He did not use one unkind or discourteous expression.

Where do the children get their unkind and discourteous expressions from? It is from the parents.

...He did not use one unkind word or discourteous expression.

The disciples were known for their language. Where did they get that from? It was from Jesus.

The grace of Christ in the heart will impart a heaven-born dignity and sense of propriety.

This speaks of respect.

“Let the little children come to me. Respect them.”

This is what Jesus urges us.

The Desire of Ages, p. 516:

Teach the children to see Christ in nature, take them out into the open air, under the noble trees, into the garden; and in all the wonderful works of creation teach them to see an expression of His love. Teach them that He made the laws which govern all living things, that He has made laws for us, and that these laws are for our happiness and joy. Do not weary them with long prayers and tedious exhortations, but through nature's object lessons teach them obedience to the law of God.

To weary them with long prayers and tedious exhortations is disrespectful to them. It is as though we assume they don't understand anything, so we must tell them. They are much cleverer than we think. They are intelligent beings. Don't weary them with long prayers and tedious exhortations. But don't make it brief just because you think they have no interest in spiritual things. They do have an interest. To make it long-winded means that you think they need it. But they don't need so many words. They are intelligent human beings.

The Desire of Ages, p. 517:

When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages,—to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, suffer them to come; as if He would say, they will come if you do not hinder them.

They will come if you do not hinder them. In other words, respect their choice.

Let not your un-Christlike character misrepresent Jesus. Do not keep the little ones away from Him by your coldness and harshness. Never give them cause to feel that heaven will not be a pleasant place to them if you are there. Do not speak of religion as something that children cannot understand, or act as if they were not expected to accept Christ in their childhood. Do not give them the false impression that the religion of Christ is a religion of gloom, and that in coming to the Saviour they must give up all that makes life joyful.

We practice adult baptism. We want people to make an intelligent decision. But this doesn't mean that children cannot understand. They do understand—even from their earliest moments, as we read before.

The Desire of Ages, p. 517:

As the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the children, cooperate with His work. Teach them that the Saviour is calling them, that nothing can give Him greater joy than for them to give themselves to Him in the bloom and freshness of their years.

I will let you read the rest of this chapter for yourselves. Every paragraph here tells us to respect the children. Respect, respect, respect. The whole message of chapter 56 is respect—respect in your language, respect in your behavior, and respect in your attitude towards children. You can see this in the words of Jesus too.

Five Aspects of Respect

Now we will consider five principles, or aspects, of respect.

1. LISTEN TO THE CHILD

The first principle is to listen to the child. Do we need to listen to a child? Certainly! A child sometimes sees situations more clearly than we can. But we don't realize this, and therefore we don't listen. We don't listen when the child has a need either. We simply don't listen.

A story is told about a child who asked,

“Where do I come from?”

The parents began to talk about the birds and the bees. After a long explanation, the child said,

“I know all that. But I want to know where I come from, not where the birds and the bees come from.”

So the parents began explaining where babies come from. The child interrupted, saying in an exasperated voice,

“That’s not what I want to know! One of my friends comes from Auckland and my other friend comes from Sydney. Where do I come from?”

This story shows that parents are simply preoccupied by their own thoughts. They don’t listen to what the child wants to say. It is a real problem. So we must listen to the children. Let’s read an interesting Bible text now, which speaks about the book of *Revelation*.

Revelation 3

¹ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

John was commanded to write this book. It was sent to the seven churches in Asia Minor. It was given to the elders, who in turn read it to their churches, and the churches listened.

“Blessed is he who reads this book. And blessed is he who hears—who listens.”

“Listen” is the meaning of the word “hear” in the original text. Blessed is he who listens to the words of this prophecy. To listen is an ability that we often do not have. That is because we have so much to tell, or because we think we know so much—especially in relation to children. The problem is that we talk and talk, but don’t actually listen. We don’t understand what the child really wants, because we are too busy talking. We don’t get their message. That is the problem.

Let’s consider a story about Jesus and His relationship with His parents.

Luke 2

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

⁴⁶ Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, Son, why have You done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously.

⁴⁹ And He said to them, Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?

⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Why didn't they understand? It was because they did not listen. They were full of their own words. They found Jesus, but they were full of their own words. They questioned him and scolded Him, instead of listening. That was the time for them to listen. Had they listened to Jesus from the beginning, they would have known where He was and they would not have been amazed. Jesus said,

“Why are you amazed? Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business? You should know.”

He certainly would have spoken with them about it before then. But they didn't listen. He definitely would have given them messages which would have made it clear where He was. But they would not listen. That problem didn't happen only with Jesus. It happens in our lives as well. Respect towards the child means to listen. That is a very important principle.

2. LET THE CHILDREN SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

The second principle of respect is to let children speak for themselves. Why is it so important to emphasize this? I'll tell a story to illustrate the point. Imagine a nine-year-old girl goes to the doctor with her mother. The doctor asks the girl,

“How are you?”

The mother answers,

“My daughter has a tummy ache.”

The doctor asks the girl,

“Where is your tummy ache?”

And the mother says,

“Up here,”

—pointing to the abdomen. The doctor asks,

“Is it burning or stinging? What does it feel like?”

The mother replies,

“It burns. It burns and she feels sick.”

The doctor then asks,

“Does your mother always speak for you?”

The mother smiles and says,

“That’s what her sister always does. It drives me crazy when her sister always speaks for her.”

The child has developed a habit, and is in a rut. She never speaks for herself, because it’s become more comfortable for others to speak for her. The same situation can happen between husbands and wives, too. It can happen between siblings, as well. And it happens especially between parents and children. There is a temptation to step in immediately and take over. But in doing

that we are inadvertently saying that the children cannot speak for themselves. That is a lack of respect. It is a lack of respect to speak for the child, even if you don't mean it like that. We'll read a Bible example which explains this.

Mark 9

³⁸ Now John answered Him, saying, Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.

The disciples told the man that he was working in the wrong way and that he should stop. They wanted him to ask permission first. Yet they were not sure if they were right in that. So they asked Jesus whether they had acted correctly.

³⁹ But Jesus said, Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterward speak evil of me.

⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side.

⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

In other words,

“Let him do it.”

It's the same principle as when Jesus said,

“Let the children come unto me.”

The man was like a child.

“Let him come to me.”

That is what Jesus speaks about later in this parable.

⁴² But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble [and this man was a “little one”], it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

Jesus clearly gives a warning to those who seem to be more experienced or knowledgeable, such as parents, who use their greater knowledge and experience with disrespect towards the children. He plainly says,

“Don’t do it. If they preach in my name and cast out devils in my name, let them do it. Let the children come, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Let the children act for themselves.”

It is not easy to be quiet and let others speak when we think we know better. I was once brought to court on false charges. Someone spoke in my defense. They were asked at what time a certain event happened, but they couldn’t remember. I was somewhat restless, wanting to answer for the witness. I had to bite my tongue, because that would have been very inappropriate. Ultimately, the judge accepted the witnesses testimony and the charges were dropped. But can you imagine what a temptation it was to speak?

Sometimes, we want to speak because we know the answer, but we need to let the child speak for themselves. When a child goes to the doctor with their mother, the mother thinks she knows how to speak better to the doctor about the child’s disease. But the child must be allowed to speak for themselves. That is critical. Otherwise the child will become dependent on the person who speaks for them. Respect for the ability of the child to speak for themselves is very important.

3. NEVER DO FOR THE CHILD WHAT THE CHILD CAN DO FOR ITSELF

Let’s come to the third principle now. Never do for the child what the child can do for himself. It’s a very important principle—one which I want to illustrate by my experience with a patient. I have had to learn a lot when treating patients. I tend to help patients when it is not appropriate. For instance, during my first hospital internship, I was doing the rounds with the doctor, when he dropped something small. A patient was standing right there and the object fell close to them. It seemed to me that the patient was in pain and would not want to bend down to pick it up. So I

quickly picked it up and gave it back to the doctor. He didn't say anything then, but later he told me that I should not have done that. He had dropped the object on purpose, in order to assess the patient's ability. I was surprised because I thought I was just being courteous. Patients often want to do something for themselves, even though they may be a bit slower than others. If we do it for them, we take away the opportunity for them to do it for themselves. That is not good.

Respect for a child means to let them do things for themselves. Children are slower than we are, especially at the beginning. For example, it may take them longer to button their jacket. But if we are in a hurry and always do it for them, then it becomes a habit. They won't be able to button their own jackets for a long time, because we always do it for them. The same is true with other tasks, such as tying shoes and so on. It is important to let the child do for themselves whatever they can. That is respect. Doing it for the child is disrespectful.

Let's turn again to a Bible scripture that explains this.

Matthew 17

²⁴ When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?

²⁵ He said, Yes. And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?

²⁶ Peter said to Him, From strangers. Jesus said to him, Then the sons are free.

²⁷ Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for me and you.

The temple tax was a religious offering given to the temple in those days. Everyone was required to give a certain amount of temple tax. This amount was given by everyone, except those

who served in the temple, who were the Levites and the priests. And Jesus came to earth as a Priest. The Jews wanted to set a trap for Jesus by asking Peter this question. If Jesus had said He didn't pay the tax because He was a Teacher, they would have accused Him of breaking the law. If He had said He would pay the tax, they would have claimed that He must not be a teacher. Peter did not understand the issue. He was just zealous for his Lord and zealous for the temple tax. So when the question was asked, he immediately said,

“Of course our Master pays the temple tax,”

–not even realizing the problem he had made for himself.

Sometimes our children make decisions which are not good for either them or us. What do we do then? First of all, we rebuke the child for having acted so foolishly. Secondly, we bring the situation into order again. But this is a problem. Parents always want to bring things into order for the child. It is so important that the child has an opportunity to bring the situation into order on their own. In this text, we see that Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to bring the situation into order on his own, instead of regulating it for him. He made Peter a part of the solution to the problem that he had created. But Jesus didn't just say,

“Now it's your problem. You said that we pay the temple tax, so now you have to figure out where to get the tax from. You won't get it from me because I am not involved in the situation. I'm not the one who made the mistake.”

He did not act in either of the wrong ways. Instead, He gave Peter the money in a miraculous way, telling him to pay it for both of them. In other words, Jesus told Peter,

“We are in the same boat. your mistake is my mistake. Your blame is my blame. If they blame you, they blame me. If they blame me, they blame you. No matter what, we carry the burden together. And you are a teacher as well.”

Jesus wanted to help Peter.

The question is, do we really respect our children when they make mistakes? Do we still respect them when they act foolishly? Or do we take the situation into our own hands and arrange everything for them, because they are so incapable and foolish? Do we think we must do everything for them? That is disrespectful. It is a superior view of my capabilities, in comparison with those of the child. It is self-confidence and feeling superior—a superiority complex. It is disrespectful.

Matthew 17

²⁵ What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?

Jesus dealt with the situation so tenderly and respectfully. He did not even mention the mistake. He simply told a story through which Peter understood for himself. Such encouragements for children to do things for themselves will also create respect and self-respect. Self-respect leads the child to have a much firmer stand in the truth. The reason why children don't have a firm stand in the truth is because they have so little self-respect. So let the child do for themselves what they can.

4. LET THE CHILD CHOOSE

The next principle is to let the child make their own decisions. We are not speaking of small decisions, such as which flavor of ice cream they want, or what food they will eat. Those are not big decisions. We are talking here about real life decisions—for instance, whether they want to be obedient or not. That is a decision the child can make, and you can challenge them to make it.

Let's read an example from the Old Testament, when Joshua asked the people to make a decision.

Joshua 24

¹⁴ Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!

¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Make a choice. He didn’t say,

“Make a choice, but I have nothing to do with it.”

Instead, he very clearly said,

Joshua 24

¹⁵ ...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

In other words, he went ahead with a good example. He went ahead with enthusiasm. He went ahead saying,

“Look, this is my choice. Do you want it too?”

That enthusiasm—that clear stand—of Joshua himself, infected others to make the same decision. It was contagious. It filled the others with the same enthusiasm, which is what they expressed.

¹⁶ Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.

Joshua could have simply said,

“Decide what you want.”

Sometimes, if we don’t want to make a decision, we will tell others to make it instead. For example, if I don’t know which treatment to give a patient, I could simply ask them which one they want. That’s a hard decision for the patient to make. It’s also a hard decision for children to make. But, if I clearly state,

“This is the way I will go,”

—or,

“This is my experience with the treatment,”

—then the patient will say,

“I want it too.”

This is obvious.

Joshua 24

¹⁵ ...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Setting an example is so important. But respect for the child means that we will let them make their own decisions, and we will also respect the decision they make—even if we don’t like it. It must be a real decision.

5. DON'T MEDDLE IN A CONFLICT

The fifth and final principle of respect is, don’t meddle in a conflict between others. What does this mean? And why is it respectful not to meddle in a conflict between others?

Let’s use an example of a mother and daughter. Imagine that the girl comes home and sees a dessert—a pudding—cooling on the windowsill. The child puts her finger into the pudding to try it, then repeats her taste test. The mother sees it and stops her, saying that she will not get dessert that day because she should not have stuck her finger in the pudding. After dinner, everyone is given dessert, except the daughter. She begins to complain. The mother replies that she won’t get dessert because she tried it without permission. The girl continues to fuss, but her mother is firm. Then the father says,

“Oh, the poor child. Give her a little dessert.”

Mother repeats her answer, but the father tells her not to be so strict, excusing the girl’s behavior. So the mother gives in and the girl gets some dessert.

What do you think about this story? It was not very consistent was it? The daughter got what she wanted and the mother’s word did not stand. What will happen in the future? The mother’s word

will not mean much. That will educate the child to disobedience. We made this point last week.

Where was the meddling in the conflict of others? The conflict was between the mother and the child. Who meddled or interfered? The father did. He should have stayed out of it. He should have said,

“That’s not my conflict. It’s between you and your mother and I will respect it. You work it out between yourselves.”

In fact, he should even have supported the mother in her decision.

Sometimes children come home from school, complaining that their teachers are being mean to them for one reason or another. What do the parents do then? They make sure that the teacher deals with their children differently in the future. That is meddling in the conflicts between others. The child may have an issue with another child. They might say that they are being bullied. What do the parents do then? They go and speak with the other child’s parents, so it doesn’t happen again.

In these three cases, I’ve explained situations in which a parent might meddle, or interfere, in the conflicts between others. Why is this disrespectful? It is disrespectful towards the child, even though it doesn’t seem so at first. In reality, though, it does not respect the ability of the child to deal with the problem by themselves. If they have a difficulty with another child, they can deal with it. All we need to do is to strengthen them to handle it. That is our job as the adult. But to take over, trying to control and solve the problem, is actually to disrespect the child’s ability to deal with the situation. Doing that will naturally cause the child to become incapable, because their parents will have controlled everything for them. They will not be able to deal with problems in the future.

Sometimes I wonder why I find it difficult to do certain things, when I don’t see that I was disrespected in the way we’ve just de-

scribed. So let's look at another example—one which I can identify with more. Imagine there was a little girl who needed to call a teacher to get help. She asked her mother to do it for her. But the mother said that the daughter could do it herself. The girl asked again, saying that she didn't know how to use the phone. The mother encouraged her again, adding that she could do it. She handed her daughter a phone-book to look up the number. It took a while for the girl to find the number and make the call. But finally, she had success and was very happy about the good conversation with her teacher. It was a positive experience. That was respect of the girl's ability to do something for herself.

Let's read a story from the Bible to illustrate further the point of meddling in conflicts between others.

Luke 12

¹³ Then one from the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

¹⁴ But He said to him, Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?

¹⁵ And He said to them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.

Then, in order to illustrate his reply to the brother, Jesus told the parable about a man with a full storehouse. The man thought he would have many years to eat, drink, and be merry. But God told him that he was a fool and that his soul would be required of him that very night.²⁵ You know this parable well, so we won't read it now.

What do you think about this story? First of all, the brother in the crowd came to Jesus, requesting that He make a judgment between him and his brother. By asking, he implied that he would accept Christ's verdict and that he believed Jesus to be a just man who would make a fair division of the inheritance. If Jesus had merely been a human being, He would have been flattered by the

²⁵ *Luke 12:16-21.*

request and would have told them how to divide the inheritance. How often do we do this in our lives? But Jesus did not do so. He said,

“No, I’m not your judge or arbitrator. You can do this yourself.”

In other words, Jesus told the man that He trusted his ability to handle the situation himself. This is respect. Not only did Jesus say,

“I trust you to handle the situation yourself,”

–but He also told the brother how he could handle it, by telling him the parable. He was essentially saying,

“Beware of covetousness. If you are free from covetousness, I know you will be able to handle it.”

This is respect. He trusted that the man could do it. Such respect leads to self-respect. Of course, if the man does not want to give up his covetousness, then he wouldn’t be able to deal with it. That is obvious. But if he gives it up, then he will be able to handle it.

Respect children to deal with situations themselves. This is true, for example, when they are in a conflict with another child. You can tell them some principles to help them deal with it. But they must handle it themselves. If, for example, the child thinks a teacher is awful, we can ask how that came about. Maybe the child did something to cause a problem. Or we can simply ask the child to deal with it in a courteous, respectful, friendly manner—just as Jesus was always courteous, respectful, and friendly.

The same is true when there is a conflict between our child and our spouse, either the child’s father or mother. As the partner, we must respect the ability of our partner to deal with it, as well as respecting the ability of our child to deal with it. When you sow respect, you will reap respect. If you sow disrespect, by meddling

or interfering, you will also reap disrespect. That is a principle which we must really understand.

When to Take Action

I would like to clarify one aspect of this principle of respect. There are situations when it is important for adults to take action with children—for example, in the case of abuse. If abuse takes place, it is always good to strengthen the child who is abused, and to encourage them and show them how to deal with abuse in the future. That is always right to do. You need to help the child in order to strengthen them. But at the same time, you have to take measures to protect the child. Children are still weaker and they cannot fight against an adult with evil intentions. You can also encourage the child to speak about it—to make it open. The worst reaction is to tell the child to hide it, to be quiet, to hush up, or not to speak about it, and then just dealing with it in a secretive way to save the family's reputation. That is very disrespectful towards the child. You really need to deal openly and candidly with it and do something about the matter. To respect the child also always means to strengthen them.

Let's summarize these five principles of respect:

1. Respect means to listen to the child.
2. Respect means to let the child speak for themselves.
3. Respect means never to do for the child what they can do for themselves.
4. Respect for the child means to let them make their own decisions.
5. Respect for the child means not to meddle in their conflicts with others, but to let the child deal with it. This will strengthen them for life.

We can also encourage each other as we handle our children. I hope you can transfer these principles to other situations in your life too. When we show respect towards one another in this way, we will really grow in the grace of God.

9. Togetherness

Sabbath, March 10, 2018

I WOULD like to begin by inviting the children to come forward. We will play a game.

[Four children of various ages come to the front. The youngest is only two years old. They stand in a circle around a table. They play a game in which they all stack their hands on top of each other, then the bottom hand must be pulled out and placed back on top. This is repeated at increasing speeds. The older children help the youngest child to play the game.]

Now that we have played the game, what would you say made us faster? Yes, we could pull our hands out faster. But the important point is that we do that at the right moment. If we go too fast and pull our hand out too early, we end up with only confusion. Cooperation is so important. We can see that younger children can play this game as well as the older ones. Now you have a new game to play at home—to learn coordination and cooperation.

This game represents togetherness. It is good to play with our children from time to time, in order to foster togetherness. Children want to belong to the group. They have a desire to belong to the world of adults. That is why it is important for us to emphasize togetherness and learn more about it. When parents tell their children that they are in this together with them, the children will develop a sense of belonging to the team.

Jesus Is One with Us

Let's begin our study of togetherness with a Bible text.

Matthew 8

²³ Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

²⁴ And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

²⁵ Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us! We are perishing!

²⁶ But He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

²⁷ So the men marveled, saying, Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?

We read this story because they were all in a boat together. That is something we need to help our children understand. We are in a boat together. It's not that they are over there and we are here; no, we are in the boat together. We all know the saying,

“We are all in the same boat.”

We must help our children understand that we are in the same boat. Jesus certainly made His disciples understand that they were in the same boat as Him.



When the disciples woke Jesus up, He was not afraid. He also told them that they should not be afraid. Why? Was it because Je-

Jesus was a hero? Was it because Jesus was different? Was it because He was God, not man, and could calm the storm, that they should not be afraid? Let's read a commentary on this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 336:

When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power.

He was not different. He was really in one boat with them—not just physically. He was in the same boat as far as His fate was concerned too. If they drowned, so would He. If they survived, He would survive. They were in the boat together. He was not exempt or different. He didn't say,

“Nothing can happen to me because I'm God.”

No! He had laid that power down.

It was not as the “Master of earth and sea and sky” that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says,

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

Jesus did everything just as the disciples could have, if He were not there in the boat. That makes it clear that, when He was on earth, Jesus was in the same boat as us. He was in the same situation.

The Desire of Ages, p. 336:

As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.

The help He gave them, though, was the same help they could get themselves—namely, the help of the Father. The critical point is that as Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest. That is clear, because He is sitting in the same boat as we are. Similarly, parents—who are so superior to their children in strength—need to realize that they are sitting in the same boat as their children. If their children fail, they fail. If they fail, their children fail. The two cannot be separated.

When God sent Jesus to this earth, He made it very plain that He is sitting in the same boat as we are. Even Christ’s name makes this obvious. Let’s read about it.

Matthew 1

²³ Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.

“God with us”—or, “God in the same boat with us.” That is the meaning. He has bound His fate to ours. Whatever happens to Him, happens to us. Whatever happens to us, happens to Him. It’s not that He stands aloof and has no concern over what happens to us. No! We are in the same boat.

He Took Our Infirmities

Let’s read a text which speaks about the healings which Jesus performed.

Matthew 8

¹⁴ Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever.

¹⁵ So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.

¹⁶ When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed.

¹⁷ And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

What does the last sentence have to do with the first few verses of this text? It seems to be unrelated. We read that He healed the sick and cast out demons so that the prophecy might be fulfilled,

Matthew 8

¹⁷ He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

This text shows how He healed people. It was by coming into the same boat with them. That is how He became our Saviour. It was by getting into the same boat as us. That is the meaning of the text.

¹⁷ He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

This is the way He heals—from spiritual as well as physical disease. It shows how important a spirit of togetherness is between parents and children.

“Our Father”

We can read about this also in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus taught His disciples to pray. The Lord’s Prayer is very well known in Christianity and is often prayed. Here is how it might have been prayed:

Matthew 6

⁹ My Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give *me* this day *my* daily bread.

¹² And forgive *me my* debts, as I forgive *my* debtors.

¹³ And do not lead *me* into temptation, but deliver *me* from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Is that what the text says? No! It actually says,

⁹ *Our* Father in heaven...

What does this indicate? Who is included in “our”? That is a great expression of togetherness. “Our Father” includes those who pray this prayer. Who is that? It is you and I, and also Jesus,

who is in the same boat as us. When Jesus said, “Our Father,” He included himself. If I say to you, “Our Father,” then I am speaking of you and me. Likewise, when Jesus said, “Our Father,” He was referring to those He was speaking to—the disciples and us—as well as himself.

What meaning is included in the phrase, “Our Father”? Even the fact that we can call God “Father” is amazing. This is not found in any other religion. Nowhere else is God presented as a loving Father, as Jesus presented Him. That is unique. It is fantastic. And even more than this, He is *our* Father, together with Jesus.

All of One

In order to understand this point better, let’s read another Bible verse.

Hebrews 2

¹¹ For both He who sanctifies [God, or Jesus] and those who are being sanctified [us] are all of one [in one boat], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

That is the reason why He said, “Our Father.” He is essentially saying,

“I am in the same boat as you are. Therefore, pray to ‘Our Father.’ As I pray, you can pray too.”

When we read Jesus’ High Priestly prayer in *John 17* we can see togetherness again and again. Let’s take a look at that text.

John 17

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also whom You gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which You have given me; for You loved me before the foundation of the world.

He is saying,

“I desire to be in the same boat as they are. I don’t desire to be in a different place from them. I want them to be where I am.”

This is the entire content of this prayer, which was one of the last prayers of Jesus on this earth.

There is, of course, a situation when Jesus cannot say, “Our Father.” That is described in the following verses.

John 8

³⁸ I speak what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.

⁴⁰ But now you seek to kill me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

⁴¹ You do the deeds of your father.

Jesus had to speak of “your father” and “my Father.” There was a difference. He was not in the same boat as they were. Why not? It was because they had a different spirit: they wanted to kill. Jesus was here to save and to give life. He said,

“I cannot be in the same boat with those who want to kill. I cannot participate in that spirit. It’s not possible.”

“My Father and Your Father”

We will read another text where Jesus brings us into unity with himself and where He speaks of togetherness.

John 20

¹⁷ Jesus said to her [Mary], Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

“My Father and your Father.” In other words, they are one and the same. He is my God and your God—He is one and the same God. You are my sister, or my brother. That is unity. That is togetherness, which is what God desires to have with everyone. We are in the same boat together.

“We Have Sinned”

The togetherness which God feels towards us is also something that we should feel towards each other. A good example of this is found in Daniel’s life, although we could look at many examples. Daniel prayed for his people and included himself in his confession of the sins of his fathers.

Daniel 9

³ Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

⁴ And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,

⁵ We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and your judgments.

Daniel described the situation of Israel before they were led into captivity. His thought was,

“There is a good reason why we were led into captivity. It was because we sinned.”

Those events happened when he was only a young child, or even before he was born. Yet he still included himself when he referred to the sins of his fathers. He said,

“We are in the same boat.”

He didn’t point his finger at the sins of his forefathers and praise himself for his own righteousness. He didn’t blame others and claim innocence for himself. No, he actually included himself in it. He said,

“We are in the same boat,”

—even though he had not committed the sins of his ancestors. In that way, he expressed that they were all together in the boat.

Commonality in Crisis

This feeling of togetherness is very well expressed by the early Christian church. We will read about it.

Acts 4

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

³⁵ And laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

There was not anyone who lacked, because they sold everything they had, brought the proceeds and laid them at the apostles' feet. No one said that anything they possessed was their own. Rather, they said,

“It is ours.”

It's like saying, “our Father,” not “my Father.” They had a very strong sense of togetherness.

Wise Leadership Necessary

We must understand that this sense of togetherness which exists does not happen immediately. When new people came into the church—even thousands in a day, as happened back then—we can imagine that many of those people would not have known that kind of spirit. That spirit of togetherness cannot be found in the world. Especially in a world full of capitalism and the maximization of individual profit, such a spirit of togetherness is very strange and quite foreign. It has no place. Generally, the main aim in society is one's own survival.

Imagine new people coming into the church. Suddenly they have a totally different set of values—togetherness. It is obvious

that problems come up in such a case. There must be a way to deal with strange elements that come into the church. How can it be dealt with? Should it just be allowed to run by itself, in the hope that everything will work out and come together again somehow? No, even in the above text we can see a certain order which happened. The people brought their proceeds to the apostles who distributed them to whoever needed them; there was clear and definite leadership in that system. They were in it together, but there was leadership: that was necessary.

If we read on, in the book of *Acts*, we can see how necessary that truly was. The next chapter describes two people, Ananias and Sapphira, who used the system to enrich themselves. That story shows how prone the system is to attack from a different spirit—a selfish spirit. Another problem came up about togetherness, which we'll read in *Acts* 6.

Acts 6

¹ Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

There was togetherness. Everyone brought what they had and gave it to the apostles, who distributed it to whoever needed it. But there were some who felt neglected. The Hellenists and Hebrews were all Jews, but the Hellenists came from abroad, whereas the Hebrews came from Judea. The Jews were dispersed in those days. Those living outside of Judea were called Hellenists, a name which came from the fact that Greek culture was everywhere.

There was distrust between the two groups. The Hellenists thought they were neglected. It was impossible for the twelve apostles to organize it all. There were thousands of people coming together. How could those twelve people distribute fairly? Togetherness had definitely been there before. But it had stopped in this situation. Selfishness came up. There was a complaint. They

needed leadership again, which is described in the following verses.

Acts 6

² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

⁴ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Deacons were then chosen to help distribute the gifts. There was system and order again—leadership. The question is often asked whether leadership is necessary when there is a spirit of togetherness. Of course, it is necessary! And God wants everyone to be a leader. If everyone were a leader—if everyone would feel a responsibility for keeping the fold together—then there would be no lack. It is already a disturbance to the spirit of togetherness when some feel that they have no part in that work and do not see themselves responsible for it. Togetherness requires leadership. It requires an active desire to stay in the boat and to keep others in the boat as well—as long as the boat is going in the right direction, of course—as long as it is a life-saving boat.

Principles of Togetherness

The purpose of the gospel is essentially to preserve unity—togetherness. Let's summarize these principles of togetherness now.

1. IN THE SAME BOAT

The first principle is that we are sitting in the same boat together. In child education it is very important to make this clear in all of our actions and words. We are in the same boat. We are in it together. For sure.

2. SHARED LIFE EXPERIENCES

The second principle is that we must share life together. What is meant by this? Let's read a Bible verse that explains it.

Romans 12

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

What often hinders togetherness is the fact that we think we are wise. We think that our children have to learn, but that we are the teachers. That leads to sermonizing. What is sermonizing? It means that we constantly pound a certain point into the children, instead of counseling together with them.

Can we rejoice when our children rejoice—at every age? Can we weep when our children weep? These are the questions. Sharing life means to share experiences. That's why we wanted to demonstrate the game at the beginning. We should play with the children, even when they are young. Then share experiences when they are older. Rejoice when they rejoice and weep when they weep. Put yourselves in their shoes. Have sympathy with their sorrows and joys. That is a wonderful power by which you can bind yourselves together to sit in the same boat. This is made abundantly clear through our experience. It is also made clear in Jesus' words. We will read the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

Luke 15

⁵ And when he has found it [the lost sheep], he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, *Rejoice with me*, for I have found my sheep which was lost!

⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The rejoicing must be shared. He can't keep it to himself. His rejoicing becomes even greater when he realizes that others rejoice with him.

Growing up, I was the only child in my family. I did not have many toys. But I had a plastic car which I was playing with by myself one day. I can remember feeling glad that I had no siblings, because I could have the toy all to myself. Meanwhile, though, I have learned that it is much more fun if we can share our joy, rather than just enjoying it ourselves. Now, if there is something I enjoy doing, it is all the more enjoyable if there is someone to share it with. That is a law.

Rejoicing with our children puts them in the same boat with us. If we want to keep them in our boat, then we must rejoice with them when they rejoice. They say to us,

“Rejoice with me!”

They invite us to rejoice with them. We can also invite them to rejoice with us.

Let’s now read the next parable, that of the lost coin.

Luke 15

⁸ Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, *Rejoice with me*, for I have found the piece which I lost!

¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

She said,

“I can’t keep it to myself, I must share it. Please rejoice with me!”

That is what our children actually tell us too. They ask us to rejoice with them. The same is true when there is suffering. They also want us to suffer together with them. But before we consider suffering in depth, we’d like to connect these points by reading a statement from the apostle Paul:

Philippians 2

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

I hope we understand what is meant by being poured out as a drink offering. Paul was in prison at the time he wrote this. He was not in a comfortable position. He was in a dungeon, for example. But he writes that he was still glad and rejoiced, because he was rejoicing with the Philippians. If we invite someone to rejoice with us, it could also help them out of their dark situation. That's very possible. Rejoicing with someone is a wonderful, social power, which fosters togetherness. Sharing suffering, hardships, and difficult experiences together also does so.

This principle is described well in the following verses. Paul writes about our all being members of the body. We are not all hands, we are not all eyes, and we are not all noses. Each member has a specific function.

1 Corinthians 12

²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

That is the mark of a body. It belongs together. It is one. So, if one member suffers, the other members suffer too. If one rejoices, the others do too. Being in the same boat means to share life together.

An example of sharing suffering together is found in Nehemiah's experience. We will read the story. Nehemiah, a Jew, was serving as a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes, who was the most powerful man on earth at that time. He was the king of the mighty Medo-Persian Empire. Among the king's servants, the cupbearer was an important position. He was responsible for the king's health. In addition, he would also counsel the king at times. We could say that the cupbearer was like a state secretary. It was a very important position. In that position, Nehemiah had

everything he needed. He had recognition and enough money to care for his family and others. He could influence the king. But Nehemiah heard about the fate of his countrymen in Jerusalem. He heard that Jerusalem was broken down and it was difficult to build the wall and the temple.

Nehemiah 1

⁴ So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

He was so connected with his people back home that he was mourning. He fasted, prayed, and mourned. He could not rejoice in his comfortable life in the king's court. He felt with his people. He was one with them.

3. COUNSELING TOGETHER

The third point of togetherness is to counsel together. The book of *Proverbs* includes many verses which show how crucial it is to counsel together. They also show how perilous it is not to do so, imagining that we can solve everything by ourselves, or not realizing we need the counsel of the brethren or family members. We need the counsel of our children—especially as they grow up. I definitely need the counsel of young people.

Some people think they don't need counsel. They think they know everything. That is a real block to togetherness. Togetherness builds on mutual counseling with each other. Let's read about this. There are several texts which emphasize the same point, but we will read only a few.

Proverbs 11

¹⁴ Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Think about how important that is!

Proverbs 15

²² Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

In the multitude of counselors is safety. In the multitude of counselors there is togetherness.

Did Jesus seek counsel—from the disciples, for instance? We don't think that He needed counsel, and conclude that fathers don't need counsel from their children. But you mentioned that He needed counsel in Gethsemane, as one example. Yes, that's true. He needed the prayers of the disciples. Let's read a statement on this topic.

The Desire of Ages, p. 152:

It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples. Sometimes He taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them by the way, He revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He did not sermonize as men do today. Wherever hearts were open to receive the divine message, He unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He did not command His disciples to do this or that, but said, "Follow me." On His journeys through country and cities He took them with Him, that they might see how He taught the people. He linked their interest with His, and they united with Him in the work.

He did not sermonize as men do today. What is sermonizing? It is lecturing. It means that one person stands above the others as superior, and tells them what they have to do. Sermonizers say that they know what needs to be done and that others don't. That kind of relationship is not togetherness. That is a relationship of an authority figure and someone else who is dependent on that person in authority. But a relationship of togetherness is found in mutual counseling with each other. If we include children—even younger ones—in the family counsel, then what a blessing for togetherness it is. Jesus definitely included His disciples in counseling.

Let's read about this in another verse. It is the story of Peter being asked if his Master paid the temple tax. Peter answered that He did. What was Jesus's reply?

Matthew 17

²⁵ He [Peter] said, Yes. And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?

“What do you think?” Jesus asked Peter for his opinion. He could have told Peter,

“I will give you a lesson. You have a wrong concept and I need to correct it.”

But He didn’t approach it that way. Instead, He asked Peter what he thought. He included him in the process of understanding the situation. That is counseling together, quite simply. It is including the other person and asking what they think.

We’ll read another story about this.

Matthew 16

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

¹⁴ So they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

¹⁵ He said to them, But who do you say that I am?

Jesus asked them for their opinion on the matter. He definitely included His disciples in the development of thought processes.

Let’s read a story now of a man who wanted to be a disciple.

Luke 10

²⁶ He [Jesus] said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?

How do you read it? Jesus could have told the man what the Bible says about the topic and what the man must do. But he didn’t do that. Instead, He asked the man,

“What is your reading of it? What is your understanding of it?”

In other words, what does the Bible say and how do you understand it? Jesus didn't merely want to tell the man what the Bible says. He wanted the man to understand it himself. So He asked him what his understanding was.

We can find this inclusiveness again and again in the life of Jesus. He includes His disciples and others in the thought process, by asking them what they think, what they say about matters, what their opinions are, and so forth. Now we can understand how Jesus counseled with His disciples when He was alone with them, after their missionary tours, for instance. He didn't sermonize to them. We'll read about this.

Mark 6

³⁰ Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

³¹ And He said to them, Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

Will children ever come and tell us everything, if there is not already an atmosphere of counseling together? Would they ever express their real opinion, just as it is? Or will they merely ask for permission or consent? They will come and tell us everything, as parents, when we deal with them as Jesus dealt with His disciples. Instead of sermonizing, that is to include them in the thinking process.

When Jesus called the disciples apart to a deserted place, it was so they could talk together. They had had many experiences and Jesus wanted to counsel together with them. It was a counseling session. Such sessions were highly prized by the disciples, which we will read about in the following statement.

The Desire of Ages, p. 642:

The interviews between Jesus and His disciples were usually seasons of calm joy, highly prized by them all.

Those times were highly valued. The disciples all looked forward to those counseling sessions. That is because they were included in the counsel.

The early church also counseled with each other in the same way, as we can read in *Acts 15*. They gave each other the same opportunity to express their thoughts. That is why they were successful in counseling each other and why the Holy Spirit could speak to them. If one person had stood up as the only authority—without giving others the opportunity to think for themselves—it would have been sermonizing. Jesus never did that.

Let's summarize our points of togetherness again. Togetherness means:

1. We are sitting in the same boat together;
2. We share life together;
3. We counsel together.

There are two other points, which we will consider next time. They are the following:

4. Win cooperation;
5. Talk with the children, not to them.

These are the points of togetherness which we want to study together.

10. Togetherness: Winning the Cooperation

Sabbath, March 17, 2018

OUR subject is “Togetherness,” which we started last week. Our sub-heading today is “Winning the Cooperation.” Winning the cooperation of children together is very important. How can we win that cooperation?

The Need of Togetherness

To begin, we will read a Bible text that shows how important it is for us to cooperate together—to stand together.

Ecclesiastes 4 [NLT]

⁷ Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:

⁸ There is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good? This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.

¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

¹¹ Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?

¹² Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

This text shows how important togetherness is from the viewpoint of those who stand together. The text begins by describing what it’s like when a person stands alone. It is not nice. Loneliness is a real problem, especially in our modern age. It’s connected with greediness—gathering for myself. Today we live in the age of greediness. Capitalism is greediness. And so, we have more and more people who are lonely.

The British government has recognized that loneliness is a problem for many, so they have formed a ministry to tackle this problem of loneliness. There is actually a government ministry for

it. The loneliness problem is also recognized in other countries. How many people die alone in their homes! How many people feel lonely even though they are in a busy environment? This is all, of course, a result of the increased greediness that we find in this world, as we read in the verses above. This shows that our topic today is an issue of great importance. We could also form a ministry for loneliness, so to speak. We may speak about this topic some other time.

Today we want to see how we can gain the cooperation of children. If parents have never emphasized togetherness, if they have never won the cooperation of their children, then they should not wonder if the children feel lonely later on. The loneliness felt within the family will also be felt outside of it. They may mingle with others for a time, but really there is emptiness inside and they feel lonely. Togetherness is founded in the family—in the early years of childhood. Again, I want to stress the fact that every child has their own destiny in their hands. Every child can make choices. As we grow up we constantly make choices. So we can learn this together. That is why we are studying it here.

Winning the Cooperation of Children

When does the cooperation of children start? At what age do we win their cooperation? When are they able to cooperate? Even babies can cooperate. They can even cooperate while still in the mother's womb!

Let's consider babies for now. Parents don't usually have as many issues with babies in the womb. But once they are born, they cry at night, they wriggle when they are being dressed, and so on. When does the baby cooperate? Why can't it hold still when we dress it, for example? We sometimes feel angry. But if we get angry, then we have surely lost the battle at that very moment.

Let's think about this. The child wants attention. We have studied this already. The baby wants to belong. But if they don't get enough attention, then they try to get attention by crying or

wriggling around. Babies are very intelligent, even though we often don't think they are. But they really are. They learn so quickly.

An example of how they learn is found in babies of deaf and dumb parents—those who can neither speak nor hear. When those babies want attention, they look at their parents. Then their face becomes red, tears roll down their cheeks, and their mouths open. But there's no sound of crying. They may stomp on the floor so that their parents feel the vibration. But they don't cry out loud, because they know that the parents aren't able to hear. Babies learn very quickly. If all parents were deaf and dumb, there would be no crying babies. But there would be other issues instead.

If we want to get the cooperation of babies, we must do something. But what exactly must be done?

The greatest problem that parents have is when they think that the children are too young to learn. I asked when they can cooperate. And, actually, they can cooperate from their earliest moments. The greatest antagonist to cooperation is the thought that the children are too young to do so. If we start out by saying they are too young for this or that, then when they are older they will see no need to cooperate because everything has run so well without them already. Why would their help be needed then? At that point it is very hard to win their cooperation.

When you want the cooperation of children, you need to start early. Don't say,

“You are too young.”

Such a statement should not be made. Let's read what God says about this.

Jeremiah 1 [NLT]

⁴ The Lord gave me this message:

⁵ I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.

⁶ O Sovereign Lord, I said, I can't speak for you! I'm too young!

⁷ The Lord replied, Don't say, I'm too young...

Instead of God saying that we are too young, it is the other way around. When we say we are too young, He tells us not to say that. You know, when you talk with children, we usually talk with them as though they are stupid human beings who cannot understand yet. This alone is an evil in itself. Think of them as partners, if you want their cooperation. Consider them as partners—speak to them as intelligent human beings. Of course, we can't discuss about difficult subjects such as complex math problems. They will learn that later on. But we should talk with them as sensible human beings.

Why does God tell us not to say we are too young?

Jeremiah 1 [NLT]

⁷ ...for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you.

⁸ And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!

⁹ Then the Lord reached out and touched my mouth and said, Look, I have put my words in your mouth!

In other words, I'm in the same boat together with you. We are together. You're not alone. We do it together. And because of me and our cooperation, you can do it. You are not too young.

¹⁰ Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. Some you must uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow. Others you must build up and plant.

¹¹ Then the Lord said to me, Look, Jeremiah! What do you see? And I replied, I see a branch from an almond tree.

¹² And the Lord said, That's right, and it means that I am watching, and I will certainly carry out all my plans.

In the next verses God gave Jeremiah a few dreams which outlined his future work. Then God said to him:

Jeremiah 1 [NLT]

¹⁷ Get up and prepare for action. Go out and tell them everything I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them...

God was saying, “You are not too young.”

¹⁷ ...or I will make you look foolish in front of them.

¹⁸ For see, today I have made you strong like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. You will stand against the whole land—the kings, officials, priests, and people of Judah.

¹⁹ They will fight you, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken!

God really encouraged Jeremiah not to say he was too young. That is an important factor in winning cooperation. The very moment we say, “You are too young,” we have cut off the cooperation. It’s as if we are saying,

“Let someone else do it.”

Maybe the child will make a mistake and spoil something that has been carefully built up. But what is more important—the material item or the soul of the child? The soul of the child is much more important! Children must be allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them. Tell the children that we are together in it all. That is what’s important.

Today’s society is relatively democratic. That is in contrast to former times, when there was more of an authoritarian style. Today there is a partnership style. This is not the case everywhere though. For example, parents often use the authoritarian style with their children. They use commands such as, “Do this!” or “Do that!” The parents often don’t like what their children are doing, and they feel disturbed by them. But in the partnership style, the parents speak with their children as partners. If we were to

speak with a friend as we often do with our children, the friends would quickly leave.

Politeness is so important. We have already lost the battle, the very moment we lose our temper. We no longer treat the child as we would treat an adult. We are not as polite or friendly. In that authoritarian style, we may use the word “cooperation,” but it really isn’t. It is actually only compliance.

The word “compliance” is used in medicine. It is said that patients are compliant. During one of my courses, I told the instructor that I didn’t like using that word because it made the patients seem like stupid beings who had to do what they were told. I would prefer the word “cooperation.” My instructor replied that another word used nowadays is “empowerment,” but that we could also use the word “cooperation.”

Compliance is that kind of cooperation which comes from the authoritarian style. Parents expect compliance from their children. Cooperation is something else. Cooperation is the behavior of an intelligent being who has the same aims as ours. In order to win the cooperation of children, we need to formulate aims and win the children over to these aims.

Children often see things from their very personal, subjective perspective. For example, they may want to play with us, even when we are not able to at that moment. We have two ways to respond to this. We can simply tell our children that we can’t play with them right now, because there is something else we need to do. Or we can tell them,

“I’d like to play with you too. But there is a higher duty to do, which we can do together. After that, we can play together.”

That is a totally different way to handle the situation. This way also works when two children want two different things. Instead of simply answering that both will get what they want, we must ask ourselves,

“What is the higher aim? What is needed?”

It is good when we can come to a unified conclusion with the children of what that higher aim is.

Let’s consider the example of an untidy room, which needs to be cleaned up. We could mention how nice it would be to have a tidy room, then we can do it together with the child. There is a story told about a young child who was sick in bed for two weeks. Everyone in the family was responsible for a particular cleaning task in the house, which worked very well. Each of the children had a specific area and they all cooperated well. When the sick one was well enough to join in the work again, the child said,

“I don’t want to clean my area, because when I was sick, I wasn’t the one who made the room messy. Those who made the mess should be the ones to clean it up.”

How would you answer that child? The mother said,

“You are right. You were sick and didn’t make the room dirty. But I’m sure that your siblings will help you clean it up. You can lead them in the work.”

So the child called the other siblings and they all cleaned up together. Everyone was happy in the end. The point is that there is a higher aim. The room needs to be cleaned. Somehow it has to happen. The question is, How? How can we win the cooperation of the child? That is the question.

How God Wins Cooperation

Let’s look at how God does this. We’ll read about it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will

find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

That is how God does it. That's how He wins our cooperation. What does He do? He identifies himself with us. He doesn't tell us that it's our problem. He doesn't say,

“Obedience is your problem. My job is to tell you what's right and your job is to do it.”

No. He identifies himself with us. He says that He is in the same boat as we are. He tells us that He knows our temptations, trials, and difficulties. He knows both our innocence and our guilt. He identifies with us—with our thoughts, and most importantly, with our aims. That is, if we consent.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

...into conformity with His will...

That is cooperation.

...that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.

That is pure cooperation, and nothing else. Cooperation is not a delegation of tasks. It is not expecting or getting compliance. Rather, cooperation means working together on the same aim. It means both to have the same aim and to work together on it. We should not be satisfied until we have real cooperation. Togetherness means cooperation.

The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight...

That is when cleaning up the room becomes the highest delight. Of course, it must also be our highest delight as parents. If it is not, then how can we be together in it? It won't work. But we'll find that the tasks we like to do, are the ones our children will also like to do, when we have their cooperation.

When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

When we study how to win cooperation, we are really studying how God wins our cooperation. Let's think about this for a moment. How do you cooperate with God? How does He win your cooperation? In exactly the same way as you can win the cooperation of your children. There is no other way than that.

Anger, or angry words, and impolite speech, are not found with God. There's no place for these in His kingdom. When He wins cooperation, He wins it so well, that we want to do the same as He does.

"DIVINITY NEEDED HUMANITY"

Let's read a few statements about cooperation between God and us, in order to understand cooperation between parents and children.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man. So with the servants and messengers of Christ. Man needs a power outside of and beyond himself, to restore him to the likeness of God, and enable him to do the work of God; but this does not make the human agency unessential. Humanity lays hold upon divine power, Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and through cooperation with the divine, the power of man becomes efficient for good.

This speaks of our having "like passions" as others. Then we read,

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

Divinity needed humanity.

Have you ever considered that you need your children? Sitting in the same boat, means you need them. It's not that they need you. But you need them. Divinity needed humanity. Of course, we could say that humanity needs divinity. Certainly, that is true too. But have we ever heard of it the other way around—that divinity needs humanity? Have we ever heard that parents need their children, in order to survive? Do we feel that way? Or do we feel that the children need us, but that we can do just fine without them? They need us, we think, and they will come to us when they need something. Divinity needed humanity for it required both to bring salvation to the world. That phrase, “divinity needed humanity,” is repeated, as if to emphasize how important it is. Parents need children. They need their children, not just any children.

PARTNERSHIP

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.

We like the word “partnership,” don't we? But do we like it in relation to our children? If we consider the difference between God and us, that is much greater than between us and our children. It is a greater difference in intelligence, ability, and everything else. So, if God calls us partners, how much more we should call our children partners! They are not our subjects. They are our partners. That's a huge difference! God offers partnership. Do we offer partnership to our children? To offer partnership means to have cooperation. We are partners, and we work together. We need them for the accomplishment of the work. We are offered an

apprenticeship with Christ. That is what we heard last night in an experience related by a brother who told his autistic son that he wanted to work together with him, so that the son could learn to drive. The father offered an apprenticeship to his son. He could have also said,

“I need you. One day you will drive me places. I need you. Let’s be partners.”

We’ll read another statement now.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 482:

The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation.

It is interesting how this is stated. It is cooperation—partnership.

There is to be cooperation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness.

This is from our point of view. We need God. Even though there is weakness, sinfulness, and absolute helplessness, there is to be co-partnership. Consider a little baby who is absolutely helpless and weak, though perhaps not sinful. Now consider partnership. That’s what it is.

God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and cooperation. The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties given to man. Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are

“willing to be made willing,” the Saviour will accomplish this for us,

2 Corinthians 10

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

COOPERATION

We read again and again about cooperation. What a privilege it is to be partners with God! And He needs us. Let’s read one more statement about this.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 354:

The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God. This knowledge is the spring from which flows all power. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind; and He is ever seeking to bring the human mind into association with the divine. He offers us the privilege of cooperation with Christ in revealing His grace to the world, that we may receive increased knowledge of heavenly things.

Do we offer our children the privilege of cooperation with us, as God offers us cooperation with Him? That is the question. What concept do we have of God? That is also a question to ask. We need to understand that we are partners. This means that the law is written in the heart—what He wants, we want.

MORE EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE

We would like to consider a Bible story about how God gains our cooperation. It is about James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

Matthew 20

²⁰ Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor.

Now consider Jesus’ question in reply.

²¹ What is your request? He asked.

Did Jesus not know what her request was? Of course, He knew. What would you have done with that knowledge? Imagine your child comes to you, wanting something that isn't right. Normally we would try to distract them with something else. But Jesus didn't do that. He wanted their cooperation. He asked what their request was. He took them seriously in their desire. That is the first step. Winning cooperation means to look to children as partners. That means firstly to take their desires seriously. If the desires are sinful, then they have to be dealt with. But we shouldn't pretend as if the desires don't exist—as though the child has to be distracted to something else. We have a partner in them. That is the message. So Jesus asked the mother what her request was. Then she responded with a strange, even sinful, request.

Matthew 20

²¹ ...She replied, In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to You, one on your right and the other on your left.

In other words, she asked for them to be given special honor, place, and privilege. This was not a good request, was it? Yet Jesus took it seriously. They were partners. So He listened, first of all. He listened to what they had to say. He did not tell them that their request was quite wrong, sinful, and selfish. Instead, He asked whether they knew what they were asking.

²² Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?

Jesus told them what would happen and what the result would be. He let them judge it. He didn't tell them,

“You are too young.”

He treated them as partners. In their immaturity, they said they were able. Jesus didn't tell them that they weren't able, that they didn't know what they were talking about, and that they didn't have any experience. That would not be treating them as partners. Just imagine telling a friend that. Imagine speaking to a

friend as we speak to our children. That friend would quickly say, “Goodbye,” and would have no interest in speaking with us further.

Jesus did not rebuke them. But instead He said,

Matthew 20

²³ You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones He has chosen.

The other ten disciples became dissatisfied, because they could see that Jesus treated John and James like partners. Whereas they thought that He should have treated them like stupid little children. But instead, He treated them like partners. He gave them something that the other ten also wanted. How did Jesus deal with this? First, He called them together.

Matthew 20 [NLT]

²⁵ But Jesus called them together and said, You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them.

“You know...” He said. He did not say,

“You don’t know...You don’t know what I did here.”

He said, “You know.” He appealed to what they knew. He entered into their thinking. He treated them as partners. He said, “Yes, okay.” This reminds us of the way that God treated Adam and Eve after they sinned. When He approached them and asked where they were, they replied that they had hidden themselves because they feared Him. He then asked if they had eaten the forbidden fruit. Adam replied that he had, but he blamed the woman. God could have stopped him and told him to focus on the fault in his own heart, instead of accusing the woman. But God entered into Adam’s thoughts and asked the woman, who in turn blamed the serpent. So God turned to the serpent. Everything came back to Adam and Eve eventually, but it was after their hearts were won over—after He had won their cooperation. That is the point.

God is always on the task of winning our cooperation. He is never on the task of just telling us, “Do this” or “Do that.” His work is cooperation. He says,

“You know. Come, let’s reason together. You know.”²⁶

Jesus was saying to His disciples,

“So it is in the world. But I am sure you don’t want it to be this way among you, right? Of course not. So it shall not be among you.”

And the disciples replied,

“No, it shall not be among us.”

Matthew 20 [NLT]

²⁷ Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave.

²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.

In other words, Jesus said,

“Look. You have seen it with me. You see it all the time.”

In this way He awoke their interest in being like Him. So they had a common aim, which was to not be like the kingdoms of the world. Now He had their full cooperation in wanting to be like that. That’s how to win cooperation. It’s a wonderful story. We should always look to Jesus to see how He won the cooperation of His disciples.

Let’s turn to one more story in the New Testament.

Mark 10

⁴⁶ Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and His disciples left town, a large crowd followed Him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road.

²⁶ See *Isaiah* 1:18.

⁴⁷ When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

⁴⁸ Be quiet! many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, Son of David, have mercy on me!

⁴⁹ When Jesus heard him, He stopped and said, Tell him to come here. So they called the blind man. Cheer up, they said. Come on, He's calling you!

⁵⁰ Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked.

That's an interesting question, isn't it?

“What do you want me to do for you? You are my partner. What do you want?”

Christ won his desire and his cooperation. Winning cooperation has always been the work of Jesus. This must be the way we work with one another too, not only as parents towards children, but also towards our fellow man.

I am reminded of one time when I was in school. I wanted to join a certain class, yet there was a limit to how many people could get into that class. But, I really desired to get into that class, so without thinking too much about it, I went and said to the teacher,

“I am coming to your class and I thank you very much for taking me.”

The teacher said, “Okay,” and signed me into the class. I thought to myself, “What does the teacher want?” He wanted students who were interested in this class. He didn't just want an arbitrary number. He wanted those who had an interest. We can really work with the desires of others. We can ask, “What is your desire?” and work with that.

We want to consider the story of when Nehemiah cooperated with the Israelites to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. How did Nehemiah win the cooperation of the people? It was not easy. The

people were discouraged. That's why Nehemiah went there, even though they could have basically done it themselves. Nehemiah had a very important post of duty at the king's court. He was the cupbearer. But he left that position because they needed him. However, he needed their cooperation. He couldn't do it alone, and neither could they do it without Nehemiah. How did he win their cooperation? This is the question. He arrived in Jerusalem and we'll read what happened next.

Nehemiah 2

¹² I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding.

¹³ After dark I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates.

¹⁴ Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble.

¹⁵ So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate.

Nehemiah inspected the wall very carefully and thoroughly that night. He prepared himself before he won the cooperation of the people. He became an expert about the situation. At first the people didn't know that he'd gone and checked it out. Then he addressed them.

¹⁷ But now I said to them, You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!

"You know very well ..." In other words, he did not preach to them, but he appealed to their common understanding. He said,

"You know it. I've seen it. This is the situation. And you are very acquainted with it."

Then he appealed to them,

“Let us rebuild the wall and let’s end this disgrace.”

He strengthened and appealed to something that was in their hearts already, namely the shame they felt. Then he offered hope and faith. He said,

“Let’s do it now.”

That was the first part, and the second part was,

Nehemiah 2

¹⁸ Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king.

Next, he related that whole fantastic experience—how the Lord had impressed him; how the king had asked him what he needed; how he’d prayed; and how the king was suddenly so open and gave him everything he needed. The soldiers and materials were with Nehemiah as evidence. He could have started by speaking about himself, telling them that he was the king’s representative, that the Lord had arranged it so, and that they needed to obey him. But no, he first appealed to their common knowledge. In other words, he won their cooperation. And then, in order to strengthen this desire of cooperation which was in them, he explained his experience as a matter of strengthening their faith. Can you see this order? It is perhaps very different from the way we would go about it.

In the next chapter we can read how the wall was rebuilt. There was one group who didn’t cooperate.

Nehemiah 3

⁵ Next were the people from Tekoa, though their leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.

If you speak to people as a whole, there will always be some who refuse to cooperate. And here, even the leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.

Did Nehemiah stop working because of this? No. He was not disturbed. They were not won over. Their cooperation was not won. Such situations are possible, but it did not stop Nehemiah.

In closing, I would like to read a well-known statement about this. We will read it now in the light of cooperation.

Prophets and Kings, p. 638:

Nehemiah's whole soul was in the enterprise he had undertaken. His hope, his energy, his enthusiasm, his determination, were contagious, inspiring others with the same high courage and lofty purpose. Each man became a Nehemiah in his turn and helped to make stronger the heart and hand of his neighbor.

This is a wonderful paragraph to show how cooperation is gained. His hope, energy, enthusiasm and determination were contagious. He inspired others with the same high courage and lofty purpose. Each man became a Nehemiah in his turn. That is partnership. If each child becomes a father in the family—a partner—they will help one another. The family will stick together. They will help each other and be there for each other. In a family where it's only the father's word that stands and nothing else, and where there is no cooperation, the children won't help one another. Everyone will live for themselves. But in a family where cooperation is cherished, they will help each other. They will be there for one another. This, of course, is the aim. And this is how God works. This is how Nehemiah worked. And this is how we can always work. Let us really strive to win the cooperation of the children. This is togetherness.

11. Togetherness: Speaking

Sabbath, March 24, 2018

OUR introductory picture is of a father alongside his young daughter, who is speaking with him. The father is listening to the child. This picture relates to our study title today. One of you have mentioned that the father has come down to the level of the child. But then someone else said they didn't like it when their parents tried to come down to their level. Why is that? It is because it is sometimes only to dig into the child more, or to convince them of our opinion.



Talking With and Not Down To Children

Alternatively, the father can see the child as a partner, on the same level as himself. And another way to view the picture is that the father is trying to understand the child, putting himself into her shoes. These are a few of the ideas which the picture conveys. Putting ourselves in the shoes of another person is a very important point, which we will look at in a moment. But first, we will read a statement about all this.

Messages to Young People, p. 420:

In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you. This is the true rule of honesty. It is another expression of the law, "You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.” And it is the substance of the teaching of the prophets. It is a principle of heaven, and will be developed in all who are fitted for its holy companionship.

We must put ourselves into others’ shoes, into their roles. The introductory picture also illustrates this. We can endeavor to enter into the thoughts of others. We often think that we know better than children, because they have much less experience than we do, so they don’t know as much. We think that what they say and want is illogical. But it’s very logical for them. It’s actually psychological. That is something we need to remember. Children have their logic too, and it is important for us to understand it.

Our topic today is togetherness—specifically, speaking *with* children instead of *down to* them. How do we speak with a child instead of speaking down to them? We will consider what it means to speak both down to and with a child. As usual, we can apply these principles of parenting to our dealing with one another, as well as to our relationship with God, who is our Parent.

Speaking *down to* a child, is sermonizing. In contrast, when we speak *with* a child, it is not merely informing them of our opinion, and expecting them to obey us. Rather, it is working through an issue together. We come to a solution together. It is a partnership. If parents are wise, they will so influence the child, that the child will formulate the solution to the problem on their own. That’s a critical point.

And it requires a lot of patience and skill to speak wisely with a child. For instance, we naturally want to answer for the child, if they are asked a question but don’t know the answer immediately and everything goes quiet. Or if they do something wrong, we want to make sure they don’t repeat the wrong action, so we often jump in too quickly and speak, instead of waiting until the child comes to the conclusion about how wrong it is by themselves. I know this tendency very well. When I preach to you I am also preaching to myself. It’s a habit and we must change our habits, which is not easily done.

Leading Others to Think for Themselves

Letting the child find the solution for themselves can be done in two ways. The first option is to leave the child alone and not do anything. We simply let the child come to their own conclusion. We leave the child to find out by themselves and we don't say anything, thinking that life will teach them and that we don't need to be involved. But this is not leadership.

The second way is to let the child come to their own conclusion by leading them. That is a different way. It is the way we want to promote. It is how God deals with us. It is letting the child come to the conclusion with leadership—not without leadership. God definitely gives us leadership when He lets us find out the solution to a problem—when He makes us think. He leads.

We will look at some examples of this later, but we need to understand that there are these two ways. The first way is more anti-authoritarian, saying,

“I don't care. You figure it out for yourself. I'm not going to meddle in your growing up.”

This is letting the child find out *without* leadership. So, the question arises,

“How can we lead the child to find out for themselves? How can we lead? How does that happen?”

There are two main tools that we have in our hands. One tool is asking questions. It is possible to ask questions in such a way that makes the child feel silly, while we feel wise. That is not what I am referring to. What I'm talking about is to ask questions so wisely and so respectfully that the child themselves will think about the matter. This is what Jesus often did. He often asked questions, such as,

“Who do you think that the Son of man is?”²⁷

²⁷ *Matthew* 16:15.

He asked questions, which made people think. Another tool Jesus often used was telling parables. Jesus' parables also made people think. Proverbs and poems can be used as well, to make people think. Jesus told object lessons to make people think. We'll read an example of this.

Luke 8 [NLT]

⁴ One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear Him.

This was not sermonizing. He wanted to tell a story. He didn't sermonize and tell them to do this or that. Instead, He told them a parable. The parable He related here is the story of seed sowing, where the seed falls on various soils. The reaction of the people is interesting.

⁹ His disciples asked Him what this parable meant.

They asked questions. Another way to bring children to the right conclusion is to make them ask questions—to provoke questions. Teaching parables is one way to provoke questions, as we can see here. The disciples did ask. But sometimes that method doesn't work. The Pharisees didn't ask questions. They understood part of the parable, but not all of it. Instead of asking, the Pharisees showed that they didn't want to know. That can happen. Provoking others to ask questions is not easy.

To summarize: the two tools we've looked at in order to help children come to their own conclusions are:

1. To ask questions, and
2. To provoke questions.

As a confirmation of this, we see that although the disciples didn't understand the parable, their interest was awakened. They came to Jesus and asked for an explanation. This was the desire which Christ wanted to arouse, so that He could give them more definite instruction. That is how Jesus made the disciples think. The disciples were like His children, of course.

Relating as Partners

How can we lead children to find out solutions for themselves? First of all, we need to remember that we can't lead them to find out for themselves, unless we think of them as partners. Copartnership is the important point. I want to emphasize that it really is copartnership, in spite of the fact that we have more experience and wisdom because of our greater age. We are partners despite that fact. There is no question that we have more experience. We can't expect children to have as much experience, knowledge, or wisdom as we have. That's not the case. But we can still accept them as our partners.

Accepting a child as a partner can be understood theoretically. We may accept a child as our partner, in theory, while we still think and even tell them that we have so much more experience than they do. If we approach a child by saying,

“I have more experience than you, and I know more than you do,”

—we have fixed ourselves in that role. It is important to accept the child as a partner, without making them feel as if they are much less experienced. That is how God deals with us. God could always tell us that we are nothing—not even ants—compared to the universe that He has in His control and at His command. Every day He could tell us,

“I know everything, but you know nothing.”

The difference between God and us is much greater than the difference between us and children. Yet God does not boast of it. Instead, He tells us that we are His coworkers and He makes himself dependent on us. He tells us He needs us and that He chooses us as His messengers instead of the angels. God tells us all of this. It doesn't give us the feeling that He knows everything and we know nothing. Yet God gives leadership. He gives leadership in such a way that we want to depend and rely on Him. But He doesn't demand that He is King, and we are nothing.

Let's look at the relationship between God and ourselves by reading a few statements.

The Desire of Ages, p. 23:

The burning bush, in which Christ appeared to Moses, revealed God. The symbol chosen for the representation of the Deity was a lowly shrub, that seemingly had no attractions.

God could have revealed himself in a magnificent light, which would have blinded Moses. But instead, He revealed himself in a lowly shrub which seemingly had no attraction.

The all-merciful God shrouded His glory in a most humble type, that Moses could look upon it and live. So in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, God communicated with Israel, revealing to men His will, and imparting to them His grace. God's glory was subdued, and His majesty veiled, that the weak vision of finite men might behold it. So Christ was to come in "the body of our humiliation" (*Philippians* 3:21, RV), "in the likeness of men." In the eyes of the world He possessed no beauty that they should desire Him.

This shows that God comes down to the same level as us, but not with the purpose of showing His superiority. The next paragraph speaks of the sanctuary. All of these illustrations show us that God isn't standing above us. Rather, He considers us as partners. Another example of this is the ladder which Jacob saw, going from heaven to earth and connecting them as one. We can ascend on that ladder. And on that ladder Christ came down. There are many Bible examples of God's dealing with us, which show us how we, as parents, can relate to our children.

As we mentioned earlier, children's logic may be different from ours. We might imagine that something is very logical and clear. The child must accept it, we think, because it's so clear. There's no question. But the child has different logic. It's psychological, as well as logical. So, how can we deal with children? We'll apply the next statements we read to parents and children. Let's read the following in a slightly different way from how they are writ-

ten. We will reword them, so that they apply to parents and their children.

Early Writings, p. 102:

The servants of God [parents] who teach the truth should be men [parents] of judgment. They should be men [parents] who can bear opposition and not get excited; for those [children] who oppose the truth will pick at those [parents] who teach it, and every objection that can be produced, will be brought in its worst form to bear against the truth [the logic of the parents]. The servants of God [parents] who bear the message must be prepared to remove these objections, with calmness and meekness, by the light of truth. Frequently opposers [children] talk to ministers of God [their parents] in a provoking manner, to call out something from them of the same nature, [Is this the case? Of course!] that they can make as much of it as possible and declare to others that the teachers of the commandments [their parents] have a bitter spirit and are harsh, as has been reported. [This does happen.] I saw that we [parents] must be prepared for objections, and with patience, judgment, and meekness, let them [the words of the children] have the weight they deserve, not throw them away or dispose of them by positive assertions, and then bear down upon the objector [the child], and manifest a hard spirit toward him; but give the objections their weight, then bring forth the light and the power of the truth, and let it outweigh and remove the errors. Thus a good impression will be made, and honest opposers [children] will acknowledge that they have been deceived and that the commandment keepers [parents] are not what they have been represented to be.

We can apply these principles in this way because that's really how it happens. We will see how true this is when we look at power struggles in a later study. There are often power struggles going on, and much depends upon how the parents react, and how they speak. Do they talk *with* their children or *down to* them? Let's read another text in this connection. There are different opinions seen. Children have a different logic. Again, we will read this text from the perspective of parents and children.

Romans 14 [NLT]

¹ Accept other believers [children] who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

² For instance, one person [child] believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer [child] with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables.

³ Those [children] who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those [children] who don't. And those [children] who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those [children] who do, for God has [the parents have] accepted them [both].

⁴ Who are you to condemn someone else's servants [children]?

It is true that they are someone else's children. They belong to God. And who are we to condemn them? Consider Jesus' parents. They could easily have condemned Jesus for His beliefs. They had a different understanding. But it was important for them to realize that He was a Child of God and they were only stewards. We could continue reading this chapter, as it's a good example, but we won't right now. When we do though, let's re-word these texts in this way, using parents and child.

We have different opinions. We have a logic and the children have another. What do we do with that? How do we deal with it? We need to come to a shared conclusion. We are studying togetherness. So we can't just leave it there with two different opinions, and concluding we'll go different ways, saying to the children,

“Go ahead. You'll realize I'm right. I have much more experience and wisdom than you do. Find out for yourself.”

That would not be the right way. That's not togetherness. Rather, togetherness means that we really strive to come to a shared conclusion. It means that we develop together with the child to answer the questions,

“What is the right way of thinking? Which is the right way? How shall we do it?”

There are several ways to answer these questions. One way is to look at the consequences together—not just telling them what

will happen, which would be sermonizing. Instead, we should ask the child what they think the result will be. God often asks us what we think. For example, He asked the lawyer what his understanding of the scripture was.²⁸ We can also ask the child what would happen if everyone dealt with the matter in a particular way.

For instance, if the child desires a certain privilege, we can ask what would happen if everyone were to act the same way. Let the child think about it. We could also ask them what they suppose the other person thinks and feels when the child acts a particular way. We could use parables as well. For example, Nathan didn't sermonize to David about how wrong his actions were. David knew already. Instead, Nathan spoke a parable, which made David think. David came to a conclusion which was crystal clear, and Nathan merely had to say,

“You are the man!”²⁹

It was clear. David had condemned himself. God doesn't condemn us. He lets us come to our own conclusions, so that we condemn ourselves in the end. But He doesn't push or force it. Sometimes it takes a long time for us to come to the right conclusion. God has a lot of patience! He has already been waiting for 6,000 years for us to understand what the real issues of the great controversy are. He waits and waits and waits. At the same time, He constantly provides us with leadership. He is not lacking in that work. Yet He has infinite patience.

Again, we can ask the following questions:

“What does the other person think?”

“What will happen if we continue with a certain way of thinking?”

“What would happen if everyone did the same?”

²⁸ *Luke* 10:25.

²⁹ See 2 *Samuel* 12.

The Word of God Is the Standard

These are questions which help the child to think in a logical way. But there is another aspect as well. We also need to have a standard. And that standard is the word of God. We should not use the word of God to sermonize, telling them that they must do this or that, because it's what the Bible says. No, the Bible should be searched together. Together, we should stand under the authority of the word of God. And the word of God applies to us as much as to anyone else. We can show the solution to the child, but not necessarily in such a way that they are told specifically to do this or that.

Imagine, for example, always telling a child not to eat dessert. Perhaps we could find a Bible text to back up our statement. But that would be sermonizing. The child could reply that the text doesn't apply to them. Children sometimes have good arguments for not accepting certain things. Or maybe they don't understand the Bible text used. What do we do then? First of all, we should not sermonize. We should not be satisfied until the child comes to the conclusion for themselves that the principle is right, good, and the best for everyone. That is the result we want to come to. As we studied last week, obedience is not just following orders. Obedience is when the child wants to do the right thing themselves. As Paul wrote,

Philemon 1

²¹ Knowing that you will do even more than I say.

That is obedience. What did Jesus do when the disciples didn't understand? Did He push the point through to the end, so they had to say He was right and that they would obey? No! He never did that. Sometimes He tried to explain something to His disciples without their understanding it. He knew very well that they would understand later on. He knew that they would remember His words when He was gone. Then they would learn. This is something that parents need to understand. Sometimes children don't understand immediately. Sometimes it only happens much,

much later. Sometimes, even after the parents are gone, the children remember their words and practice them.

Jesus was not necessarily giving specific lessons all the time. But He was teaching them the way to find out the specific lessons. That was much more important. He was pointing them to the Source, where they could find out for themselves what was right and wrong. He pointed them to the Bible. That is an important point.

When we teach our children, it is more important that they understand how to find out what is right and wrong, than to know what is right and wrong. When we have been successful in that—when they know how to find that out—then we have reached the goal. Let’s read this text from last week again.

Luke 10

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

²⁶ He said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?

In other words,

“What do you make of it? Read it yourself. What is your understanding of that text?”

That’s what Jesus asked him. He didn’t tell the lawyer to do this or that. He could have told him many things. He knew him. But instead, He asked,

“What is your reading of it?”

That is how Jesus often dealt with people. We will read another statement about this. And we’ll reword it in the context of parents and children again.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 38:

They [the parents] dwelt upon traditions [their own understanding of the Bible], upon human theories [common wisdom] and speculations [those things they merely thought were true].

Often that which man [the parents] had taught and written about the word [the Bible], they put in place of the word [the Bible] itself. Their teaching [to their children] had no power to quicken the soul [to encourage them to want what is right]. The subject of Christ's teaching and preaching was the word of God [The subject of what the parents teach their children and their worships should be the word of God]. He [Christ] met questioners with a plain, "It is written." "What do the Scriptures say?" "How do you read?" At every opportunity, when an interest was awakened by either friend or foe [by obedient or disobedient children], He sowed the seed of the word. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, himself the living Word, points to the Scriptures, saying, "They are they which testify of me." And "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," He opened to His disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

This is how Christ taught. He showed His disciples the way to acquire knowledge, rather than merely the knowledge itself. It requires a change of thinking. We always want to convey knowledge. But it is much more important for the people to know the way of knowledge, than to have the knowledge itself.

Now we will do a little exercise. We will read several statements about sermonizing. Sermonizing is talking to the children, of course. Our aim is to see what the contrast is in these next statements. We will reword these statements by inserting "parents" and "children" as we did before. We will also insert "talking down to the child" and "talking with the child."

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 526:

Those who occupy the position of under-shepherds [the parents] are to exercise a watchful diligence over the Lord's flock [of children]. This is not to be a dictatorial vigilance [sermonizing, or talking down to the children], but one that tends to encourage and strengthen and uplift [by talking with the children]. Ministry [child education] means more than sermonizing [talking down to the children]; it means earnest, personal labor [talking with the children]. The church on earth [the family] is composed of erring men and women [parents and children], who need pa-

tient, painstaking effort that they may be trained and disciplined to work with acceptance in this life, and in the future life to be crowned with glory and immortality. Pastors [Parents] are needed—faithful shepherds [parents]—who will not flatter God’s people [children], nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life—men [parents] who in their lives feel daily the converting power of the Holy Spirit and who cherish a strong, unselfish love toward those [children] for whom they labor.

We can see a contrast here. On the one hand there is sermonizing—speaking down to the child—and on the other hand, personal labor. It’s interesting that these two things are contrasted here—personal labor instead of sermonizing.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 57:

The sowers of the seed [parents] have a work to do in preparing hearts [their children] to receive the gospel. In the ministry of the word [education of children] there is too much sermonizing [talking down to the children], and too little of real heart-to-heart work [talking with the children]. There is need of personal labor for the souls of the lost [children]. In Christlike sympathy we [parents] should come close to men [children] individually, and seek to awaken their interest in the great things of eternal life. Their [the children’s] hearts may be as hard as the beaten highway, and apparently it may be a useless effort to present the Saviour to them; but while logic may fail to move, and argument be powerless to convince, the love of Christ, revealed in personal ministry [talking with the child], may soften the stony heart, so that the seed of truth can take root.

The purpose of reading these statements is to see what it means to speak with the child. Talking with the child does not just mean speaking. It means labor. It means heart-to-heart work. Here again we read about personal labor. “...while logic may fail...” means we may think we are so logical in what we say and believe, but it may fail to move the child. How often have we depended on argument? But “...the love of Christ, revealed in per-

sonal ministry...” softens the heart. Personal ministry is heart-to-heart work. These are the ways that work. Talk with the child.

The Holy Spirit’s Influence

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 130:

When we eat Christ’s flesh and drink His blood, the element of eternal life will be found in the ministry [work of education]. There will not be a fund of stale, oft-repeated ideas. The tame, dull sermonizing will cease. The old truths will be presented, but they will be seen in a new light. There will be a new perception [understanding] of truth, a clearness and a power that all will discern. Those [children] who have the privilege of sitting under such a ministry [experiencing such parenting] will, if susceptible to the Holy Spirit’s influence, feel the energizing power of a new life. The fire of God’s love [and the parents’ love] will be kindled within them. Their perceptive faculties will be quickened to discern the beauty and majesty of truth.

“The old truths will be presented, but they will be seen in a new light.” We could always repeat the same things over and over again. But that is sermonizing—a dull, continuous set of rules. It’s simply repeating,

“You should do this, you should do that.”

But when the power of the Holy Spirit is present, old truths will be quickened with new life. They will be applied to present day life.

Earlier this morning we talked a little about the generational differences found in the world today. For instance, one generation doesn’t tend to use computers and cell phones. They don’t like them, thinking they are too complicated. Another generation is the email generation. But young people would say that emailing is old hat. Then there is the Facebook generation. They do everything via Facebook. And the youngest generation will say that Facebook is outdated and that they have new means of communication, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and so on. Every generation has its own thing, and the older ones seem not to be able to

communicate with the younger ones anymore, because they use different means of communication. If two people use different means, how can they communicate with each other?

But when we build on the Word of God—on Jesus and what He taught—you get new things out of the old. This doesn't refer to instruments or tools now, but to old truths—of the Bible. Some people think the Bible is old-fashioned and has nothing to do with modern life today. But when the Holy Spirit illuminates the scriptures, you can suddenly see an application in the most recent situations of life. You wonder,

“How did they know that in ancient times?”

I sometimes quote from the scriptures during the university lectures I give—a verse from *Proverbs*, for example. It's so fitting, it's so modern, that you would think it was written by a philosopher just yesterday. That's how it is. Jesus drew new thoughts out of the old, because the Holy Spirit was present to explain the scriptures.

On one hand, there is talking down to the child, which is dull sermonizing. But on the other hand, there is the Holy Spirit's influence. That is the contrast. Talking with the child means to speak under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It means that you are filled with the Holy Spirit when you speak with the child. That's a huge difference. Let's reword another statement.

The Desire of Ages, p. 152:

It was by personal contact and association that Jesus [parents] trained His disciples [their children]. Sometimes He [the parents] taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them [their children] by the way, He [they] revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He [parents] did not sermonize [talk down to their children] as men [parents] do today. Wherever [the children's] hearts were open to receive the divine message, He [parents] unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He [the parents] did not command His disciples [their children] to do this or that, but

[they] said, “Follow me.” On His [their] journeys through country and cities He [parents] took them [their children] with Him [them], that they might see how He taught the people [their parents work]. He [the parents] linked their interest with His [their children’s], and they united with Him [them] in the work.

The main point here is “follow me” in contrast to sermonizing. Sermonizing is talking to the children. But talking with the children means causing them to follow us, linking their interests with ours. When they unite with us in the work, that is when they follow us. Of course, that can only happen when the Word of God is foremost in our heart. Then we can really say, “Follow us,” with a clear conscience.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 143:

There is need of coming close to the people [children] by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing [talking down to the children], and more time were spent in personal ministry [talking with them and personal work with them], greater results would be seen. The poor [in the world] are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled [because together with the children, we have a work to do]. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

That is quite a statement. It will not, it cannot, “be without fruit.” Under what circumstances? It happens when there is togetherness. Instead of talking down to the children, we spend time and personal ministry with the children. This is the work that we are doing together with them. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and bereaved comforted, the inexperienced counseled. We have a work to do together in the family, in the church, accompanied by the power of persuasion. Sermonizing has no power of persuasion, none whatsoever, but personal ministry does have power of persuasion—the power of

prayer, the power of the love of God. This will not, and cannot, be without fruit.

We want to close the subject of togetherness for now, but we don't want to stop thinking about it. That has just begun.

From the Discussion

What does heart-to-heart mean? Mutual conversation can be heart-to-heart, but it is more than this. It means we understand each other without talking. When we communicate because we understand, it's heart to heart. A heart doesn't talk orally, or audibly, but it talks through actions, facial expressions, body language, and so on. Heart-to-heart means you know what each other is thinking without speaking. It is when you are in harmony with the child. Heart and heart are bound together. It results in obedience from the heart. When heart is bound to heart, we don't need much talking, because we understand each other. We are going in the same direction, so I can trust my child to do exactly the right thing, even when apart from me.

The Desire of Ages, p. 250:

It is not the highest work of education to communicate knowledge merely, but to impart that vitalizing energy which is received through the contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul.

This is heart to heart.

12. Power Struggles I

Sabbath, March 31, 2018

Note: Prepare for this study by reading the chapter 48, “The Child’s Reaction,” in the book *Child Guidance*, by Ellen G. White.

I WOULD like to begin by asking the children a question:

“Which is stronger, a lion or a snake? Lions roar, and snakes slither on the ground. Which is stronger?”

[Children]: A lion is stronger.

I think all the children agree that the lion is stronger. Of course, a lion is much heavier. It has more muscles, it has more teeth, it has more power, it is louder, and so on. But you would be surprised at what a snake can do. It is also very powerful. In some struggles between the two, the snake actually won against the lion, although the lion does often win.

We wanted to ask this question at the beginning, because today we are studying about struggles—power struggles— and we find this power struggle in the world of animals and of course, in the world of adults too, and of parents and children. This is the context we are studying it in here.

What Is a Power Struggle?

What exactly is a power struggle? In a power struggle the question is asked, who is right and who is wrong? Parents are always right and children are always wrong, aren’t they? Just imagine if you had a friend who was always right and you were always wrong. Would you like that? Not very much.

Power struggles are about the question, who has the last word in the matter? Naturally, both parents and children would like to have the last word. So they go back and forth trying to have the final last word. It just goes on and on and on.

Power struggles are also about the question of who is physically stronger. This is obvious, at least to a certain age. Parents have more muscles—like the lion. They are stronger.

Who is mentally stronger? Who is wittier and cleverer? Who can trick the other better? That is a power struggle.

Even in spiritual matters there can be a power struggle. Who has the stronger arguments? Who can argue better, so that the other cannot answer anymore? It can be like a game in sport.

“I have better arguments. I know more of the Bible than you do.”

A power struggle is also about revenge—getting your own back.

“He beat me this time. Next time I will show him.”

“He has blamed me or shamed me. Next time I will show him what the real issues are! I will let him know.”

This is a power struggle. A power struggle is about anger too. If I have anger in my heart, if I refuse to accept something—“No! It will not be like this!”—then that is a power struggle.

A power struggle is trying to make the other do as I want. How can I make the other do what I want them to do?

How can I triumph? This is another question in power struggles. Who has the victory? Humiliation is involved in power struggles as well.

Asymmetrical Warfare

So far, I have mentioned many things that are all components of power struggles, but in the struggle between parents and children there is also another element of struggle, which we call asymmetrical warfare. Do you know what this is? First of all, there is warfare. In the Cold War, there were two equal powers: the Soviet Union and the United States. They were fairly equal and they both had their muscle states and sometimes fought in countries like Vietnam and so on. These were open wars.

But then in 2001, unexpectedly 9/11 occurred. Suddenly some “soldiers” fought a battle without many weapons. They just had some knives, went on an airplane, and killed 3,000 people or more. How could they do this? And from that time, some people are finding ways to kill many others with few weapons. America is amassing more and more weapons to fight against it, and spends billions of dollars to fight against such people, who do not need many weapons in order to create a lot of chaos. This is asymmetrical warfare. Asymmetrical means that they don’t have the same weapons as the other side, and yet they are successful at what they are doing. Guerrilla tactics are also asymmetrical warfare.

When we talk about children and parents, this is also asymmetrical warfare, because who is obviously physically stronger? Who knows more? Who can trick the other one better? It’s the one who has more experience. It should be the parents, theoretically, but sometimes it isn’t. That’s because the children know how to fight back in a way that only they can fight. For instance, if the parent demands that their child cleans up a mess, the child agrees but doesn’t do so. Then the parent gets angry and says,

“You clean it up now!”

The child still doesn’t do it. The parent get even angrier. Finally, the parent beats the child, and the child cries.

“I will do it now.”

“Okay, you do it.”

The parent goes away, but it’s still not cleaned up, or it’s cleaned up roughly, and very superficially. When that happens, what kind of warfare did the child fight? A very successful one, because in the end the demand was not fulfilled. But they couldn’t use physical power. They were too weak. They couldn’t use all the other weapons. It was an asymmetrical warfare.

There are many instances of this, for example, with cleanliness. There is a story told of a boy whose parents were trying to toilet train him. After a meal, the mother would tell him to go to the toilet and the child would reply that he didn't feel the urge to go, so could he go play? The mother would say, "Yes," and the boy would go off. After being away for a few minutes, in his room or somewhere, he'd go outside. Then the mother could smell something. So she'd investigate and find that the child had done his business in the father's hat. That was something. The mother would go outside and shout at the child and lock him in his room. But as soon as the child was locked in, he filled his pants. Can you see an asymmetrical warfare here? The mother imagined it was because of fear or something like that, but it was the child's weapon. It was a power struggle. We could give many such examples of power struggles and I am sure you could, too.

Avoiding Struggles with Children

Let us look in the Bible and see how important it is not to enter into a power struggle with children. There are at least two scriptures that are very clear on this.

Ephesians 6

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

Is this correct? Is this really the first commandment with promise? How many commandments do we have, children?

[Children]: Ten.

And how many commandments contain a promise? That is a difficult question. Do the adults know? There are at least two. And which one has the first promise? The second commandment. God promises there that He will give His mercy to many generations after Him if they follow Him. That's the first promise. Why does Paul then say this is the first promise, when it is in fact the

fifth commandment? The second commandment contains a promise. The fifth commandment also contains a promise, but Paul says that this is the first commandment with promise. Why?

[Audience]: We have ten commandments, but they are divided into two parts. One is when humans deal with God, and the other is about humans with other humans.

Okay, so which is the first commandment with promise in the second part of the Decalogue? It's the first one. For the relationship between human beings this is the first commandment, and it contains a promise. As soon as we come into the world, the first thing, the very first thing, we experience from the Ten Commandments, is obedience to father and mother. It's the first thing that the children of Adam and Eve learned, and it contains the promise that you'll live a long time, even eternally. Let's read further, in *Ephesians*.

Ephesians 6

⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

So it says not to provoke your children to wrath. In other words, don't enter into a power struggle. Don't make them angry. How do parents make children angry? There are several ways. You can read this summarized nicely in the chapter in *Child Guidance* entitled, "The Child's Reaction," which was the preparatory reading for this study. One way to anger a child is to deny them an innocent enjoyment, in the mistaken belief that the child must suffer as you suffered. Such things make children angry. But it makes them particularly angry when you allow a power struggle to happen with them. As soon as you are angry, you instill the same spirit into the children. You drive one evil out, but two evils into the child. Ellen White writes in *Child Guidance* that the evil the parents do by being angry with the children is worse than the transgression of the child. Why is that? It is because we instill the same spirit of revenge, proving oneself, and superiority into the child. That is the problem. A power struggle is a real problem for

the children and for God's cause. We need to understand that. This is why Paul tells parents not to provoke their children to wrath. They are provoked every time we enter into a power struggle.

Let's read another verse about this.

Colossians 3

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

What does it mean for children to become discouraged? It means they give up. They can't speak to the parent in an adult way. So the only way to achieve things is to remain disobedient. It's useless to try to please the parents. The children become discouraged.

²¹ Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

We provoke them every time we enter into a power struggle. We will now read two very similar statements. They are almost identical in wording, but there are a few differences.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 398:

Impatience in the parents excites impatience in the children.

When do we realize there is a power struggle? How does it begin? We can know that there is power struggle happening every time we feel impatient, angry, or the desire for revenge. We have to see it in ourselves. When we feel these emotions, then we know that we are in a power struggle. It is when we desire to have the upper hand or to prove something to the other person. Impatience is one word for it. Passion is another.

Passion manifested by the parents creates passion in the children and stirs up the evils of their nature.

What is passion? Again, it is a tense feeling, similar to those we mentioned above.

Some parents correct their children severely in a spirit of impatience, and often in passion. Such corrections produce no good result. In seeking to correct one evil, they create two. Continual censuring and whipping hardens children and weans them from their parents.

Whipping is seldom done nowadays, but censuring is common.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 398:

Parents should first learn to control themselves, then they can more successfully control their children. Every time they lose self-control, and speak and act impatiently, they sin [not against the child, but] against God. They should first reason with their children, clearly point out their wrongs, show them their sin, and impress upon them that they have not only sinned against their parents, but against God. With your own heart subdued and full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them.

We have a duty to correct them. But before we do that we must be free from passion ourselves. That is important.

Then your correction will not cause your children to hate you. They will love you. They will see that you do not punish them because they have put you to inconvenience [with thoughts such as “I don’t want to be disturbed now. You make it too hard for me. Can you be quiet?”], or because you wish to vent your displeasure upon them; but from a sense of duty, for their good, that they may not be left to grow up in sin.

Let’s read the second statement now and note the differences.

The Signs of the Times, April 10, 1884:

If parents would succeed in the government of their children, they must have perfect control of themselves.

That is the first step. A power struggle always happens when we do not have control of ourselves. That’s how it can be defined.

They must learn to control of themselves. They must learn to control their words and the very expression of the countenance.

I want to mention that our countenances all differ. Some appear one way, some look another way. We form our own ideas in our minds of whether a person is sympathetic or not. Yet that is not right. Perhaps a person may not have the habit of smiling often. They may be more serious. But it is different if a parent who normally smiles all the time suddenly changes and has a red, angry face. Controlling our countenance can only happen when the grace of God is in the heart. It has nothing to do with personality, as such. We are different people. One person looks quite different from the next person. But how do we normally look, and how do we look when we chasten our children. That is the question. That is the difference. It is in our countenance and in our words.

The Signs of the Times, April 10, 1884:

They should not suffer the tone of the voice to be disturbed or agitated with excitement or passion.

This doesn't mean that we should speak without emphasis, in a monotone, like a robot. That's not the case. We can speak with emphasis and with a divine passion—with divine love and appeal. But excitement and raising the voice and yelling are meant here, as well as agitation with passion.

Then they can have a decided influence over their children. Impatience in the parents excites impatience in the children. Passion manifested by the parents creates passion in the children, and stirs up the evils of their nature. Some parents correct their children severely in a spirit of impatience, and often in passion.

The word “exacting” fits here—they are exacting.

Such corrections produce no good results. In seeking to correct one evil they create two. Continual censuring and whipping hardens children, and weans their affections from their parents. First reason with your children, clearly point out their wrongs, and impress upon them that they have not only sinned against you, but against God. With your heart full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them.

When our hearts are full of sympathy and pity for our children, then we can correct them. That is when we also need to be strict. We will look at some examples later. Pity does not exclude correction. Quite the opposite. Pity includes correction, because we love the children.

The Signs of the Times, April 10, 1884:

Then they will see that you do not punish them because they have put you to inconvenience, or because you wish to vent your displeasure upon them, but from a sense of duty, for their good; and they will love and respect you.

Although these two statements are similar, they show different aspects. The conclusion is, a power struggle always implants a seed in the children—a seed that is not good.

We need to understand that neither the snake nor the lion are stronger than the other. Remember that. Both the snake and the lion have lost. I looked for a picture of a lion and a snake to show you. And what I found was a picture of a lion and snake together, but both were dead—mortally wounded when they fought against each other. A large lion had bitten the snake, but the cobra had wrapped itself around the lion, suffocating it. That is possible. There are also pictures of a crocodile and a snake lying dead, after having killed each other. Such things happen. It is a good object lesson. There are always two losers in a power struggle. There is not just one loser. Both parties always lose. There is no victor in the end. There can't be in such a struggle. It's impossible. Parents may sometimes feel that they have won the battle, but that feeling will be short-lived. You can be sure that they have lost, and the children have lost too. Sometimes it seems that the children win the power struggle, through asymmetrical warfare. But no, they also lose. Both the parents and children lose.

Triumphing and Revenge

How can we avoid power struggles? The answer is very simple. We can avoid power struggles by not having power struggles in our hearts. A power struggle is not an action. It's an expression of

character. If we have any desire to triumph, regardless of how small, then we are on the wrong side. That must be gone completely—whether in religious, intellectual, or physical matters.

In physical matters parents want to be bigger, faster, better, stronger, and so forth. But when the children grow up they suddenly overtake you. That is hard for some parents to swallow. It is also difficult for the children. When I was young I used to play a board game of draughts with my mother. I loved it and always wanted to play with her. But I always lost. I really worked hard to improve, but she was always better. She somehow knew how to play the game very well. That was a kind of mental power struggle. It was definitely not good. Power struggles can also be spiritual. We want to have the last word, or we think we know the Bible best, for example. Sometimes children give up and think,

“What shall I do with all these Bible texts that are used in order to punish me? I won’t read the Bible anymore because there is no point. I am always defeated by it and I don’t want it anymore.”

The spirit of triumphing must be completely gone if we want to avoid power struggles. The spirit of triumph is deep in human nature and we all are subject to this temptation. It shows itself clearly in spiritual matters. Let’s read an example of this.

Luke 10

¹⁷ Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

That was triumphing. They had the feeling of triumph. It was not all sinful, but can we imagine how they would approach a demoniac the next time? They would confidently expect another victory. That’s what they thought when the father asked them to heal his demoniac son.³⁰ But the demon only mocked the disciples. It was a power struggle and they lost. They were completely caught up in the power struggle. But Jesus knew their feeling of

³⁰ See *Luke 9*.

triumph was going in that wrong direction. That is why He first gave them an encouragement.

Luke 10

¹⁸ And He said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven...

²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

In other words, He said,

“Get rid of this feeling of triumph, of rejoicing because the devils are subject to you. Instead, rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Jesus wanted to remove that triumphant feeling from the disciples, because it would lead to power struggles again and again.

This feeling of triumph or victory is one issue. The other problem with the spirit of a power struggle is the desire for revenge. We know how it is when we, as adults, are in a situation where an injustice is done to us, yet we have to remain silent about it. We sometimes want to prove something to them, or make them feel what we are feeling. But this secret desire for revenge must fully go. It will always lead to a power struggle.

Let's turn again to *Romans*.

Romans 12

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

²⁰ Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Paul clearly says here that every feeling of revenge must go. Jesus said the same in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul tells us not to repay evil with evil, but to have regard for the good things in the sight of all men, and to give place to wrath. In other words, let it be in God's hands.

“Rejoice, not that you have power over the devils, but rejoice that your names are written in the book of Heaven.”

You can be fully satisfied with this, you don't need anything else. You don't need recognition. You don't need triumph. You don't need revenge. Leave everything in God's hands.

Something else that really helps us to avoid entering into a power struggle, is the Golden Rule. Everything that you want others to do to you, do to them. In other words, put yourself in their shoes. Put yourself in their position and try to feel as they do, whenever and however you interact with them. This is the first step.

Parents need self-control before they can control their children. We need to get rid of any spirit of triumph or spirit of revenge. When we are totally free of those—when our interest is totally selfless, and we are totally there for that child—then we can correct them. Then you are ready—you have removed the beam from your own eye and you can remove the splinter from the eye of your child.

Another way to avoid the power struggle is to prepare yourself for the encounter with the children. This means to pray a lot before you correct them. It also means knowing how to approach the situation. Sometimes the problem should not be addressed at all. At other times it must be clearly addressed. When do you confront the child with their error and when do you leave them to themselves? Of course, both ways have merit. When you leave the problem with the child, they will learn through circumstances and the consequences that result. Consequences are an important aspect of education as we have seen. However, sometimes you

cannot allow the consequences to happen, because it's too dangerous for the child.

In the second case you need to do something about the matter and must confront it. For example, when a child is sick and wants to do things that are not good for their health, you have to stop them. You can't just let them kill themselves. When a child wants to run onto a road, you have to stop them. You can't just carelessly say,

“They'll bear the consequences.”

The consequences might be fatal. You cannot pray about it either. No, you have to do something, straight away.

The Example of Jesus

How did Jesus deal with this subject? He did both. Sometimes He confronted situations. Sometimes He did not. Let us look at instances where He clearly confronted situations. We can start with the story of the paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus was standing by, watching the people. He saw one especially wretched case. That man had been sick for 38 years. Jesus asked him if he wanted to be made whole. He did. So Jesus told him to stand up, take his bed and go.

John 5

⁸ Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your bed and walk. And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

Jesus asked the man to pick up his bedroll. Was this merely an unimportant side point? No, this point led to a real power struggle with the Jews, or so it seemed. They told the man that he should not carry his bedroll on the Sabbath. Then they asked him who told him to carry it. He replied that the Man who had healed him told him to do this. The Jewish leaders then took him before the Sanhedrin to answer the charge of breaking the Sabbath. However, to do this the man had to speak about his miraculous healing.

Do you think this was by chance? It wasn't an unimportant side issue. Jesus did that intentionally and very deliberately. He clearly told the man to take up his bed and go. Why did He say that so deliberately? It was because He knew that it would attract the attention of the Jews and would cause them to accuse Him.

Jesus thoughts were with the sick man. Yet, the main reason He healed him was because of what would happen afterwards. He chose to perform the healing on the Sabbath. He could have chosen any other day and He would have had no trouble with the Jews. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching. Everything was important, including the command for the man to take up his bed and go.

The Desire of Ages, p. 206:

For this reason He had chosen the Sabbath upon which to perform the act of healing at Bethesda. He could have healed the sick man as well on any other day of the week; or He might simply have cured him, without bidding him bear away his bed. But this would not have given Him the opportunity He desired. A wise purpose underlay every act of Christ's life on earth. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching. Among the afflicted ones at the pool He selected the worst case upon whom to exercise His healing power, and bade the man carry his bed through the city in order to publish the great work that had been wrought upon him. This would raise the question of what it was lawful to do on the Sabbath, and would open the way for Him to denounce the restrictions of the Jews in regard to the Lord's day, and to declare their traditions void.

It was an opportunity to make a statement and to publish a great work. He really looked for that confrontation, because there was a lesson in it. That is the important point. He did not do it with a spirit of revenge, or in the spirit of triumph. He did not do it selfishly, in order to show them their bigotry or to otherwise elevate himself. That was not His attitude. Rather, His thoughts were on how He could help them and bless them. He could bless and help them only by confronting them with full power—in the

same way you would hit an iceberg directly head-on and with full power. That is the only way to succeed. Jesus did this very deliberately.

This shows very clearly that avoiding power struggles does not mean avoiding confrontation. Those are two different things. If you imagine that you will avoid power struggles by avoiding confrontation, you will do a great injustice to your children. Again, to avoid power struggles does not mean to avoid confrontation. It means to avoid power struggles. Jesus did not enter into a power struggle with the Jews. He did teach them something, but not in the manner of a power struggle. Of course, they tried to struggle with Him in a power struggle—not only in this instance but in others too. We will turn to another statement now that shows how Jesus avoided power struggles.

Luke 20

¹ Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him,

² And spoke to Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?

They confronted Him. That is another way of saying they wanted a power struggle. That's what they were looking for. We said that confrontation is not a power struggle. But in this case, it was. They wanted to show Him something. They knew in whose authority He acted, but they wanted to accuse Him in front of the people. They thought He had ruined their reputation. Therefore, they wanted to ruin His reputation. They wanted revenge—to pay Him back equally. So what did Jesus do? He avoided that power struggle.

³ But He answered and said to them, I also will ask you one thing, and answer me:

⁴ The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?

⁵ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we say, From heaven, He will say, Why then did you not believe him?

⁶ But if we say, From men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.

⁷ So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

⁸ And Jesus said to them, Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

There was no power struggle. Jesus avoided it. But at the same time, He helped them by asking them this question. They should have known where He came from, because John the Baptist had said that the One who came after him was the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world and was greater than he was. He had said that about Jesus and the people knew it. When Jesus asked them about John the Baptist, He gave them their answer and they knew it. This was without entering into a power struggle. If He had said,

“Of course, I am from God,”

–they would have argued with Him. It would have been a long-lasting power struggle. He clearly avoided it here and answered them logically.

Let’s look at another Scripture where Jesus did not avoid confrontation. He avoided the power struggle, but not the confrontation. After He fed the 5,000, He went into the synagogue and spoke of the Bread of Life. His clear speech shows that He was confronting a situation. Ultimately, the people left Him. A rumor was spread that Jesus had said that He was not the Messiah. This would have a great influence that would lead people to believe that Jesus was not the Messiah. So then He asked His disciples if they also wanted to leave Him. They did not. Not even Judas wanted to leave at that time. Jesus could have avoided this by not talking in the synagogue. Why didn’t He? The answer is clearly given in *The Desire of Ages*.

The Desire of Ages, p. 393-394:

Many of the words and acts of Jesus appear mysterious to finite minds, but every word and act had its definite purpose in the work for our redemption; each was calculated to produce its

own result. If we were capable of understanding His purposes, all would appear important, complete, and in harmony with His mission.

If our actions as parents would be like this, what a difference it would make! The problem is that often when we deal with children, what we do is not so important. It may be unimportant. For instance, if we are annoyed by the noise, we may tell the child to be quiet. But that's not dealing with the true issue. It's pushing it away. But it was not that way with Christ. Everything He did was important and complete. When He corrected something, He did it with full power.

The Desire of Ages, p. 393-394:

While we cannot now comprehend the works and ways of God, we can discern His great love, which underlies all His dealings with men. He who lives near to Jesus will understand much of the mystery of godliness. He will recognize the mercy that administers reproof, that tests the character, and brings to light the purpose of the heart.

When Jesus presented the testing truth that caused so many of His disciples to turn back, He knew what would be the result of His words; but He had a purpose of mercy to fulfill. He foresaw that in the hour of temptation every one of His beloved disciples would be severely tested. His agony in Gethsemane, His betrayal and crucifixion, would be to them a most trying ordeal. Had no previous test been given, many who were actuated by merely selfish motives would have been connected with them. When their Lord was condemned in the judgment hall; when the multitude who had hailed Him as their king hissed at Him and reviled Him; when the jeering crowd cried, "Crucify Him!"—when their worldly ambitions were disappointed, these self-seeking ones would, by renouncing their allegiance to Jesus, have brought upon the disciples a bitter, heart-burdening sorrow, in addition to their grief and disappointment in the ruin of their fondest hopes. In that hour of darkness, the example of those who turned from Him might have carried others with them. But Jesus brought about this crisis while by His personal presence He could still strengthen the faith of His true followers.

Compassionate Redeemer, who in the full knowledge of the doom that awaited Him, tenderly smoothed the way for the disciples, prepared them for their crowning trial, and strengthened them for the final test!

It was important for Jesus to confront it fully. However, He did everything in love and compassion. And He did it in a way that would win, even though it seemed to undermine His influence at that time. The significant lesson that we want to learn from this, is not to be diverted at all from doing our duty in order to avoid conflict. That is the message here.

The Teachings and Example of Paul

Let us now read another statement from the Bible, which tells us how to avoid power struggles.

Acts 16

¹ Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

There were Jews and heathen. The Greeks were heathen. So Timothy's mother was Jewish and his father was non-Jewish. She believed in Christ, but the father obviously did not.

² He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

³ Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

⁴ And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

There were many struggles about the question of circumcision. Even in the previous chapter in *Acts* we can read about the struggle they had in Antioch, and how they discussed in Jerusalem about this matter. There was a long struggle before they finally

agreed that they wouldn't lay the burden of being circumcised on the Gentiles. But then Paul circumcised Timothy. He avoided that struggle, which he expected would await him as he traveled with Timothy from place to place. It is a clear example of how he avoided a power struggle. It was a nonessential matter. It was to win people to the gospel. He removed every possible hindrance for that purpose.

It reminds me of *Romans* 14, where Paul explained the principle of how to avoid power struggles. Let's look at this briefly:

Romans 14

¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things [or over minor issues, or about things that are important just to you].

² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat.

The entire chapter shows us how to avoid power struggles. Read it, study it, and become acquainted with it. The main point is not to make ourselves important. Don't make yourself the standard for others. Don't start a power struggle for nothing. The question of circumcision was nothing. Paul states this clearly:

1 Corinthians 7

⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

That is what Paul taught and lived in the case of Timothy. In order to win people, he would let the matter go. In our dealing with children, it is sometimes important to let them have some enjoyment that we may not have chosen in the first place. But let them have it, because it may be worse if you take it away from them, leading them to think that they must take it for themselves. Then they might go and take worse things. Enjoy the little things with them. That is the point. And don't be too particular about everything. Don't be exacting. This is the point. And this is what *Romans* 14 says.

Let's read a good statement about the circumcision of Timothy.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 204:

As a precautionary measure, Paul wisely advised Timothy to be circumcised—not that God required it, but in order to remove from the minds of the Jews that which might be an objection to Timothy's ministrations. In his work Paul was to journey from city to city, in many lands, and often he would have opportunity to preach Christ in Jewish synagogues, as well as in other places of assembly. If it should be known that one of his companions in labor was uncircumcised, his work might be greatly hindered by the prejudice and bigotry of the Jews. Everywhere the apostle met determined opposition and severe persecution.

So Paul did not excite persecution unnecessarily. What can we do, in order to avoid a power struggle? First of all, think about your commands or requirements. Are they really necessary? Secondly, prepare yourself. When you have something to tell your children, prepare yourself through prayer and heart searching, so that you are free from any spirit of triumph or revenge. And thirdly, give the matter your full attention—don't just do it as a side issue, superficially. These are some rules that will help us.

Two Cases: Judas and Jacob

We will continue our study, by looking at two Biblical examples. First, we will see how Jesus dealt with Judas as if he were a child. And then we will look at the struggle between Jacob and Esau, which shows how God overcame the power struggle. This can also help us to understand how power struggles between children and parents can be overcome.

We will now look at how Jesus dealt with Judas. This is related to the question about when to confront and when to avoid confrontation. We can see that Jesus very seldom confronted Judas directly. Jesus avoided such power struggles, although Judas was always ready to have a power struggle—though indirectly, never directly. Judas' messages came in through the back door, so to speak. Can't you imagine how that would have annoyed Jesus?

How would you feel if you were in His position? How would you feel if one of your disciples was constantly spreading dissatisfaction and rumors, which undermined the very things you were teaching? It was not easy. But Jesus dealt with it very wisely.

The first instance we'll consider, is when Jesus met Judas. Jesus knew that Judas' motives were not pure. That is why He made the following statement.

Matthew 8

¹⁹ Then a certain scribe [which was Judas] came and said to Him, Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.

²⁰ And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

By making this statement, Jesus wanted to remove the hope that Judas had of gaining something through connecting himself with Jesus. But Judas was not deterred by it. He still thought he would gain something. He thought that Jesus was being too humble and modest. He thought he would help Jesus by bringing out the best in Him and helping Him make it. Judas thought that he would become great.

Another situation was when Mary washed Jesus' feet. Judas thought that it was too humiliating for an adulterous woman to perform such an act. It was revolting to him, a Pharisee. Judas started a rumor by saying,

“Why this waste?”³¹

That question spread around the room. Jesus answered by speaking to the people generally, but which was also a rebuke to Judas. He did not rebuke him directly. Jesus confronted the situation, but yet He avoided it. He avoided a direct power struggle with Judas. Yet He confronted the situation by giving a lesson for everyone. This is something that can be done. If it is for the benefit of everyone, you can teach them all. That is a valid point. It is possible to call the whole family together and give them a lesson.

³¹ See *Matthew* 26:8.

However, it must be clear that the finger is not pointing to one person, otherwise the power struggle will start. Judas understood Christ's lesson very clearly. From that time on, he was determined not to follow Jesus anymore.

Then when Jesus and His disciples were in Gethsemane, Judas kissed Jesus. But Jesus did not confront him or call him a hypocrite. He didn't say,

“You don't mean it. You only want to betray me.”

He could have said this. But what did He say instead? He called him a friend. He said,

“Friend, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?”³²

Everything Christ did was pouring out His heart for the sinner. That was His entire work.

Let's read about Judas' final struggle now.

The Desire of Ages, p. 722:

“I have sinned,” again cried Judas, “in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” But the high priest, regaining his self-possession, answered with scorn, “What is that to us? see you to that.” *Matthew 27:4*. The priests had been willing to make Judas their tool; but they despised his baseness. When he turned to them with confession, they spurned him.

It seemed as if Judas were repenting.

Judas now cast himself at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging Him to be the Son of God, and entreating Him to deliver Himself. The Saviour did not reproach His betrayer. He knew that Judas did not repent; his confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a looking for of judgment, but he felt no deep, heartbreaking grief that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God, and denied the Holy One of Israel.

³² See *Luke 22:48*.

What was this? It was a power struggle. It was the final effort in the power struggle. Judas wanted Jesus to do what *he* wanted Him to do. It is possible to enter into power struggles even through confessions. Remember asymmetrical warfare. Even with a confession we can try to make the other person do what we want. How did Jesus answer?

The Desire of Ages, p. 722:

Yet Jesus spoke no word of condemnation. He looked pityingly upon Judas, and said, For this hour came I into the world.

Jesus remained firm. He did not change His course in the least—not even with such pitiful tears. I wonder how many parents can stand as firmly as this. There are very few. Most parents would change their course. But Jesus stood firm. While standing firm, though, He looked pityingly at Judas. That was the expression of His countenance. He also spoke no words of condemnation. This is exactly the attitude that helps.

We will now consider the example of Jacob. His story is also about a power struggle. It was a struggle between Jacob and Esau from the very beginning—even in their mother’s womb. Let’s read about it.

Genesis 25

²¹ Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

²² But the children struggled together within her; and she said, If all is well, why am I like this? So she went to inquire of the Lord.

The children struggled together within her. That is how the power struggle began. It was a constant power struggle. They were twins. Even in the mother’s womb, the question was, who had the upper-hand? That’s how it started. We’ll continue reading about when they were born.

²⁴ So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.

²⁵ And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.

²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

The name Jacob means supplanter, or deceitful one, literally one who takes the heel. That was also Jacob's character. He was deceitful. We can read the first example of his deception in the following verses.

Genesis 25

²⁹ Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.

³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary. Therefore his name was called Edom.

³¹ But Jacob said, Sell me your birthright as of this day.

That is quite remarkable. He took advantage of Esau's weakness. Who was stronger in the power struggle, Jacob or Esau? Obviously, Esau was the stronger person. He had more strength and was physically stronger. He was a warrior. But Jacob was evidently more clever. He used that to his full advantage. Just imagine having two children—a very strong one and a very slim one who is able to outwit the stronger one. That is something! And those were Isaac's two children. One was strong and the other was clever. Those were their characters.

Why it was exactly like that is another question. The power struggle started in the mother's womb, and evidently the parents were not successful in stopping it. So it continued and was accelerated by the fact that they were so different. First of all, they were different by nature. One was stronger, while the other was weaker. One was more thoughtful, while the other was less so. One was rash, while the other was calmer. They both had a weakness though—they were both constantly struggling to be better than the other. Instead of stopping the power struggle, the parents struggled too. They had the same struggle with each other.

Isaac favored Esau, while Rebekah favored Jacob. The conflict continued on and on.

There was another deception about the birthright which can be read in *Genesis 27*. Isaac was old and blind. He wanted to bless Esau. However, Jacob got the blessing from Isaac by means of a trick. When Esau found out about it he was very angry. The two brothers were separated. For the time being it was the end of the power struggle because they were physically apart. But both of them lost. Esau lost the birthright and Jacob lost his home. It was a terrible loss for both of them. That is always the outcome with power struggles.

Both brothers became very rich during that time of estrangement. Despite the fact that they were both blessed with material riches, neither of them had peace. Jacob was not at peace and neither was Esau. Both of them feared each other—in spite of the fact that they were separated. Esau feared Jacob, because if he returned Esau thought he would want his birthright. And Jacob feared Esau, because he was a threat to Jacob and would try to kill him. It was quite a test for both of them when God told Jacob to go back home. How would the power struggle continue? That was the big question.

Esau came to meet Jacob. Jacob tried to do everything to appease his brother, because he feared him so much. Esau knew that Jacob was a cunning man, so why should he trust him now? Jacob had tricked Esau out of his birthright at least twice. Why would he not trick him again? Jacob would have thought similarly. How could Esau ever trust him? Everything that Jacob did to try to prove his sincerity had no effect. Esau was coming against him with a great number of soldiers. That was a real threat. Let's read what happened.

Genesis 32

²² And he [Jacob] arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

²³ He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

Jacob thought that this man was either Esau himself, or one of his men. It was dark and he couldn't see him. Jacob truly thought it was one of the men who were coming for revenge. Therefore, as far as Jacob was concerned, the same power struggle that had always been in the family continued in a physical way. Esau didn't know anything about it, but the power struggle was also going on with him. He thought that Jacob was coming back to take his possessions and he was determined to prove himself victor. It was power struggle, phase two. So Jacob and the man struggled. Of course, we know it was Christ, not an enemy.

Genesis 32

²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

²⁶ And He said, Let me go, for the day breaks.

Who was the victor in the struggle between Christ and Jacob? They were both victors. That is the point. When we change from fighting a power struggle to a struggle together, it is not just one person who gains the victory. Both do. Just as we both lose when we enter a power struggle, we both win when we cease the power struggle. That is the case here.

[Audience]: When we have a power struggle with each other, we are actually struggling with God.

[Audience]: Jacob could have seen Esau as a friend from the beginning. Esau himself was not a threat to him. The entire struggle that Jacob had against Esau for so many the years was not necessary, because God had everything in His hands.

Later in the story, we read that Jacob's name was changed—from Jacob, meaning “deceitful,” to Israel, meaning “overcomer.” His character had changed.

Genesis 32

²⁸ You have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.

Now he was in the real great controversy. Now he was in the controversy against sin, not against people anymore.

Genesis 33

¹ Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.

² And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.

³ Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

That was the end of the power struggle. This is how things change. They can only change when God works for us, as parents—as we want to undo our past failures. The only way God can do that is by giving us the experience of Jacob. When He does, we will see that our children have changed too. God doesn't work on only our hearts. He also works on their hearts. In Esau's case it did not convert him. But at least it made him peaceful and the power struggle between the brothers ceased. They went their separate ways—but not in fear of each other anymore. There was no unrest.

This also essentially answers the question,

“What can we do when we have established a wrong spirit in our children which causes power struggles?”

We need to have the experience of Jacob. That will make a difference eventually.

13. Power Struggles II

Sabbath, April 7, 2018

WE'LL read our introductory text together. It is the basis for our study today. The connection is again to child education: we need to understand how we can avoid power struggles. Power struggles between parents and children are one of the most common problems in child education. These always lead to unhappy consequences, regardless of who wins the struggle. In reality, no one wins; both parties lose—even if one seems to have success. For instance, a parent may succeed in getting their child to do what they want them to; but in a power struggle, we drive out one devil and let two others in, as we saw last week. That is why we don't want to have any power struggles in child education, under any circumstances. Our aim is to work together on a project—not to have a power struggle with the other party. It is a new style of education, which we are learning here from the word of God.

The Power Struggle in Heaven

The paragraph we'll read is about the controversy between God and Satan. We could also call it a power struggle between light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil. This controversy doesn't even take place from God's side; we can see that in the following quote:

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

God could have destroyed Satan as easily as a pebble can be cast to the earth. How easy is that? The children know that it's very easy. But God didn't do that. Is it good that He didn't do it, or is it not so good? We all agree that what God does is good, so it must be good. But how often are accusations made against God for things which He didn't do! If He had destroyed Satan immediately, we would not find ourselves in all the problems we are in now. There would be no struggles, no death, no hatred, and so on; they wouldn't exist. Therefore, there must be a very good reason why God didn't destroy Satan.

Imagine having a pest in one of our fields. If we fight the pest and destroy it from the very start, then we will have a break from this pest for the rest of the year. But if we don't destroy it, the pest will multiply and will cause us huge problems. For example, the pests will eat the crops. There would have to be a very good reason for not eradicating the pest at the very beginning.

This reason is described in the statement we just read. We need to understand it. The same principle can be applied to child education. If we suppress the child from the very start, the problem is solved for the rest of their lifetime. But if we don't do so, we must have a good reason. We could solve many problems in this manner—very quickly and effectively. Therefore, if we don't do so, we must have a good reason. Let's see what these reasons are now.

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used.

The statement speaks of "compelling power," which is the power of force. Parents are able to use compelling power: they are stronger; they have muscle strength, and they are stronger while the children are young. But this power is not found in God's gov-

ernment; it exists only in Satan's government. Even though God has the power, He does not use it. The use of such force is never found with God; we find it only with Satan. We can conclude then, that God applies principles which correspond with His true nature—namely, not using force.

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

What does *moral* mean in this context? It means that only two principles are used: truth and love. What would be the opposite of these? The opposite of truth is lies, or deceit—such as fake news, exaggerations, rumors, misrepresentations, or lies of any kind. And the opposite of love is hatred, anger, and selfishness. Being selfish and only wanting something for ourselves—selfishness—is actually the very opposite of love. These are not found in God's government, that would be immoral. How can we define the word moral? Moral includes everything which is truth and love. Anything else is immoral.

Perhaps you have heard the phrase “moral compass.” Some people are said to have lost their moral compass. This means that they no longer know what is right and wrong. They are said to lie through their teeth. This even happens with people who profess to believe in God and who say they are Christians. It's all merely for their own advantage. Then the lies are justified as being emergency lies, or white lies, and are portrayed as being very charitable.

What is actually right and what is wrong? What do they lead to? God's government shows us what is right. And God's government rests upon these two principles of truth and love. Those are the means He uses. Those form the foundation of His government. We can always rely upon the fact that whatever God says, is true. And whatever God does, is always selfless. We see this love in the fact that He sent His son, Christ, to this earth. Jesus was born like us; He laid down His life for us; He experienced

temptation for us; and so on. All of this shows that truth and love are the foundation of God's government.

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used.

God's ways are the ways of goodness, mercy, and love. These three different characteristics are named separately, which indicates that they must each have a different meaning, while still belonging together. We can say that love is selflessness; that is probably the best definition. Mercy could also be called forgiveness. And what does goodness mean? Goodness is simply doing what's right—being good.

Someone once called Jesus "good Teacher" and Jesus answered that there is no one good except God.³³ That is in harmony with the principles of truth and love. Goodness also is connected with compassion and friendliness. These characteristics are included in the word "goodness." It means what is good and right. God's authority rests upon that. His authority does not rest upon superior power. If He wanted to use superior power, He would have destroyed Satan long ago. But instead, God's authority rests upon these three characteristics. And that is why He did not destroy Satan. It's very simple and straightforward. God limits himself in this sense.

The paragraph we read states that God doesn't use force, because it is not a principle of His government. He acts as He does simply because that is who He is. It is His character. The next paragraph describes that there is also a good reason for His acting the way He does. It is not merely an expression of His character. It also has a specific object and purpose—an aim. That goal is described as follows.

³³ See *Matthew* 19:16.

AN ETERNAL BASIS

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.

What is the aim? It is for lies and hatred to be done away with forever. It is not about getting rid of people who express these—who have hatred in their hearts, or who lie. That is not the goal. Rather, the aim is to put away the hatred itself, the lies themselves, and the selfishness itself. That's what it's about. But that cannot be done by making a quick end of them. We are reading here about sustainability. Sustainability is an important word today. We have forgotten what sustainability means and we are destroying our planet as a result. We know this and can read it in many articles and scientific studies. We are not living sustainably.

An example of this is how we cultivate the ground. We lose a certain amount of arable land each year, due to the way we live—through meat eating, and many other unsustainable lifestyles. Even fertilizing destroys the land. We are robbing the soil and thus destroying it. Our agriculture team could certainly tell us a lot about this. Sustainability is lacking. It doesn't make sense to do everything as quickly as possible, trying to get a big harvest by drawing all the nutrients from the soil. It doesn't achieve the aim. We need to think of future generations, if we want to be sustainable. We need to think about how the land can continue to be used without being destroyed. As humans, we are somehow not willing to do that. But God thinks differently. He thinks sustainably.

When God wants to end hatred, selfishness, and lying, He does it in such a way that it remains sustainable and permanent. If He had destroyed Satan at the very beginning, as a gardener would

kill a weed with a herbicide, then it would not have been lasting or on a secure basis. Questions would have remained unanswered; doubts would have remained about the possibility of Satan's arguments being right after all. Therefore, God gave the opportunity for Satan's principles to be fully developed; then it could be seen where they lead to, so everyone could make an intelligent decision. That is sustainable.

APPLIED TO CHILD EDUCATION

The same is true in child education. Things must be revealed, in order to be able to deal with them intelligibly. God works to place everything on an eternal and secure foundation. That is why He gave Satan time to develop the principles of his government.

The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.

We also are viewing this. We see where hatred and lies lead. We can see how awful they are—especially when we are their victims. When we are the offenders, we might see advantages in lying and hatred, but we see how bad they are when we are the victims. In this world we are not only offenders. We are also victims. At some point, sooner or later, we will each be a victim of the exact offenses that we now commit.

We can say that situations become sustainable when we give them enough space and time for them to develop, so that it can be seen where they are leading. This is very important in child education.

Examples from the Bible

THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS

Let's look at an example from the Bible, which shows this principle very clearly. It is the story of when one of Jesus' best friends, Lazarus, became sick.

John 11

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

They were very closely connected with Him.

John 11

⁶ So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

How do people normally react in such situations? They usually hurry to their sick friend. But Jesus didn't do that.

⁷ Then after this He said to the disciples, Let us go to Judea again.

“Now let's go.” But the disciples asked why go then, after two days' delay.

¹¹ These things He said, and after that He said to them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.

¹² Then His disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get well.

The disciples assumed this meant that he was recovering.

¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there.

What a [seemingly] heartless statement! His best friend had died, and He said that He was happy not to be there! But Jesus had a purpose which was sustainable; He wanted to do something, which the disciples didn't understand as yet. He wanted to resurrect Lazarus; that was why He was glad. Jesus performed His greatest miracle for Lazarus. He had healed many people, but He performed the resurrection only for Lazarus. It was very special for Lazarus to be woken up from the dead. What Jesus had in store was much deeper than the disciples could see.

Jesus allowed Satan to take the life of his best friend, Lazarus. All sickness and death come from Satan's power, not from God. Why did Jesus allow Satan to attack like this? It was in order to be able to strike back—once and for all—through the resurrection. Jesus thereby showed that He had power even over death.

Through that demonstration of power over death, He showed His power to all of us too. He gave us hope and faith. He accomplished much more in that way, than if He had prevented Lazarus' death. That is the profound depth of the ways of God.

THE SUFFERINGS OF JOB

These same principles can be seen in the example of Job. This is also an interesting story, which Job himself did not understand. Why did God allow Job to be tortured as he was?

Job 1

¹² And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

God told Satan that Job was in his hands. Didn't He give Satan an advantage? Didn't He place His faithful servant Job under the power of great hatred? The word "Satan" means "the enemy." He abandoned Job to the enemy. We could think that God cast Job to the ground like a pebble. But that wasn't the case. That would be just to look at it superficially.

In the following chapter of the book of *Job*, the same statement is repeated.

Job 2

⁶ And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.

God also set the limit that Satan should spare Job's life. It's another question as to whether it was nice for Job or not. He was very sick and in pain. He even wished to die. But eventually he received everything again, and even more. This experience revealed how evil Satan is on the one hand, and on the other, how faithful we can be to God—even in the worst times. It made a greater blow against hatred and lies than if nothing had happened to Job.

God works in a sustainable way. With God, the holy end sanctifies the means. God is justified in not destroying Satan, because

He achieves so much good through acting as He does. The sustainable results are a justification of the means He uses. We often say that the end justifies the means, but what is that end, or that aim, which we want to reach? It is short term, not sustainable. If we really want to reach permanent and sustainable aims, then we will use the corresponding sustainable means, as God does.

HOW JESUS DEALT WITH HIS DISCIPLES

Let's apply this now, practically speaking, to child education. Should we allow children to follow their will, even when that will places the child in danger? That is a difficult question—one which every parent would answer differently. One parent would say that nothing adverse should be allowed to happen to their children. We might call those parents the “helicopter parents.” They are very careful to make sure that nothing bad happens to their children. They will not allow it under any circumstances. The children of such parents often feel very restricted as they grow up, or else they end up completely dependent on others to rescue them.

What should we allow when the children want their own way? Jesus is our Example again. We can consider Him as the Father, and His disciples as the children. If we look at how Jesus dealt with the disciples, this will give us guidance as to how we can deal with our children. Let's consider Peter's experience first.

Matthew 14

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.

²⁹ So He said, Come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me!

³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

Jesus told Peter to come to Him, but then Peter sank and was in life-threatening danger. Peter asked for something and Jesus said he could have it by telling him to come to Him on the water. But then Peter sank. Of course, Jesus saved him at the last moment,

by stretching out His hand when Peter cried out for help. But Jesus gave Peter the freedom to follow his own will, even when it put him in danger. This is shown very clearly here.

Let's look at another similar example.

Luke 22

³¹ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.

³³ But he said to Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.

³⁴ Then He said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me.



Jesus knew that Peter was not converted in this aspect. Peter thought he was strong and capable of withstanding any temptation, but he didn't realize that he was so weak. That's why he made his boastful claims. And when Jesus was brought to trial, Peter followed Him there. Then when Peter was asked if he were

a disciple, he denied it. Jesus could have prevented such a situation. He could have told Peter not to follow Him to the trial. He could have told him to stay home because he wouldn't be able to manage it. But Peter wanted to go and Jesus allowed him to. He allowed Peter to deny Him. He even foretold that he would. Jesus gave Peter the full and free choice. How many parents would do that? How many would do so if their children were to stand before a court and deny them, saying:

“I don't know them. They're not my parents. I don't have anything to do with them.”

That would be very difficult! How many parents would tell them to stay home, because they couldn't handle it yet? Jesus knew everything that would happen, but nonetheless He let Peter do it. He also told Peter,

Luke 22

³² When you have returned to me [KJV: are converted], strengthen your brethren.

He told him in advance that there was a way out. This shows the sustainability of Jesus' methods. He would not have achieved anything by preventing the situation. Absolutely nothing. The same story can also be found in *Matthew 26*.

EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

We will now consider an example from the Old Testament. We'll think of God as the Parent and the Israelites as the children. The Israelites also often wanted their own way. It was not always what was for their best. God was their King in actuality, but they said that they wanted to have a human king. What did God do? He gave them a king. Let's read about this.

1 Samuel 8

⁷ And the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

God told Samuel to obey their voice in everything. He basically said,

“They want a king, so let them have a king.”

Why did God allow this? It had to be revealed. It had to be shown where it all would lead. Eventually, in Jesus’s day, the Israelites cried out that they had no king apart from Caesar.³⁴ Pilate asked if they really wanted to crucify their King and they cried that they had no king except for Caesar. What a humiliation! They must have at least seen what a terrible choice they had made. Let’s read another verse about it.

Hosea 13

⁹ O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from me.

¹⁰ I will be your King; where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, Give me a king and princes?

¹¹ I gave you a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath.

God essentially said that He allowed them to have a king, because they wanted one. But, ultimately, their king would disappoint them. The very thing they chose would disappoint them.

Balaam is another example we could look into.³⁵ He really wanted something, namely the money from King Balak. Balak had offered him money in exchange for cursing Israel. Balaam thought it was a good idea, but he said that he’d have to ask God first. Of course, God told him, “No.” So Balaam told Balak that God would not allow him to curse Israel, although he wanted to do as the king asked. Then Balak simply offered more money and fame to Balaam, to try to change his answer. Balaam made the same pretense of asking God again. He received the answer that he could go a short distance with them. But on the way, his donkey was stopped by angels. Balaam was very angry about this, and beat his donkey, so God allowed him to continue on. It was

³⁴ See *John* 19:15.

³⁵ See *Numbers*, chapter 22.

all permitted, only because Balaam wanted it. Why did God allow this? It was to show what seeking our own advantage leads to. We know the rest of the story about Balaam, and his end.

THE SELECTION OF JUDAS

Another interesting case is the choice of Judas as a disciple. The other disciples recommended Judas, thinking that they needed him to belong to them. He was a capable man—a Pharisee, who knew the Bible well. He was a shrewd man with a lot of influence. The other disciples really believed that they needed him. Jesus received him rather coolly though. He said,

Matthew 8

²⁰ Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

But still the disciples said they wanted him. So Jesus allowed him to become a disciple and accepted him as one of the twelve inner group. The disciples never understood until the end of Judas' life. Then they saw how crazy it is when we get our own will. That was a lesson which was much more sustainable than if Jesus had prevented Judas from becoming a disciple.

There are many more examples which show that God never entered into a power struggle with His children. Instead, He showed them through circumstances what the results of their choices were. He does the same with us. He shows us, through the consequences, what happens when we choose to go in a different direction from His counsel. This doesn't mean that He creates circumstances arbitrarily. It's simply the result of our actions.

DAVID'S DEALING WITH AMNON AND ABSALOM

We will consider another example now that is found in *2 Samuel* 13. It's the story of Amnon, David's son. David had committed adultery which really discouraged him. As a result he had a bad conscience. Although he remained king and retained his honor, he was depressed and weakened for the rest of his life. He could no longer stand up to his own children. He always thought about his own sin. How could he punish his children for the sin which

he himself had committed? That question was always in the back of his mind. That's why it was so difficult for him to do anything. But he should have done something.

One of David's sons, Amnon, took his half-sister Tamar by force, without marrying her. Another of David's sons, Absalom, was his sister's protector. The situation brought terrible shame on the entire family. Of course, it was a burden for Tamar who could never marry after that. It was a bad situation. David didn't punish Amnon. He didn't do anything. You can read the story for yourselves.

2 Samuel 13

²¹ But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry [internally].

Some translations add that he didn't do anything to punish Amnon, because he loved him the most, as he was his firstborn son. What kind of love was that? It was love at the cost of others. Absalom, Tamar's brother, was her natural protector. This is why we read that:

²² Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

Later on, Absalom took revenge and killed Amnon. When that happened, David was angry again. He couldn't tolerate one of his sons killing another son. So Absalom fled from home and was estranged from his father. It is a well-known story. What happened here? It was a natural progression: hatred, retaliation, revenge, and so on. These are all found in this story. Why did this all happen to David? The answer is found in the following paragraph.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728:

David had neglected the duty of punishing the crime of Amnon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and father and the impenitence of the son, the Lord permitted events to take their natural course, and did not restrain Absalom. When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be

in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.

When God takes the case in hand, it doesn't mean that He actively steps in. Rather, He simply lets situations run their course. Nothing more. Letting the situation run its course means that sin will be punished with sin. Sin limits itself.

This principle is found in nature as well. For example, bacteria grow and multiply at a rapid rate. This can be a problem. But once they reach a certain point, they start to crowd each other out and begin to die off. The whole bacteria colony collapses. We can see how sin limits itself. It develops more and more, but at some point, it stops. Sin is punished with sin. That is the point. This also reveals what sin actually is. It is a destructive power. There is a limit for our will too. We can't just want everything, especially when it hurts other people. God will also set a limit for us.

God's Dealing with Prayer

We know that God doesn't answer every prayer. There are several very interesting statements about this. Let's read one of them.

Gospel Workers, p. 219:

We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose.

His purpose!

Our desires and interests should be lost in His will.

God doesn't always leave us to our own will. That is also important when we deal with our children. It is important to allow those things which are for their best. We need to think more

widely, more sustainably. We should not triumph over them, saying,

“I already showed you! I told you so!”

That is also a possible reaction. We tell them beforehand what will happen, then when things go awry, we tell them that we told them so.

“Didn’t *I* tell you so?”

—we say, with the emphasis on “*I*.” But that is not how God is. God wants what happens to us to be a blessing to us. It’s not about His glory being increased. No, He wants us to be blessed. His entire aim is to help us. When He allows something which we desperately want, then it is the best for us, even if it hurts us in the short term. In the long run it will be for our good. And when He doesn’t answer our prayers, it is also for our good. That is a fact, and we have the privilege of knowing it with God. That’s what we read in the next paragraph as well. This statement refers to John the Baptist, who would be another good example to study in connection with our topic. But we won’t do that today.

The Desire of Ages, p. 224:

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.

Therefore, we can know that when God doesn’t give us something that we want, it is for our good. We can have that trust in Him.

Dealing with the Will of the Child

It is important for parents to respect their children. It’s not necessary to have power struggles, because we want what’s best for them. When we have that in our hearts, then we don’t need to struggle; it’s not necessary. But as soon as we get angry, or feel injured or attacked, then the power struggle starts. We studied

that last week. But we must avoid this at all costs. It must not happen. We need to realize that the will of our children is very important. It must not just be ignored or pushed aside. It must be developed in the right way and at the right time; every bit of it is needed. We need every bit of our will when we face tests and temptation; that will must be strengthened. This is why we need to avoid all power struggles. Every power struggle is about whose will is stronger. That is so wrong.

In closing, we will read one more statement which describes this very nicely.

Education, p. 288:

To direct the child's development without hindering it by undue control should be the study of both parent and teacher. Too much management is as bad as too little. The effort to "break the will" of a child is a terrible mistake. Minds are constituted differently; while force may secure outward submission, the result with many children is a more determined rebellion of the heart. Even should the parent or teacher succeed in gaining the control he seeks, the outcome may be no less harmful to the child. The discipline of a human being who has reached the years of intelligence should differ from the training of a dumb animal. The beast is taught only submission to its master. For the beast, the master is mind, judgment, and will. This method, sometimes employed in the training of children, makes them little more than automatons. Mind, will, conscience, are under the control of another. It is not God's purpose that any mind should be thus dominated. Those who weaken or destroy individuality assume a responsibility that can result only in evil. While under authority, the children may appear like well-drilled soldiers; but when the control ceases, the character will be found to lack strength and steadfastness. Having never learned to govern himself, the youth recognizes no restraint except the requirement of parents or teacher. This removed, he knows not how to use his liberty, and often gives himself up to indulgence that proves his ruin.

Since the surrender of the will is so much more difficult for some pupils than for others, the teacher should make obedience to his requirements as easy as possible. The will should be

guided and molded, but not ignored or crushed. Save the strength of the will; in the battle of life it will be needed.

The will is needed. Requirements should be as easy to obey as possible. It may not necessarily be our natural tendency to make obedience as easy as possible. This, of course, does not mean that we should make requirements as easy as possible to slide under or get around. That is different.

This statement could be read to say that we should make it as easy as possible for children *to disobey* our requirements. But no, we are to make it as easy as possible for them *to fulfill* the requirements. Why is this? It's because children are different from each other, and because it is important for their wills to be set on the right side. When the will is on the right side, then there will be a real power for good. That is needed. Therefore, power struggles are neither necessary nor good. Let us really avoid them and apply ourselves fully to strengthening the will.

14. Power Struggles III

Sabbath, April 14, 2018

OUR topic is again about how to avoid power struggles. When you look back at your experience over the past week, did you avoid power struggles? How much did you put the principles into practice? Did you manage to avoid them?

[Audience]: My results were mixed. I'm still learning. Sometimes I was able to avoid them from the beginning, and sometimes I realized when I was in the middle of one, which was usually the case.

At least we can say we are more aware of the power struggles. We have not been aware of them in the past. Now we know when a power struggle takes place. We know we have to watch.

[Audience]: I went to somebody with whom I had had a power struggle and apologized. The study really helped me not to discuss, but rather just to say what I had to say. That was very helpful.

So, you didn't defend yourself. Good.

[Audience]: Now I can start to realize when a power struggle starts. I can sense and understand that it's up to me whether a power struggle starts, then I can go quickly to God. I remembered that the key is doing something together and then the power struggle does not start.

Good. We will continue this subject today. Of course, we may think that we are avoiding a power struggle when we don't confront difficult situations. But we want to make clear that this is not really avoiding it. A power struggle does not need to have angry words necessarily. There doesn't need to be a physical fight. It can also be about the question of whether or not the naughty child gets what they want. If you are simply quiet to avoid a power struggle, the child gets what it wants. You also get what you want—your peace. You both get what you want. That is a way

of avoiding the power struggle, which does not lead to a really good character.

The Child Jesus

Today, we want to look at the life of Jesus as a child. This is the key topic today. The main chapter we'll draw thoughts from is "Days of Conflict" in the book *The Desire of Ages*. But let us begin first with a Bible text.

Luke 2 [NLT]

⁴⁰ There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Jesus was a child filled with wisdom, which means that He also had the wisdom to know how to avoid power struggles. He is our Example.

⁵¹ Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And his mother stored all these things in her heart.

⁵² Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

Jesus grew in wisdom and in favor with God, as well as with all the people. That is quite a statement! Who would not want to grow in favor with everyone? That would be a nice situation, right? The big question is how to achieve it. The secret is explained precisely in the following verses.

Proverbs 3 [NLT]

¹ My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart.

² If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying.

³ Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.

⁴ Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will earn a good reputation.

That's the same result as with Jesus. He grew in favor with both God and all the people. What is the condition for that?

Proverbs 3 [NLT]

¹ Never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart.

³ Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.

Then it will happen. That is the secret. We could basically close the study with this text. Everything is explained here. But we also want to see how this worked out in Jesus' life.

First of all, we must say that favor with God and man does not necessarily mean what we think, superficially. It doesn't mean that there are no conflicts. It does not mean that you never get hostility from the other party. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Let's read about this.

Galatians 1 [NLT]

¹⁰ Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

Another translation says "the favor of people." Favor and approval have the same meaning here. Jesus had favor with God and man. In other words, His approval ratings were high. If they were so high, why did the people crucify Him?

¹⁰ Obviously I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

That's very clear. When Jesus grew in favor with God and man, it does not mean what some imagine; it does not mean high approval ratings. It does not mean that everyone clapped and cheered at everything that Jesus did—certainly not. Jesus was not a people-pleaser—not even as a child.

Matthew 23 – The Environment Revealed

The conflict that Jesus was involved in every day is revealed in *Matthew 23*. Jesus describes the Pharisees and the scribes of His time. As we read the text, remember that these were the kind of

people whom He had to meet every single day. His was not a very peaceful life.

Matthew 23 [NLT]

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples,

² The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses.

³ So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach.

⁴ They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

A different version says that their demands are *impossible*, which is another word for *unbearable*. Consider this in relation to parents and children. Parents crush children with impossible religious demands, but they themselves never lift a finger to ease the burden. Situations like this do indeed happen. When Jesus was a child, His mother was not exactly as described here. But His brothers sided with the Pharisees and they put the same pressure on Jesus as is explained here.

⁵ Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels.

⁶ And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues.

⁷ They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called Rabbi.

Can you see the role of the parents here? They love to go to the Sabbath worship every week. They love to give answers, and so on. Their children don't give them, but the parents do. They love to receive respectful greetings. They love to be called daddy and mommy by their children.

⁸ Don't let anyone call you Rabbi, for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters.

⁹ And don't address anyone here on earth as Father, for only God in heaven is your Father.

¹⁰ And don't let anyone call you Teacher, for you have only one teacher, the Messiah.

¹¹ The greatest among you must be a servant.

¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

¹³ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You won't go in yourselves, and you don't let others enter either.

¹⁴ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, you will be severely punished.

¹⁵ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!

That was stern language! Remember that this was really the situation. Jesus describes here something that was real. This was the kind of character He had to meet every single day as a child. He was not in school, but He was urged to go to school. They wanted to teach Him. These very people Jesus was describing here, were the same ones who wanted to teach Him.

Then Jesus continued to say,

Matthew 23 [NLT]

¹⁶ Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it means nothing to swear by God's Temple, but that it is binding to swear by the gold in the Temple.

¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred?

¹⁸ And you say that to swear by the altar is not binding, but to swear by the gifts on the altar is binding.

¹⁹ How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

²⁰ When you swear by the altar, you are swearing by it and by everything on it.

²¹ And when you swear by the Temple, you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it.

²² And when you swear by heaven, you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne.

²³ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

In the Old Testament times it was considered unclean to eat either camel meat or insects, such as gnats. The Pharisees were eager to strain out every little gnat, so to speak, while ignoring the bigger issues.

Matthew 23 [NLT]

²⁵ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence!

²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity.

²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build tombs for the prophets your ancestors killed, and you decorate the monuments of the godly people your ancestors destroyed.

³⁰ Then you say, If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined them in killing the prophets.

³¹ But in saying that, you testify against yourselves that you are indeed the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

³² Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started.

³³ Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?

They were already plotting to kill Jesus at the very time He said this. They already had that purpose in their hearts. Jesus addressed the very thing they were planning.

Matthew 23 [NLT]

³⁴ Therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers of religious law. But you will kill some by crucifixion, and you will flog others with whips in your synagogues, chasing them from city to city.

³⁵ As a result, you will be held responsible for the murder of all godly people of all time—from the murder of righteous Abel to the murder of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you killed in the Temple between the sanctuary and the altar.

³⁶ I tell you the truth, this judgment will fall on this very generation.

We can see here a very strong animosity towards Jesus. He had already felt that as a child too—very much so.

Ways to Avoid the Power Struggle

How did Jesus avoid a power struggle in that environment? That is our question. How can a power struggle be avoided in such an environment? How can it be dealt with in such a way that it is not self-defensive or hurtful to the other person? We will consider these questions today.

1. NO SELFISH ANGER

First of all, Jesus did not feel any anger in his heart towards the people. Even though He said all of this to them, there was absolutely no anger. Let's read a statement about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 619:

Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denuncia-

tion of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ he will still preserve calmness and self-possession.

These are remarkable attributes. There were no words of retaliation, regardless of how hard they attacked Him. There was no irritated temper. Jesus remained calm, despite everything that was hurled at Him. He preserved calmness and self-possession. This was in spite of the fact that, in addition to being attacked, He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness and sin itself. He discerned the working of satanic agencies. He saw that people were moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood. He hated that falsehood. It is remarkable to be able to retain self-possession in the midst of lies being spread all around. Jesus had a righteous indignation against sin. But He was not roused by passion to revile those who reviled Him. His passion was directed against sin, not against people.

2. NO STOICISM

Normally, we see passion only in the sense of retaliation on one hand, or stoicism on the other. A stoic person is someone who maintains an even keel and does not express emotion. The stoic attitude means to have no righteous indignation against sin—absolutely none. It means we are indifferent. If others destroy themselves, then we say,

“I don’t care. Let them destroy themselves.”

But that was not Jesus’ attitude. He had a deep concern for people. He wanted to help them. He loved them. He hated what destroyed them. But His passion was never to revile the people themselves. He preserved calmness and self-possession. He had no irritated temper and no words of retaliation. That was Jesus’

experience. In this case, Jesus was independent of the reaction of others. Regardless of what people did to Him, His peace was not disturbed. That is quite something! He was not dependent on what other people did.

3. LIVING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

We will start reading from the chapter “Days of Conflict” now. We will go back and forth in the chapter a little, looking at Jesus as a child.

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God’s countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently.

His work was often—not just sometimes—but often made unnecessarily severe. And that was because He was willing and uncomplaining. So if we make more complaints, then our work won’t be made so difficult? Indeed, that is the case. If we complain a lot, then our peace won’t be disturbed as much. But Jesus did not complain, and therefore, His work was often made unnecessarily severe. But Jesus lived as in the light of God’s countenance. So, if we know and are aware that God is on our side, then we don’t need to retaliate: we will be living in a different atmosphere. We’ll read this in the following statement as well.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

This shows Jesus' secret. He made a complete surrender to His Heavenly Father. As a result, He lived in a different atmosphere and there was perfect peace in His heart. He was not influenced by whatever people did to Him. It is quite remarkable not to be influenced by anything else besides communion with the Heavenly Father.

One problem to face is opposition and hatred. Another problem is to be misunderstood; that is, when our motives are wrongly interpreted. For instance, perhaps we want to help someone, but they imagine that we only want to harm them. Or, perhaps we do the right thing, but someone else thinks that what we are doing is very wrong; it is a misunderstanding of our actions. How do we feel in such situations? We want to explain our motives, thinking that we have to say something about the matter. But how often was Jesus misunderstood? We will read some statements about this. He was always misunderstood.

The Desire of Ages, p. 87:

Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He. His brothers felt that His influence went far to counteract theirs. He possessed a tact which none of them had, or desired to have. When they spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands. As He relieved their sufferings, the truths He taught were associated with His acts of mercy, and were thus riveted in the memory.

4. MAKING THE SCRIPTURES HIS GUIDE

So far, so good. Everything is fine. But now comes the other side.

All this displeased His brothers. Being older than Jesus, they felt that He should be under their dictation. They charged Him with thinking himself superior to them, and reproved Him for setting himself above their teachers and the priests and rulers of

the people. Often they threatened and tried to intimidate Him; but He passed on, making the Scriptures His guide.

His brothers charged Jesus with thinking himself superior to them. But was that in His mind? Wouldn't we normally say at least a word in self-defense if we were misunderstood to be thinking ourselves superior to others in that way? Wouldn't we tell the others that we don't think that way, that they are misunderstanding us, and that we don't want to be better than them? But was such a statement ever made by Jesus? No, even though they made these charges against Him. They even threatened and tried to intimidate Him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 85-86:

In every gentle and submissive way, Jesus tried to please those with whom He came in contact. Because He was so gentle and unobtrusive, the scribes and elders supposed that He would be easily influenced by their teaching. They urged Him to receive the maxims and traditions that had been handed down from the ancient rabbis, but He asked for their authority in Holy Writ. He would hear every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; but He could not obey the inventions of men. Jesus seemed to know the Scriptures from beginning to end, and He presented them in their true import. The rabbis were ashamed to be instructed by a child. They claimed that it was their office to explain the Scriptures, and that it was His place to accept their interpretation. They were indignant that He should stand in opposition to their word.

They knew that no authority could be found in Scripture for their traditions. They realized that in spiritual understanding Jesus was far in advance of them. Yet they were angry because He did not obey their dictates. Failing to convince Him, they sought Joseph and Mary, and set before them His course of noncompliance. Thus He suffered rebuke and censure.

But He simply made the Scriptures His guide. He never even went as far as to explain His motives. He simply explained scripture. Jesus did not even respond by one impatient word or look:

The Desire of Ages, p. 88:

If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example.

Even one impatient word or look would have made Him fail of being the perfect example.

5. UNSELFISH COURTESY

Jesus tried to please others, but not at the cost of principle:

The Desire of Ages, p. 68:

As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.

Jesus really made an effort to please others, but He didn't encourage them in wrong actions. He worked to make them happy and free. He didn't do that for His own sake, nor to be recognized as a peacemaker; rather, it was for their sakes. He was thinking of others as He was doing it. This we can see by the fact that He manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. That phrase describes a person who is always pleasant to be around—someone you are always happy to be with, because they will always have positive and encouraging words. Jesus had such a disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He would always be there and would help others when there was a need.

He had a “patience that nothing could disturb.” When we imagine a person who always wants to please others and make them happy, don't we think that they could easily be led into a wrong path? They want to please people, so the other person will just tell them what to do. Children naturally want to please others. When I was a child, I was with some older boys who told me that I should pull the girls' ponytails and tell them that it was an emergency handbrake. As a child I didn't know what an emergency brake was, and I also didn't know the meaning of pulling

the girls' ponytails. So, wanting to please the older boys, I did as I was told and was so surprised when the girls were unhappy about it.

Can you imagine that Jesus could have easily been led to do such things—even to tease others, especially if they didn't like it? Of course, it's another matter if we tease each other and both parties can laugh about it. But there is a very fine line between teasing and actual bullying. In my case, the older boys really wanted to hurt the girls, which is a common occurrence. We may think that Jesus could easily be led into this, but He would never sacrifice integrity, or principle; He was "firm as a rock."

The Desire of Ages, p. 68:

His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.

It's almost a contradiction for a person to be so willing to please others, yet to be as firm as a rock—someone you cannot move to do anything wrong.

6. NO FAVORITISM OR DISTINCTION OF PERSONS

And Jesus was not exclusive either:

The Desire of Ages, p. 86:

Christ was not exclusive, and He had given special offense to the Pharisees by departing in this respect from their rigid rules. He found the domain of religion fenced in by high walls of seclusion, as too sacred a matter for everyday life. These walls of partition He overthrew. In His contact with men He did not ask, What is your creed? To what church do you belong? He exercised His helping power in behalf of all who needed help. Instead of secluding himself in a hermit's cell in order to show His heavenly character, He labored earnestly for humanity. He inculcated the principle that Bible religion does not consist in the mortification of the body. He taught that pure and undefiled religion is not meant only for set times and special occasions. At all times and in all places He manifested a loving interest in men, and shed about Him the light of a cheerful piety. All this was a rebuke to the Pharisees. It showed that religion does not consist in selfishness, and that their morbid devotion to personal interest was far

from being true godliness. This had roused their enmity against Jesus, so that they tried to enforce His conformity to their regulations.

Jesus was not a respecter of persons. That is often not the case with parents. They will make distinctions between their children and favor one who is especially dear to them, for one reason or another. We have our preferences. A person's appearance also has an effect on what we think of them—more than we realize. But Jesus was no respecter of persons. He showed no partiality, but treated everyone with the same kindness and courtesy, because He loved them all. That was very unusual in His day. That is what the others hated. Jesus didn't ask what church people belonged to, or what creed they had. That was of no interest to Him. He had only one interest, which was to help people.

7. SUBMISSION TO THE WORD

As we mentioned, the main reason Jesus gave for His actions was not a statement of His good motives or good character. Rather, He said, "It is written." That is quite different from saying,

"I'm doing this or that because I want to be good, or because I am good."

That was not the case with Jesus. He did what He did because it is written, not because of His own goodness. Let's read about this. We are repeating this point, but it is important to emphasize it and make it really clear.

The Desire of Ages, p. 86:

At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. "It is written" was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance.

Again, we need to see plainly that He acted as He did because of the word of God. He always had a reason from the word of God. That is why He didn't need to defend His own motives. His own motives were not important. The important question was whether or not it was according to the word of God. That was all that really mattered. Whenever we defend our good motives, it shows where our foundation lies—in our own goodness. That is a very poor, impure foundation. In the chapter “Days of Conflict” we read that He had access to the tree of life, which is the pure sand beneath the murky waters of the water lily.



The Water Lily lives in a different atmosphere. It draws its power from the pure, clean sands beneath, even though it is growing in murky water. So Jesus lived as in the light of God's countenance, and was unaffected by the turmoil around Him. See *Education*, p. 119 and *Child Guidance*, p. 58.

Let's look at the contrast in Jesus' life. There was a real contrast, which is described in the following statement.

The Desire of Ages, p. 87:

They could not understand His conduct. Great contradictions presented themselves in Jesus.

What were the contradictions in His character?

The Desire of Ages, p. 87-88:

He was the divine Son of God, and yet a helpless child. The Creator of the worlds, the earth was His possession, and yet poverty marked His life experience at every step.

How could He be so poor, when He had possession of everything? It's like someone being the son of a billionaire and yet he struggles with income at every step.

The Desire of Ages, p. 88:

He possessed a dignity and individuality wholly distinct from earthly pride and assumption;...

That is another contrast—individuality and dignity, without any pride or assumption. We tend to think that people are proud when they have great dignity. Or, that proud people are strong individuals. But Jesus had strong individuality without any pride or assumption. This is also expressed in the following sentence.

...He did not strive for worldly greatness, and in even the lowliest position He was content. This [contrast] angered His brothers. They could not account for His constant serenity under trial and deprivation.

Another contrast is serenity and deprivation. It's like the clean waterlily in the dirty pool. These were some of the contrasts in His life.

8. CONCENTRATING ON IMPORTANT MATTERS

Jesus concentrated on the important points. That is another way to avoid power struggles. He did not deviate and was not distracted by unimportant points. This is what He said when He spoke with the Pharisees.

Matthew 23

²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

In other words,

“You make some matters very important, which are not important in God’s sight. And you leave out the matters which really are important—character issues.”

We often need to ask ourselves what is more important—the character of our children, or for us to have the last word? And which is more important—losing some money, or the character of the child? How often do we, as parents, make decisions that give preference to money, being right, or whatever the case may be. We do that instead of giving preference to what is of real value—the character of the child. That is what Jesus tried to correct. Let’s read a statement in this connection.

The Desire of Ages, p. 353:

Christ himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. ... He did not censure human weakness.

These are the gnats that people try to strain out. They try to work on human weakness. But Christ did not censure them.

He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity.

These are the camels. When we deal with children, it is important to make such differences. We must ask ourselves if the issue is a matter of human weakness, or if it is a bigger issue that needs to be dealt with—such as hypocrisy, iniquity, and so on. The fundamental principle is “It is written.” Motives are not the important point, as we saw in Jesus’ life.

9. AN INDIVIDUAL CONNECTION WITH GOD

We will now consider the individuality of Jesus—His strong personality, and His straightforwardness as far as principle is concerned. This was often misunderstood as being narrow-minded.

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

There were some who sought His society, feeling at peace in His presence; but many avoided Him, because they were rebuked by His stainless life. Young companions urged Him to do as they

did. He was bright and cheerful; they enjoyed His presence, and welcomed His ready suggestions; but they were impatient at His scruples, and pronounced Him narrow and strait-laced. Jesus answered, It is written,

Psalm 119

⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to your word.

¹¹ Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

The first part of this statement makes us think that He gained the favor of people. They sought His society. Who wouldn't like that? Yet while some sought His society because they found peace in His presence, there were many others who avoided Him. His companions urged Him to be a little different—to do as they did—not to be so much the way He was. But He would not change. So what did they think? What did they accuse Him of? They said He was “narrow and straight-laced.” They thought He was narrow-minded, focusing on only one thing. That's what they accused Him of. They also thought He was straight-laced, which means to be very uptight and reserved, closed, prim and proper. Straight-laced is another word for being very narrow-minded.

In the next paragraph we read,

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

Often He was asked, Why are you bent on being so singular,...

That is, very straight-laced and narrow-minded. “Why do you want to be single-minded, always first, and better than us?”

...so different from us all? It is written, He said,

Psalm 119

¹ Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

² Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.

³ They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways.

His answer is interesting. He didn't say,

“Because I obey God, because I am a good boy, and I’m doing the right thing.”

Instead, He simply said,

“Because it is written.”

We also read this in the next paragraph:

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

When questioned why He did not join in the frolics of the youth of Nazareth, He said, It is written,

Psalm 119

¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate in your precepts, and have respect unto your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight myself in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Frolics means to make fun at the cost of others. The individuality of Jesus was really based on the Word of God.

From the time when the parents of Jesus found Him in the temple, His course of action was a mystery to them. He would not enter into controversy, yet His example was a constant lesson. He seemed as one who was set apart. His hours of happiness were found when alone with nature and with God. Whenever it was His privilege, He turned aside from the scene of His labor, to go into the fields, to meditate in the green valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient toil.

This was the reason for His strong individuality. He had a very well-established personal relationship with God. He knew what He wanted, namely whatever His heavenly Father wanted. There was no deviation from this. That was absolutely clear for Him.

Not even His parents could turn Him from this focus. It's interesting because that was so clear.

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

Jesus did not contend for His rights. . . . Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged.

This speaks of a really strong personality, because He did not need to contend for His rights. He did not need to enter into a power struggle. There was no need, because He had personal communion with God. And for that reason, no power struggles are necessary. Instead of a power struggle, Jesus exercised a very strong and powerful influence on others—on His own parents, and also on His peers. We will read about the strong influence He had on Mary. He had many opportunities for power struggles.

The Desire of Ages, p. 90:

Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals.

He was rather stubborn wasn't He? I would say He had a strong personality—strong individuality.

When the priests and teachers required Mary's aid in controlling Jesus, she was greatly troubled; but peace came to her heart as He presented the statements of Scripture upholding His practices.

That is quite something. If He had said,

“I do this because I am so good,”

—it wouldn't have had any influence, but pointing to scripture was what influenced and changed her.

10. BURDENED FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

The Desire of Ages, p. 91:

He taught all to look upon themselves as endowed with precious talents, which if rightly employed would secure for them eternal riches. He weeded all vanity from life, and by His own example taught that every moment of time is fraught with eternal results; that it is to be cherished as a treasure, and to be employed for holy purposes. He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found himself, He presented a lesson that was appropriate to the time and the circumstances. He sought to inspire with hope the most rough and unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. Often He met those who had drifted under Satan's control, and who had no power to break from his snare. To such a one, discouraged, sick, tempted, and fallen, Jesus would speak words of tenderest pity, words that were needed and could be understood. Others He met who were fighting a hand-to-hand battle with the adversary of souls. These He encouraged to persevere, assuring them that they would win; for angels of God were on their side, and would give them the victory. Those whom He thus helped were convinced that here was One in whom they could trust with perfect confidence. He would not betray the secrets they poured into His sympathizing ear.

As described here, we can see how Jesus began to win favor with God and man.

The Desire of Ages, p. 92:

Jesus was the healer of the body as well as of the soul. He was interested in every phase of suffering that came under His notice, and to every sufferer He brought relief, His kind words having a soothing balm. None could say that He had worked a miracle; but virtue—the healing power of love—went out from Him to the sick and distressed. Thus in an unobtrusive way He worked for the people from His very childhood. And this was why, after His public ministry began, so many heard Him gladly.

Jesus was unobtrusive. He worked constantly for others in the way that He did and He was not discouraged by their reactions. He was not depressed by censure nor elated by praise. It made no difference to Him. When Jesus struggled, the struggle was always against wrong principle, but never against people.

The Desire of Ages, p. 92:

Yet through childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus walked alone. In His purity and His faithfulness, He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men. He knew that unless there was a decided change in the principles and purposes of the human race, all would be lost. This was the burden of His soul, and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him. Filled with intense purpose, He carried out the design of His life that He himself should be the light of men.

He clearly understood that unless there was a radical change—a decided change—in the principles and purposes of the human race, all would be lost. How true this is. This selfishness, which has become a science of our economics and everything else, is a destructive force. A decided change needs to take place from selfishness to selflessness. Jesus' fight was against such selfishness, but never against humans. In this light, we also need to understand what He said to the Pharisees in *Matthew 23*. He spoke against wrong principles, but He did not strive with the people. This we see very clearly when we look at the last verses of this chapter.

Matthew 23 [NLT]

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.

³⁸ And now, look, your house is abandoned and desolate.

³⁹ For I tell you this, you will never see me again until you say, Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

His real desire is expressed here.

³⁷ ...How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.

That is really what was in His heart. That is how He worked for people. No personal grudge or anger was in His heart when He dwelt with them. All His anger, His whole passion, was against wrong principles, but never against the people. This is how we avoid power struggles. We have to live in a different light; we have to get our strength from a different source. We need to get power from that Source, and only then can we fight against wrong principles, instead of against people. This is my wish for us, so then we can be a mighty influence as Jesus was.



—even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings—

15. Religion and Diet

Sabbath, April 28, 2018

TODAY we'll study about religion and diet. There are many reasons we live without eating meat or animal products. One reason is health, another is animal welfare,—the cruel way animals are farmed,—and a third reason is environmental—the misuse of the land, the inability to feed the world's population with animal products, and so on. The fourth reason is religion, which we will now study.

We want to see how religion is connected with diet, and also look at religion in education. To do this we will start by looking back at our last study, which was about power struggles. We saw that there are only losers in a power struggle. It's definitely not worth getting involved in a power struggle. There are only losers—nothing else. There is absolutely no advantage from entering into a power struggle. So why do we enter into them? Why do children get involved in them? And why do parents get involved? Don't we only do things which give us an advantage? Apart from that, we are just struggling for something which God already promised us long ago. It's essentially only fighting against wind-mills.

Where Power Struggles Come From

Why do children struggle, and why do we get involved in power struggles? That is the question. To find the answer we must go back to the beginning of the great controversy—the beginning of all power struggles. It began with Lucifer in heaven. Let's read about this.

Isaiah 14

¹² How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!

¹³ For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north:

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

These verses were written about the king of Babylon, but they are also about Lucifer. The king of Babylon was an object lesson of Lucifer in this text. That is how it all started. Lucifer wanted to exalt himself. When we look at history, we can see that everyone who wanted to exalt themselves actually came to a similar end. It didn't happen immediately though. At first, they seemed to have advantages and be on top, but eventually the fall came as a terrible awakening.

An example of this is the pride that existed in Germany at the time of World War II and the profound fall that came afterwards. When we consider today how people exalt themselves and strive to be in the highest position, we feel concerned about how they will fall.

We enter into power struggles because that is the original great controversy which is being expressed in our hearts. If we were totally free from that original desire, which Lucifer had—to be in the highest position—then the power struggle would stop. We would not enter into any more power struggles.

The Misuse of Religion in Education

We will now consider the use of religion in the education of children. Often parents are in power struggles with their children which ultimately they are not able to carry through. They don't want to use force, or to hit their children, which [in some countries] is illegal anyway. Yet arguing is not successful. The children are so clever and skillful that they repeatedly provoke their parents to anger. That is a real problem. And it seems that parents

have an advantage when they use religion. They can call on God. They say,

“God will punish you.”

In this way they use God as a pointing finger. They may say,

“The angels will punish you,”

—or,

“The Bible will judge you.”

Essentially, this is a way of balancing one’s own weakness by using religion to build the pressure, in order to win the power struggle. That is a really bad use of religion. It leads to the following effects:

1. On one hand, if the parent threatens that God will punish the child, it may lead to no consequences at all. God does not punish. The parents say that God will punish the child, but then nothing happens. So the child thinks that everything can just continue on. This causes religion to be unbelievable and unreliable.
2. Another result is that the child may become afraid of God. When they begin to think about death, for example, they become afraid and ask what will happen. An example of this is the doctrine of hell, which often creates great fear in children.
3. Another result is that the child fears that the ideal goal which is presented is actually impossible to achieve. They think that it’s simply not possible for them to reach it.

In our case, we can see this with the subject of the rebirth. For example, a child may be told,

“You are not born again. If you were, then you would do this or that.”

The rebirth is turned into a tool to gain the upper-hand in the power struggle with the child. That is really awful. In this way the rebirth is essentially rendered void. They no longer know what it is. There's a fear of this strange thing, that they don't know.

4. And there's another possible outcome. The children may have a constant struggle between knowing what is right, versus the realization that they don't do what is right—for some reason. There are hindrances in the way of doing what is right. But they actually know what's right. And in order to bear the conflict, the child must disguise themselves.

That disguising is the problem. They cannot be as they really are. The disguising is really dishonest, we know. But it also hinders true growth of character. Disguising oneself goes along with hiding oneself. And that hiding goes hand in hand with lying. We cannot say the whole truth, because if we did, then we would be admitting that we haven't reached the ideal. But we want to reach it. This is the result of moral sermonizing, which children so often hear.

Let's read a statement, which shows how religion is often used as a tool in power struggles.

The Desire of Ages, p. 550:

In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.

This is referring to history, but we can apply this statement to education. And we can see this very clearly:

The rights of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.

This means that religion is used in order to win the power struggle. That is the problem of the wrong application of religion. If we want to use religion in education, then it must have a completely different foundation.

The Proper Use of Religion in Education

Let's look at this, using the example of *Romans 14*. What does religion in education look like? It is very connected with food, as we will see. We want to see what all this has to do with what we eat.

Romans 14

¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

Which of you wants to be strong?

[Everyone in the audience raises their hands.]

Which of you wants to be weak?

[No one raises their hands.]

When we read this, we think about the weak in faith and we say,

“I'm not that person.”

We imagine we are strong, not weak. In doing so, we are already making an evaluation. This causes the person who eats only vegetables to be somewhere below us. Maybe they also think that is the case, so they feel as if they have to defend themselves. Then we already have a power struggle on our hands.

Did Paul choose his words well when he wrote this statement? Wouldn't it be better to describe this in other terms, rather than

“weak” and “strong”? Personally, I believe that the word of God is inspired. I’m asking these questions to provoke thought. The real question is,

“What did Paul mean by this?”

He was expressing these verses in the words of his day and for his specific audience. We need to see them in connection with the entire Bible, and even in the context of this very chapter. The chapter is not about looking down on those who are weak. What does it mean to be strong or to be weak as Paul used these phrases? Let’s research this in Paul’s own language in order to understand it better.

2 Corinthians 12

¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This doesn’t say, when I’m weak then I’m down low. Instead, Paul understood the weakness as strength. Think about this in the light of *Romans* 14. If weakness is strength, then we cannot look down on someone who is weak. It’s not possible anymore. Their weakness is their strength.

An example of this is Jacob, when he had an injured hip. He went to meet his brother, walking with great pain. But that weakness was Jacob’s strength, because it showed to him his great need of a Saviour.

There are many other texts where Paul speaks of weakness and strength:

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.

He chose the weak things of the world. Weakness is no reason to look down on something.

2 Corinthians 13

⁹ For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.

He even says,

“We are glad when we are weak and you are strong!”

Did Paul want them to look down on him? Was he in a power struggle with them? No, absolutely not. Quite the opposite—he was glad when he was weak, and they were strong, because in that way there was a better connection—a unification of the two. He did not want to be strong in order to keep the upper-hand. Instead, he was happy to be weak and for them to be strong. The strength which Paul describes is found in being unified with the church, not in having the upper-hand. That is what he considered to be strength. This means that in his weakness, he was actually strong.

1 Corinthians 4

¹⁰ We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!

It was no problem for him. The important point was to be united with them. The others could gladly be the stronger ones. Paul only wanted to be unified with them. Again, strength is not found in being right. Rather, strength is found in weakness. Strength is found in being one with the others. And most of all, it is found in the fact that God is right in the end.

Strength is found in the ability to submit. If only our children could understand this. Let’s read about it:

1 Corinthians 8

⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.

⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

⁶ Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

⁷ However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

⁸ But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?

¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

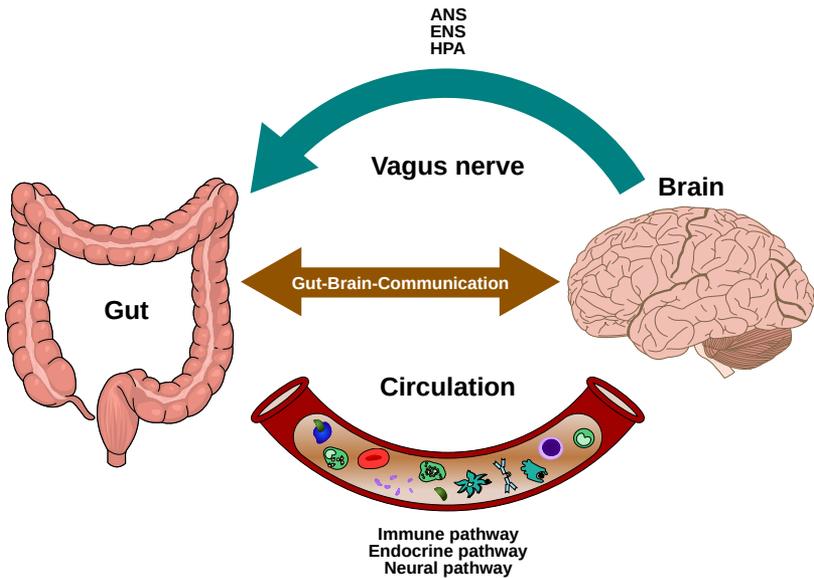
What is strength and what is weakness in these verses? Strength is found in the ability to submit. Strength is found in being there for others. Selflessness is the strength. Weakness is found in not being able to put myself in the other's shoes. It is found in not being considerate of the other. It is found in thinking only about myself. And weakness is found in causing others to stumble. That is what strength and weakness are. That's the point here. It's about being considerate and submitting in order to save the other person. That is the true strength spoken about. That is what Paul wants to share with us—as he also does in *Romans 14*. Again, strength is consideration of others. It is putting ourselves in the others' place.

The Gut-Brain Axis

Let's consider some physiological principles now. The picture following is of a brain and a digestive tract, with a double-ended arrow connecting them. That connection is called the gut-brain axis. The two organs are very closely connected. What we eat has

an effect on our brain. And in turn, our brain has an effect on our digestive system, or gut. It is well known that we can digest much better when we are at peace and rest. Conversely, if we eat food that causes digestive upset, then our brains also get sick. The bacteria in our gut—especially in the large intestine—have an unbelievable effect on the nervous system. We can say that nearly every disease is connected with that. I have almost come to the conclusion that we need to investigate the gut flora in order to understand why a person is sick. These two aspects are so closely connected.

When the digestive system is sick and therefore the brain is stressed, which then has an additional effect on the gut, causing it to become sicker. When the gut becomes sicker, it causes more stress on the brain. It is a vicious circle. These two organs must be kept in absolute health.



There is an independent nervous system in our digestive tract. There are as many nerve cells there as in a dog’s brain. People speak of it as our second brain. The expression “gut feeling” is

pretty accurate, actually. We sometimes say that our gut feeling told us this or that. In reality, our digestive systems do constitute a brain, which can exist independently from the rest of the body. This does not mean that our gut can think for itself, though. That's not the case. But, it can work independently from the rest of the body. It doesn't do this though. It allows itself to be influenced by the parasympathetic nervous system, mainly, but also by the sympathetic nervous system. The digestive system is influenced by these. And conversely, the digestive system can influence the rest of the body. That's why it is truly the case that the digestive system is a second brain which must be cared for, just as the brain in our head.

Between these two brains is a constant communication—through nerve fibers, as well as through the blood. The blood transports many chemicals and nutrients which are absorbed in the gut and taken to the brain. This is the connection—the gut-brain axis.

We'll compare this with *Romans* 14 now, so that we can see it in spiritual terms. Various philosophers have said,

“You are what you eat.”

The opposite is also true. Our digestive systems have an influence on our brains. And in turn, our thoughts influence our digestion. There are many Bible texts which throw light on this.

Health Counsel in Ecclesiastes

Where do we begin if someone is unwell with bad digestion, which affects their brain, and their immune system does not function properly anymore, leading to depression and suchlike? What do we do in such a case? The Bible gives clear counsel in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, where we can read many texts about food.

Ecclesiastes 9

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.

We will become sick when we cannot eat our bread with joy.

Ecclesiastes 9

⁷ Eat your bread with joy.

What is the reason?

⁷ ...God has already accepted your works.

In other words, we don't need to fight for acceptance. We don't have to struggle to please God. We please Him already. Now we are told to settle down and eat our bread with joy. That is the message. The problem is messages such as,

“If you're not good, then God doesn't like you. He will be mad at you.

“If you don't do what I tell you [with a pointing finger], then God will be angry.”

That is a portrayal of God which makes people sick. They're not able to eat their bread with joy. Instead, they eat it with fear or discouragement. Or, they will hide. In contrast, we can eat our bread with joy because we have already pleased God long ago. Why do we please God? Is there a reason? Are we so nice? The answer is very simply because Jesus died for us. He wouldn't have done that if we had not pleased Him.

Let's read a few more texts from *Ecclesiastes*. As mentioned, there are many texts in that book about how we should eat.

Ecclesiastes 2

²⁴ Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

²⁵ For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?

²⁶ For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

This gives an interesting definition of sin. Sin is essentially when we don't eat our bread with joy—when we are constantly worrying about whether or not God loves us, when we are not simply resting in Him. That's what sin is. It causes us to gather and collect, trying to become good, but not reaching that aim. Then we are constantly disappointed. We strive to follow Him, but we don't manage it. That is the sin.

Ecclesiastes 2

²⁴ Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor.

That comes from God's hand—eating happily and enjoying our food. This doesn't happen without God.

Ecclesiastes 3

¹³ And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.

That shows how the gut-brain axis works. It will do our body and digestive system good when we eat in good spirits and with trust in God.

Ecclesiastes 5

¹⁸ Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.

Much is written in *Ecclesiastes* about food. You can study it for yourselves as well. The entire book is full of such texts.

Eating with Joy

Now we'll look at another text about food and the importance of the spirit being with God—that the person has peace in God. We will read the context as well, which is about Israel's entry into Canaan.

Deuteronomy 12

⁴ You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things.

⁵ But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.

⁶ There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

⁷ And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

Food and being joyful are connected in this text as well. God gave His people many feasts, at which He told them they were to eat and be merry. Those were the main rules—to eat and to be happy. Being happy while eating was very important. Let's continue reading.

Deuteronomy 12

⁸ You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.

Paul wrote about this in relation to the Lord's Supper as well, saying that people were eating their own food before the others came.³⁶ That was not cooperation. Everyone did what they thought was best, without considering how it affected others or the work.

⁸ For as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you.

God connects rest with co-working and eating together in joy. Let's read a New Testament verse to help us understand this better.

Acts 2

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

³⁶ See *1 Corinthians* 11.

They were at rest. That is the rest of which God was speaking. In the Old Testament, He still had to say that everyone was doing their own thing.

Deuteronomy 12

⁸ As yet you have not come to the rest.

But in *Acts* they were indeed at rest. They were of one accord together and broke bread. This means that when they ate, their meal times were full of joy and simplicity of heart. That isn't a joy which is merely short-lived. Rather, it is a deep joy in God. It is a joy in the consciousness of being accepted. It is a joy about what God will give, because we know He loves us. It is a joy that we can rest in Him. It is a very deep joy. The apostles ate their bread with such joy. That is the gut-brain axis.

Let's read one more text in about this.

Nehemiah 8

¹⁰ Then he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet,...

What? Just by the way, this isn't speaking about soda. It's speaking about grape juice. And the fat foods were not fatty meats, but rather it refers to rich and nutritious foods.

¹⁰ ...and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” That is where strength comes from. We can conclude from this is that the opposite is also true. We will be weak if we do not have the joy of the Lord. We won't be strong, but weak, when we don't have joy in the Lord. This also means that our digestive system will be sick, when we do not have joy in the Lord. If we try to manage everything in our own strength, then we will have no joy. We must start with joy. That is absolutely critical.

Jesus says:

Matthew 15

¹¹ Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

The context of this is the topic of eating with unwashed hands. The Pharisees said that a person must wash their hands before eating. They didn't say that for hygienic reasons, but only for ceremonial reasons. It was all about maintaining the form—it was not about living healthfully. Jesus said that those who tried to keep that form would not be purified by it. They were thinking the vilest thoughts, even while they were trying to keep that form so strictly. Those thoughts were also being expressed. And that is what defiles a person. It is not what goes into a person, but what comes out of their mouths.

Jesus also tells us what the priority is to be. Joy in the Lord has priority. It would be difficult to do scientifically, but I wish we could study people who live very long lives, to see what is behind their longevity. I'm convinced that they are people who had joy in what they did, as well as serenity and peace. What a privilege is ours, to have peace in God! That is what God wants to give us.

Revisiting Romans 14

Let's go back to *Romans* 14, now that we understand strength and weakness much better. These verses are not about people having a weak faith. Instead, it is about the fact that they have a different perception or understanding. Because of that different viewpoint, they live out their faith accordingly. It is important that we don't look down on them, but rather strengthen them. If someone has a conviction, it would be wrong for us to tell them that they must do this or that differently.

When we compare these verses in *Romans* 14 with *1 Corinthians* 8, we can see that the topic is meat which was sacrificed to idols. Many people came from heathenism. In heathen customs, meat was offered to idols and then eaten as part of their worship service. When they ate that meat, they were taking part in that idol worship. It wasn't worship of the one true God, but it was

worshiping idols and the figures in those temples. The food was a part of that. It was similar to the priests eating the showbread in Old Testament times, which was part of the worship service. The heathen rituals were comparable. In heathen customs, that food was connected with many impure thoughts. That is a simple fact. Idol worship was very licentious and impure. It was about selfishness, not about building up and supporting others.

People who were converted from that system would distance themselves from it. They wouldn't go into those temples anymore, nor eat the food that had been offered to idols. They wanted to have nothing more to do with it. That was a good thing. Paul said they would be strengthened in doing that, instead of weakening them by telling them to toughen up and be strong. That's what these verses were about.

But for those people who knew nothing of the idolatry and unknowingly bought some of that food at the market, it was also okay to eat it with joy of heart, thinking of God. It was important that they weren't judged by others for doing that.

It is important to put ourselves in the other person's shoes, and to be considerate of each other. It is important for us to be able to submit in those things which are not matters of salvation, such as food and drink.

Romans 14

³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

That is the summary of this chapter.

⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That is the main point. When these three things are present, then very naturally there is consideration towards others, towards animals, towards the environment, as well as love to God and consideration for one's own body, so we can serve optimally. We coined the phrase, "fit to give," which means being in shape in order to serve and give. We want to have this. And it will naturally be there when there is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is self-evident. Paul summarizes it all at the end of chapter 14.

Romans 14

²² Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

That is thinking for oneself, and acting for oneself.

²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats,...

Those who have to disguise themselves, or hide, lie or tell half-truths will have difficulties.

²³ ...because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Whatever words comes out of a person, defiles them. It is not about what goes into the person. This is the summary of *Romans* 14. It is eating our bread with joy. That is what religion has to do with diet. When we can eat our bread with joy, thankfulness, and contentment, it will also make the cooks happy, which will help them to cook even better.

The important point is that we need these thoughts in our hearts. Let's pray for them. We can also know that God has accepted us, and we can rest in that knowledge. When this is the case, we can eat our bread in joy and rest.

16. Parents as Teachers

Sabbath, May 5, 2018



WE ARE studying about education and we have already considered several aspects. Last week we looked at the power struggles that Jesus was tempted to enter into—the power struggles which other people wanted to enter into with Jesus—and how Jesus dealt with them.

Avoiding Hypocrisy

Now we will look at the role of parents as teachers. We had two introductory pictures to illustrate the point. We will refer back to *Matthew 23* today to begin.

Matthew 23

¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

What does this mean exactly in reference to parents? Aren't parents the first teachers of their children? Isn't that how it's supposed to be? Shouldn't the children recognize the parents as teachers? Or shall their education be so anti-authoritarian that parents do not teach their children anymore? There are several possibilities. Let's turn to a statement from Ellen White.

Child Guidance, p. 21:

The father and the mother should be the first teachers of their children.

What did Jesus mean by His statement in *Matthew 23*? We'll look at the context. But first, let's read what Jesus said to the Pharisees, just a few verses later. They were sitting on Moses' seat. Why did He speak to them as He did? It was not very pleasant.

Matthew 23

¹⁴ But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven.

Why did He speak so directly and negatively to them? Didn't He push them even further over the edge? Didn't He cast them out further? These statements were not addressed only to the Pharisees; they were also addressed to the people. It had a purpose for them. Jesus had often told the Pharisees that they were hypocrites. This was not the first time.³⁷ He often showed them their sins, but usually it was through parables so that it would not embarrass or openly shame them. The people sometimes understood these parables and sometimes they did not. But those to whom the parables were directly addressed—mainly the Pharisees—usually understood, even if they did not want to understand or didn't like the message. The other people, though, did not identify the parables with the Pharisees.

Christ used warnings—some serious warnings. Examples include the parable of the man who gathered belongings to himself,³⁸ and the parable of the talents.³⁹ He gave a very solemn warning through the parable of the marriage feast. But in *Matthew 23*, He spoke very directly and straightforward, without using parables. The purpose was to warn the people. In other words, He wanted to deliver the people from the influence of the

³⁷ See *Matthew* 6:2, 5, 16; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; *Luke* 11:44.

³⁸ *Luke* 12:16-21.

³⁹ *Matthew* 25:14-30.

Pharisees. That was necessary. They were not merely under their influence, they were also in bondage to them. The Pharisees and the teachers of Israel were the voice of authority in all spiritual matters and even in daily matters, so Jesus needed to unmask them more directly, in order to deliver the people from their bondage. Let's read about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 611:

The interest of the people in Christ and His work had steadily increased. They were charmed with His teaching, but they were also greatly perplexed. They had respected the priests and rabbis for their intelligence and apparent piety. In all religious matters they had ever yielded implicit obedience to their authority. Yet they now saw these men trying to cast discredit upon Jesus, a teacher whose virtue and knowledge shone forth the brighter from every assault. They looked upon the lowering countenances of the priests and elders, and there saw discomfiture and confusion. They marveled that the rulers would not believe on Jesus, when His teachings were so plain and simple. They themselves knew not what course to take. With eager anxiety they watched the movements of those whose counsel they had always followed.

In the parables which Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak yet more plainly.

In the parables, He warned the Pharisees and instructed those people who were willing to be taught. But there was a need to speak more plainly. Why?

Through their reverence for tradition and their blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the people were enslaved. These chains Christ must break. The character of the priests, rulers, and Pharisees must be more fully exposed.

In an earlier paragraph we read:

The Desire of Ages, p. 601:

He had set before these leaders their real condition, and the retribution sure to follow persistence in their evil deeds. The

warning had been faithfully given. Yet another work remained for Christ to do. Another purpose was still to be accomplished.

This tells us that another purpose was still to be accomplished. This was the other purpose. So, it was not the first time that the Pharisees were warned like this. But for the people, it was necessary now to speak more clearly. We read that they were enslaved. The people were enslaved—they were in prison—and Jesus was now delivering them from that prison. The questions for us are,

Where are we still enslaved?

Where are we still in prison?

Where do we need deliverance?

Now let us turn back to *Matthew 23* and read the first verses again with this understanding.

Matthew 23

¹ Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

² Saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

The Pharisees were sitting in Moses' seat. In other words, they had a position of authority with the people. That authority was originally given by God, because God put Moses in his place. Now the Pharisees were sitting in the place which God had given to Moses in order to teach the people. It was God's purpose to teach the people. But the Pharisees' teachings were not in harmony with their lives. What we need to do is to teach by word and by example.

What are the instruments that can be used to teach a child? One is a lifted finger. Raising a finger is a warning—a symbol of the rod which soon will come upon the child, if they don't obey. It is even used in sign language.

[Audience]: You can also teach by example.

Yes, this is what we often read about in the *Spirit of Prophecy*. It is important that parents teach their children by precept and example. By precept is using the word—giving them instructions or commandments. Example is living it out. Are there other instruments?

[Audience]: Another is nature.

I would say that teaching through nature is connected with the word.

[Audience]: Through circumstances.

Yes, that is teaching the child by letting them have their own experiences. That is a very important point. This means that we are not teaching them through words, or by our example, but through their own example. The child learns by their own example. This is the way that God teaches us.

Isaiah 28

¹³ But the word of the Lord was to them, Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little...

This is a very interesting way to teach. You don't teach everything all at once, because the child could not bear it. Rather, they are taught here a little and there a little—consistently. It is a little here and a little there—precept upon precept. That means repeatedly, again and again. As Paul said:

Philippians 4

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

In other words,

“I'll say it again. I'm not tired of rejoicing in the Lord.”

Again, again, and again—precept upon precept, and line upon line upon line. This is from the scripture. Let's finish reading that verse.

Isaiah 28

¹³ ...that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.

That's not nice, is it? We need to understand the Hebrew language a little, in order to grasp the logic here. What God is really saying is,

“When they fall backward, when they are broken, when they are snared, and when they are caught, then I will teach them. Here a little, there a little, precept upon precept, line upon line.”

In other words, when we let children have their own experiences and they fall as a result, then we can help them and teach them by encouraging them. That will be much more effective than mere talk. We could tell children many things, such as,

“Don't touch this. Don't touch that.”

But words don't have so much effect. We could also show our own example of obedience, by not touching something, for example. But the child may still want to. So they do touch it and perhaps get dirty, or burned if it's a stove, for instance. Then the parents don't need to say anything—it's not necessary. We could say,

“I told you so!”

—but that places the parent in another role. We actually don't need to say anything, because the child has learned from what they experienced. We might say something to encourage the child. But we should never say,

“I told you so,”

—as if we are the wise person who knows everything. No, let the children have their own experience. Allow them their own experience. This is the method of teaching that parents find most difficult to accomplish. They want to save the child.

Isaiah 28

¹³ ...that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.

Do you want your child to fall backward, be broken, snared, and caught? It is through mistakes that we learn. One of my colleagues once said,

“I will never sit in a car with someone who has never had an accident. If they have had an accident at least they have learned something and probably drive more carefully.”

This may not always be the case, of course. It depends on how many accidents someone has had. But if someone has really been hurt or broken a bone, they will be more careful next time. That is much more effective than only telling them not to be careless, not to drive too fast, and so on.

¹³ Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.

In other words,

“Let the child go this way; let them have their own experiences.”

Teaching our children by word and example does not make this superfluous. We should teach them not only by their own experience, but also by our words and example. When they fall, it is especially important to encourage the child, by telling them that we've also made mistakes in our life, have fallen backwards, and have been broken and snared. And we can relate that the Lord lifted us up, and how He did that. Those situations are wonderful opportunities to teach precept upon precept, line upon line.

Let's read a statement which was written about Abraham in relation to Isaac's marriage.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 176:

Fathers and mothers should feel that a duty devolves upon them to guide the affections of the youth, that they may be placed upon those who will be suitable companions.

That's interesting, looking for a partner.

They should feel it a duty, by their own teaching and example, with the assisting grace of God, to so mold the character of the children from their earliest years that they will be pure and noble and will be attracted to the good and true.

It is important for parents to teach children through words and example. What will be the result if their teaching doesn't match their example? There will obviously be confusion, which was the problem with the Jews in relationship to the Pharisees. The Pharisees taught one way, but their example showed a different way. They taught from the law of God that no one should kill, for example, yet their example was to have murderous thoughts in their hearts, which they tried to put into action towards Jesus. That was the problem. It is hypocrisy when the words and the example do not agree. It is self-contradictory. And doesn't give a consistent message. It is saying one thing, but doing something else. That contradiction is called hypocrisy. This was the problem in the time of Jesus.

Let's come back to *Matthew 23*.

Matthew 23

³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

Jesus needed to show this, because the people were confused. They were especially confused when the Pharisees rejected Jesus and wanted to kill Him. How could that be? It was not in harmony with what they taught. They were teaching the Scriptures, which testified of Him.

“Listen to them but don't do what they do.”

Matthew 23

⁴ For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

⁵ But all their works they do to be seen by men.

⁶ They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

⁷ They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

They lay burdens hard to bear on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with even one finger. What does this remind you of? It reminds me of *Matthew 7* where Jesus said not to judge. What is judging others? It means that by our judgment we lay a burden on them which we ourselves do not bear. Why do we try to pull the splinter out of our brother's eye, while we have a beam in our own eye? This means we don't want to bear that burden. That's our beam and the splinter in our brother's eye is what we are criticizing. That is our judgment. And that is the problem.

We need to understand that this can be the role of parents when they criticize their children. It's possible. Parents lay burdens on their children, which they themselves will not move with one of their fingers, as we read in *Matthew 23:4*. It's quite possible. And this, of course, is done to be seen by people. We can say they do it for recognition from their children, but also from the whole world. They think they are something special and that they are better than others. They want others to recognize that, to give expression to it. They want "to be seen by men." There are many justifications for these kinds of actions. For example, Jesus said,

Matthew 5

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We make the excuse that that is the reason we want what we do “to be seen by men.” But people will see our “good works” without our showing them.

Matthew 23

⁵ They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

The Pharisees wrote scriptures on parchment and carried them in their garment pockets, and in small, black, leather boxes that they tied around their foreheads and their left arms. They thought that was in harmony with God’s commandments.

Deuteronomy 6

⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

They literally did that. They wrote scriptures everywhere they could. But why did they do this? It was not because they had these scriptures in their hearts. When God gave this commandment, He meant for the laws to be within our spiritual hearts—to learn them by heart and to chew them spiritually. It was not meant to be done literally. Their effort was really only outward. It was never a real conversion. It was always external, in order to appear good before others. Again, there are many justifications for this. One such justification could be,

“Well, if my children could see my real, inner self, they would have a bad example. Therefore, I don’t show it to them.”

But this is not good. Even if they can’t see it directly, they will feel it one way or another. It will always come through.

Matthew 23

⁸ But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

The word, “Rabbi” is translated here as Teacher, but it can also be translated as Master or as Leader. In other words, do not allow people to call you this. Do not allow it. Why is it so important for people to be called by a title? It is because it gives them a certain standing. For instance, the title of Doctor—if a person has the title of Doctor it gives them a certain standing in the minds of people.

For a moment we will go back to the history of propaganda. Sigmund Freud was a psychologist who studied the human mind. He realized that there are certain desires within people, which are not directly recognized. If those desires were known, the person could be manipulated and influenced. It wasn't Freud's original purpose to find this out. His purpose was more to help people. He wanted to control these secret desires in such a way that would be helpful for the person themselves. By the way, this is why hypnosis is used as a therapy. Hypnotherapists want to manipulate the person to help them. That is the idea, even though it is not God's method.

After Freud, other scientists studied the topic more deeply. They learned how to manipulate many minds *en masse*, as well as individual minds. One group of people who nearly perfected this was the Nazi party in the Third Reich. They called their method propaganda. There was even a Ministry for Propaganda. You may have heard of Dr Joseph Goebbels and his Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda. Goebbels performed what we could call a mass hypnosis. He would speak to large audiences in a way which would make them want to go to war, even though it was against their human nature. He understood how to bring out the secret desires of the people so strongly that they would want to go to war. For example, it is a secret desire of people to rule, to be king, to be the best and the greatest. If it's necessary to go to war to achieve this, then human nature will go to war. That's the simple idea. All that one has to do to control someone is to know their

secret desire and bring it out. Then they can be made to do almost anything. That is the idea behind propaganda.

The Nazis were not the only ones who practiced these methods. It spread to America, especially after World War II. It was re-named because of the negative connection to the Nazis. Instead of the Ministry for Propaganda, there was now a Council of Public Relations. It was called PR for short. Today, even the term public relations has negative connotations. Sometimes it is referred to as spinning. Perhaps you have heard of the term spin doctors.

After the war, there was a man named Edward Bernays who was a specialist in public relations. He had a great influence over the popularity of politicians—especially Roosevelt, who hired him as his personal counselor. Roosevelt took Bernays with him to the Paris Peace Agreement where the Parisians really praised Roosevelt as their deliverer. Bernays understood how to influence the masses and make them view Roosevelt as a deliverer. They were so full of enthusiasm for this president. Later, when Bernays returned to America, he worked on many campaigns, such as getting women to start smoking cigarettes. Until that time, women hardly ever smoked. But Bernays knew how to influence them to take it up. Dr. Bernays once said in an interview:

“What we are dealing with really, is the concept that people will believe me more if you call me doctor.”⁴⁰

We can see that there were also public relations in Jesus’s day. People have a secret desire, which is to have an authority, a saviour, a problem-solver, and a burden-bearer. They want that. They need it. They look for it. And for that reason, they look for titles. If Bernays was called a doctor, he was believed. He wasn’t so believable if he wasn’t called doctor. That’s the simple point. He had an understanding of the human mind. The Pharisees also had an understanding of the human mind and they knew how to exploit it to their own advantage.

⁴⁰From a video posted on YouTube, [Edward Bernays on Letterman](#).

Not Authority, But Service

Let's go back now to *Matthew 23*.

Matthew 23

⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

This was after He talked about the title, Rabbi, which we would call Doctor today. By the way, the original meaning of the word “doctor” is actually teacher.

⁸ But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father.

What does this mean? Aren't fathers indeed fathers of their children? If you want this title of “father,” it means that you want to make your children dependent on you. This title also exists in the spiritual world. Some pastors are called “Father.” That title means the person is standing in the place of God. But God is the true Father. That is the point.

If we seek such a title, then all the attention is drawn to us as the plan maker for our children. The same applies in other relationships, such as with employees and co-workers. We may present ourselves as a problem solver, plan maker, or burden bearer for them. We offer to care for them and don't allow them to make their own plans, or bear their own burdens, because of our position. Let's read a statement about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 550:

In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. *The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.* Christ was establishing a

kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows. To even the lowliest of Christ's disciples it is said,

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁵ All things are for your sakes.

But before we can serve them, we must rule them—right? We think that in order to serve them, we must rule them, so that if we can't rule them, we can't serve them. That's the logic. But that is not correct. The right of man to think and act for himself was unrecognized, especially in matters of religion.

The Desire of Ages, p. 613:

He also reproved the vanity shown in coveting the title of rabbi, or master. Such a title, He declared, belonged not to men, but to Christ. Priests, scribes, and rulers, expounders and administrators of the law, were all brethren, children of one Father. Jesus impressed upon the people that they were to give no man a title of honor indicating his control of their conscience or their faith.

Don't call them by that title, and don't allow yourself to be called by that title. It applies to both parties. Jesus impressed this upon the people, in this case. Why did He tell the people that they weren't to be called Rabbi? They weren't being called Rabbi anyway. Why did He tell the people not to be called Father if they weren't being called Father? It is because if they had the opportunity, then they would do exactly the same thing the Pharisees were. It doesn't depend on our position. It depends on our character.

If Christ were on earth today, surrounded by those who bear the title of "Reverend" or "Right Reverend," would He not repeat His saying, "Neither be you called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ"? The Scripture declares of God,

Psalms 111

⁹ Holy and reverend is His name.

To what human being is such a title befitting? How little does man reveal of the wisdom and righteousness it indicates! How many of those who assume this title are misrepresenting the name and character of God! Alas, how often have worldly ambition, despotism, and the basest sins been hidden under the broided garments of a high and holy office!

You Are All Brethren

Let's turn back again to *Matthew 23*.

Matthew 23

⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

⁸ ...you are all brethren.

“You are all brethren.” What does this mean, in contrast with Teacher, Rabbi, or Father? Parents, do you consider your children as brothers, or as children? And children, do you consider your parents as brothers, or as Reverend, Rabbi, or Master? That's the question. It's a real question. How do you consider each other?

What is the difference between a brother and a master? A master stands above the others, while a brother is equal and on the same level. What does equality mean? Does it mean equality in position, in power, in knowledge, in experience? But we think,

“No. We have more experience. And because we have more experience, then you have to listen to me. You need to learn from my experience. Because I have more experience and knowledge, I am your teacher.”

Don't we think like this? Isn't this our rationale? For example, those of us who are older, think we need to be listened to more. With regard to knowledge, I'm reminded of an interesting answer that William Tyndale gave to a papist scholar.

The Great Controversy, p. 246:

Tyndale replied, “I defy the pope and all his laws; and if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you do.”

Would you like me to tell you that I will teach your children to know more of the truth than you do? Parents, you would say this will never happen. That is how the pope replied. He said it would never happen. But it did happen. Tyndale taught the boy who drove the plow more of the scriptures than the pope. Why was it Tyndale? It was because he translated the Bible into the English language and then the boy could read it for himself.

Of course, the pope didn't like this, so he persecuted Tyndale, until eventually Tyndale was burned at the stake. Jesus was crucified for the same reason. The Pharisees and Rabbis didn't like what Jesus did and so they killed Jesus. They wanted the people to call them “Rabbi,” “Doctor,” and suchlike. That was important to them.

Equality and experience are a bit complicated. But knowledge is a simple topic to address. We can say that a child might have more knowledge than we do. That's very possible. We shouldn't be so proud that we think we always have more knowledge than the children. No! They may have more than us. It is like the boy who plows the field. He can have more knowledge when he reads and knows the Bible for himself. Similarly, it is possible for our children to have more knowledge, when they begin to read for themselves.

As a youth of about 14 or 15 years, I had begun to read the Bible for myself. I had always looked up to my parents as knowing everything much better than I did. Then I started reading the *Spirit of Prophecy* books. At first, I thought they were very boring, but I found them more and more interesting over time. I found principles in those books which my parents weren't practicing. I confronted them about it. All they said in reply was that I was being fanatical. They pushed it away. I replied that it was written in

the Word. In that case, the boy knew more than his parents, because he read for himself. Likewise, my children—the young children here as well as the older ones—can know more than I do. This can happen when you read for yourself. That is very important to understand.

What about experience? Won't we always have more experience than the children, since we are so much older? Actually, experience can be a real stumbling block for knowledge. Always quoting our experiences as wisdom is foolishness! If our experience is not based on the word of God, where does it lead us? We need to understand that our experience must also be under the scrutiny of the word of God. In fact, we may not have more experience than our children. And if we do have more experience, it can be a disadvantage, rather than an advantage towards our children and others. That ought to be understood.

Jesus can also give us experiences. We need to learn from them if Jesus gives our children experiences—some of which we may not even know about. This reminds me of a statement Jesus made to Peter.

John 21

²⁰ Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is the one who betrays You?

²¹ Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, But Lord, what about this man?

Peter wanted to know his brother, John's fate. He wanted to know what would happen to him.

²² Jesus said to him, If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me.

Jesus essentially answered,

“I'll give him his own experience.”

Similarly, our children also need to have their own experience with Jesus. We are not to control that experience. Likewise, God can give us power. He gives us everything.

I think the topic of position is already clear. We all have an equal position before God. We are not superior to our children, before God. Before God we don't even have more knowledge or experience. We simply don't, when we compare it all with God. It's like two little ants. One of them may be a half millimeter larger than the other. What do you think—is there really any difference between them? They are both still ants. There's no difference. The same is true of us before God. We are equal.

In order to understand the mindset of the Pharisees better, we can read a few examples. The first is that of Nicodemus, who came to see Jesus at night. Jesus spoke with him about the rebirth and Nicodemus asked how it was possible.

John 3

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?

In other words,

“You claim to be a teacher, but you have very little knowledge. You don't know these things?”

That should have helped Nicodemus see himself in a better relationship towards others, in order to realize how little he knew. That is something that we all need to learn—we Pharisees, we parents, we doctors. We need to learn how little we know. When we have learned this, then we have started to become good parents, teachers, doctors, and so on.

Let's read one more example.

Luke 7

³⁶ Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.

³⁷ And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,

³⁸ And stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.



Simon, the Pharisee, was also a master and a Rabbi. He was a teacher in Israel. He went around with the scriptures in hand every day, to be sure people knew that he was someone who had knowledge. Yet he had been converted to Jesus. He was impressed by Him. He'd invited Jesus to a feast, because He had healed him from leprosy. But Simon still thought that he knew more than others—even more than Jesus. He imagined he knew that this woman was a sinner, but that Jesus did not know. He thought he knew more than Jesus about this. Of course, He didn't view Jesus

as the Son of God. He saw Him as a mere human teacher. He thought himself superior—even to Jesus. Let's read on, about how Jesus handled this situation.

Luke 7

⁴⁰ And Jesus answered and said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. So he said, Teacher, say it.

⁴¹ There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

⁴² And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more?

⁴³ Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And He said to him, You have rightly judged.

⁴⁴ Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in.

⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil.

⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

⁴⁸ Then He said to her, Your sins are forgiven.

⁴⁹ And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins?

⁵⁰ Then He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

Simon thought himself above Jesus in his knowledge, and possibly in his experience. He was older than Jesus, who was just a young man—barely 33 years old at that time. Simon, on the other hand was a settled and experienced man. One might call him hoary with age. He was someone in authority. He thought he knew more than Jesus. And he thought himself decidedly above the woman. But then Jesus turned it all around. He told Simon that the woman understood more than he did. It was like Tyndale

who said that he would make the boy plowing the field understand more of the Bible than the pope. This should be our exact attitude towards our children. We should consider them as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Finally, we'll turn back to *Matthew 23*.

Matthew 23

¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Every gift that God gives us, places us under obligation to one another. If we have more knowledge or experience, it puts us under obligation to serve those who have less. But in order to serve them, we must have more, right? So, we assume we have more. Forget about this! That is a wrong way of thinking. We need to understand that all knowledge comes from God. It's not inherent in us. We are given it moment by moment—through prayer and a close connection with God. That is how we can help.

Of course, there is no question that God has given us certain gifts. He has also given gifts to our children. He has given us different gifts. But the difference in gifts does not make one better than another. It merely places us under obligation to serve each other. That's all. This is the role of parents towards their children. I hope we can apply this for the benefit of fellowship within the family.

17. Order in the Thoughts

Sabbath, May 12, 2018

NOW we will study how to induce order. It is an important subject for me. First of all, what do you think we will consider about order today? There are various aspects of order.

[Audience]: Order in the thoughts, because “As a man thinks, so is he.”

[Audience]: We have been studying about families recently, so I think it might have to do with God’s order in the family—or in the larger church family.

Good, I’ll state it a little more generally. We will study about order in relationship to others. That goes beyond family, to include church and society.

[Audience]: Perhaps we will study about order in education.

Yes, that is how we induce order. You probably also mean that the education must be orderly. But what kind of order are we referring to?

[Audience]: Order in the way we work and how we deal with our surroundings.

Okay, that is essentially order in our surroundings. These were the three elements I was thinking of. What is the highest priority? It is what you mentioned first: order in our thoughts. That is the first priority. Today we want to study about how we can induce order in the thoughts: in ourselves, our children, and in others.

Counseling with Jesus

We will begin with a text which speaks about thoughts and thinking.

Luke 12

¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?

¹⁸ So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.

These were the man's thoughts. Did he have order in his thoughts? What is order in thought? It is to have structure, to have a clear aim, and to set priorities. But is that all? The man thought within himself. Whom did he counsel with? He counseled with himself. That is an important point.

¹⁸ So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, [He is talking with himself here.]

Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.

This man seems to have great peace in his soul, doesn't he? He already has a good crop. The land had yielded plentifully. Then he stored it and told himself to have peace, eat, drink, and be merry. He counseled with himself. He commended himself. And he had peace with himself. That is the kind of peace which many people recommend you to have. They say it's good to have peace with ourselves. But we find that this peace, with self, has its source in self.

²⁰ But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?

Suddenly all the man's peace is gone, from one moment to the next. He had such peace at first; he was joyful and merry; he had everything. But in the next moment it was all gone. Why? There was something wrong with the order of his thoughts. There was no good order in his thoughts. The order of his thoughts was,

“Self first. How can I secure my income and my standing?”

That is the problem, and that is why everything was gone so suddenly.



It's sometimes obvious that our thoughts seem to be orderly, when they're not really at all. It is obvious for those looking on, but it is not obvious for the person who lives in those thoughts. The man in these verses really thought that he could have ease and could eat, drink, and be merry. It was not obvious to him that all of that was based on a very thin foundation, and that it could all break in the next moment. Someone else could have seen it. If only he had asked the other One, who is Jesus. But he didn't. He was happy to have spoken with himself and to have convinced himself that he had peace.

A Selfless Spirit

Another example of such self-deception is found in *Matthew*.

Matthew 25

⁴¹ Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink;

⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?

⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

When the people answered, they were quite convinced that they had done a lot of good. They could name many good deeds and could relate many ways they had been very active here or there. They didn't understand what was being said. Suddenly, everything they had built was on very thin ice. And it broke through from one moment to the next. They had really convinced themselves that what they had done was right. But then it was suddenly all gone.

When we think, our first thought must be to ask whom our actions benefit. Do they benefit us, or do they benefit others? Really. That is the question we need to ask. That is the most essential and fundamental question that must be asked, in order to get order in our thoughts. Our confusion which is so often manifested—by not knowing the answer, or by being confused in this way or that—has its foundation in the fact that our thoughts are not selfless. They are built on self. And because that is very thin ice, we lose our peace again and again. We are confused and don't know which way is right, or what course to take. We can't find our place, or the right place to put our hands to work. Why is that? It

is simply because there is no order in our thoughts. Order in the thoughts begins with asking the question,

“How does what I’m doing benefit others?”

So far, you probably agree with me. We all obviously want to benefit others. We wouldn’t be here if we were merely thinking of ourselves. No, we do want to benefit others. But we like to have win-win situations. That means, we benefit others and thereby get benefits ourselves and get whatever it is that we want—satisfaction, happiness, fame, income, and so on. But that is not how selflessness works!

A phrase we have used in the past is self-sacrificing love. We could just use the word “love” and it would be enough. But today, love is not understood anymore, so we need to describe it a little. We have to add a word to make clear what love is. It is *self-sacrificing*: self-sacrificing love. In other words, if we want to serve others, there is always a denial of self. If that is not there, then there is no true service to others. That must be clear.

There is always a denial of self. That is why we find an interesting word used in *The Spirit of Prophecy*. That is the word “disinterested.” What does “disinterested” mean? Does it mean that if we are not interested in something then we are disinterested? It could mean that. It would be to have no interest—to be disinterested. But the context we find for this word in *The Spirit of Prophecy* is different. You can look it up for yourselves. We will read one statement where it is used.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 397:

Those who deny self to do others good, and who devote themselves and all they have to Christ’s service, will realize the happiness which the selfish man seeks for in vain. Said our Saviour:

Luke 14

³³ Whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

Charity “seeks not her own.” This is the fruit of that disinterested love and benevolence which characterized the life of

Christ. The law of God in our hearts will bring our own interests in subordination to high and eternal considerations.

What is disinterested love? Is it to have no interest in love? No. It is to have no interests in self. It means selfless, or self-sacrificing. It is to have no interest in self whatsoever. Love is only there for others. It is not a win-win situation. Not at all. Instead, it is a win-lose situation. They win, and I lose. Are we willing and ready for that?

Those who deny self to do others good...

In other words, to do others good, it is important to deny self. If that is not the case, there is no real selflessness. Order in the thoughts begins with self-denial. It may be tough to deny myself of what I like to do and like to be, in order to serve others. But that is important. That is exactly what Jesus says. Let's read that as well.

Matthew 16

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

The word "soul" here doesn't refer to a part of our being. It is our whole being. It's not the case that we can save part of our being and just lose our soul. No, the soul is everything. It is what we are.

²⁵ Whoever desires to save his life will lose it.

It's a win-lose situation. The other person wins and I lose. I will only start to be selfless when I am ready for that.

²⁵ Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

That is very important in the family. We can see that children will never grow up to be soldiers in the army of Christ, unless that spirit is present. Otherwise, it's impossible.

Matthew 16

²⁴ If anyone desires to come after me.

Who doesn't desire to come after Him? Again, we would not be here, if we did not desire to come after Him. But how deep is that desire? Do we really take up our cross?

²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

It doesn't say, "...for the sake of others"; rather, it says, "for My sake." That is also an important factor. When we serve others, we are doing it for the sake of Jesus. The question is,

"What do we need to deny in ourselves, in order to serve God?"

That is the most fundamental question we need to ask, to gain order in our thoughts. What do I need to deny myself, in order to serve God? We must ask this question at every stage. It is not the amount of service we give to God that counts. Instead, it is the spirit of sacrifice—the spirit in which we give to Him—that counts. It doesn't matter if we have many talents and give Him a lot, or if we give just a little. The question is,

"What spirit do we give it in?"

If we don't give Him little things in the right spirit, then we won't give Him big things in the right spirit either. Let's turn to a story which illustrates this very well.

Mark 12

⁴¹ Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.

⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

⁴³ So He called His disciples to himself and said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;

⁴⁴ For they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.

Was it really smart for Jesus to do that? Didn't He discourage those who gave a lot? If you discourage those who give much and encourage those who give little, what does it do to your income? It doesn't seem very smart. But, actually, that is the only way it does function. It has to be made clear that those who give only of their abundance, do not really carry the work. They may boast about their generous gifts, but they don't carry on the work. That's not the case. The work is carried on by those who give themselves. The spirit of the widow with two mites is the only spirit which takes the work forward. This is what Jesus makes very clear. That is the only way we can give a contribution to the work. It's not about having great ideas, nor thinking that we are good for this or that. Rather, the important point is the spirit in which we do it. It is not the amount, but the spirit that is important.

Reception of Truth

We don't gain order in our thoughts only by our selflessness in giving to others. It is also gained by our selflessness in the way that we receive the truth. How do we handle the truth when it is given to us—through the word of God, through a sermon, or through brothers and sisters? That is where disorder in the thoughts begins to form early on. When we don't welcome the truth, then we try to bend it a little, in order to make it fit with our ideas. Then we become very confused. We're unable to think straight anymore. We run this way and that, and it's no longer clear where we are going.

When the truth is presented, our only safeguard is really to accept it as it is. We need to be on guard here, because Satan is always busy trying to cause disorder in our thoughts, as far as the

truth is concerned. He has a very easy game when there is still selfishness in our hearts. Let's read about this.

The Great Controversy, p. 526:

And this is the object which Satan seeks to accomplish. There is nothing that he desires more than to destroy confidence in God and in His word. Satan stands at the head of the great army of doubters, and he works to the utmost of his power to beguile souls into his ranks. It is becoming fashionable to doubt.

To doubt what? To doubt the truth when it is preached.

There is a large class by whom the word of God is looked upon with distrust for the same reason as was its Author—because it reproves and condemns sin. Those who are unwilling to obey its requirements endeavor to overthrow its authority. They read the Bible, or listen to its teachings as presented from the sacred desk, merely to find fault with the Scriptures or with the sermon.

They read the Bible in order to find fault with the Scriptures. Or, they listen to the teachings of the Bible to find fault with the sermon. That has a disorderly influence on our thoughts. Very definitely. That is the major cause for confusion, for disorder in the thoughts. Since we are studying about education, we can ask the question,

“How can this be transmitted to our children?”

I think it's quite obvious. Let's read another statement about this.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 497:

The delicate and susceptible minds of the youth obtain their estimate of the labors of God's servants by the way their parents treat the matter.

The way their parents are or aren't confused. The way their parents think in an orderly way or not.

Many heads of families make the service a subject of criticism at home, approving a few things and condemning others. Thus the message of God to men is criticized and questioned, and

made a subject of levity. What impressions are thus made upon the young by these careless, irreverent remarks the books of heaven alone will reveal. The children see and understand these things very much quicker than parents are apt to think. Their moral senses receive a wrong bias that time will never fully change. The parents mourn over the hardness of heart in their children and the difficulty in arousing their moral sensibility to answer to the claims of God. But the books of heavenly record trace with unerring pen the true cause. The parents were unconverted. They were not in harmony with heaven or with heaven's work. Their low, common ideas of the sacredness of the ministry and of the sanctuary of God were woven into the education of their children. It is a question whether anyone who has for years been under this blighting influence of home instruction will ever have a sensitive reverence and high regard for God's ministry and the agencies He has appointed for the salvation of souls. These things should be spoken of with reverence, with propriety of language, and with fine susceptibility, that you may reveal to all you associate with that you regard the message from God's servants as a message to you from God himself.

I think this is clear for those who really want to learn. There's no question. But if we're not really willing to learn, then we begin to criticize.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 497:

Many heads of families make the service a subject of criticism at home, approving a few things and condemning others.

Does the approval of a few things make it better? No. Why not? I would even say that it makes it worse. When we approve of a few things, we give the impression that we understand. We place ourselves above the word of God. We think that we can judge the word of God, determining what is right and what is wrong. We think we can approve and disapprove. That has a really bad influence on our children. Some children may follow their parents' footsteps and become critics. Others may throw away faith altogether. That's possible, and these results have happened.

Entering into God's Thoughts

The final point we want to consider about order in our thoughts is found in the Golden Rule.

Matthew 7

¹² Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Selflessness and right thinking begin here. Whatever we want others to do to us, we must do to them. If we are confused and don't know what to do anymore, we can ask ourselves what we would want to be done and we can do it to others. But do we think that Jesus spoke this verse only about our fellow humans? He also said it in relation to God. In other words,

“Whatever you want God to do to you, do also to God.”

The law is made up of two parts—loving God with all our heart, mind, and strength; and loving our neighbor as ourselves.⁴¹ This means that the same love we exercise towards our neighbor is exercised towards God—and vice versa. So, whatever we want God to do to us, we are to do to Him.

What does that mean?

What are we doing to God? Are we thinking of Him? No? Don't we want Him to think of us? Do we care for Him? No? Don't we want Him to care for us? And so forth. Think about this. Whatever you want God to do to you, do also to Him. Yet we say that we don't understand God—that He understands us, but we don't understand Him. And this is the point. In order to do to someone else what we want them to do to us, we have to enter into their thoughts. We have to enter into their understanding and mind. Otherwise we can't do to them what we want them to do to us.

For example, perhaps we don't like particular foods, but we do like other foods. So we give our neighbor plentifully of the foods

⁴¹ *Matthew* 22:36-40.

which we like, and we don't give them any of the foods we don't like. First, we have to enter into their thoughts. Of course, that also includes their health—and what they would want to eat if only they knew what good health requires.

It is very important that we enter into the thought of God. Let's read this.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 134:

In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you. This is the true rule of honesty. It is another expression of the law.

Matthew 22

³⁹ You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And it is the substance of the teaching of the prophets. It is a principle of heaven, and will be developed in all who are fitted for its holy companionship.

Apply this to God now. Enter into God's feelings, into God's difficulties, into God's disappointments, into God's joys, and into God's sorrows. We already have a vague idea of what God's sorrows are. If we are disappointing Him, then we cause Him sorrow. What causes Him joy? He is joyful when we overcome self. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.⁴² There was great joy when the widow gave her two mites. Enter into these joys and sorrows. Try to understand them.

- Enter into His disappointments, such as when we have made promises and don't keep them.
- Enter into His difficulties in dealing with minds like ours.
- Enter into His feelings and how He loves us, and so on.

When we enter into all this, then we will do to God what we wish Him to do to us. This is the law and the prophets. First, understand Him, and then act accordingly.

⁴² Luke 15:7.

This is order in our thinking. When we think like this, entering into His thoughts and feelings, we are aware that we are constantly surrounded by Him. Every minute we are surrounded by Him.

Psalm 139 [ERV]

⁵ You are all around me—in front of me and behind me.

Psalm 139

² ...You understand my thought afar off.

⁵ You have hedged me behind and before...

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

Try to understand this continually. Even our thoughts are not secret.

Psalm 139 [GW]

² You read my thoughts from far away.

They are read and understood by God like an open book.

Psalm 139 [MSG]

² I'm an open book to you...

As we understand this, we will realize how He feels when we think in a certain way, and it will break our heart. We cannot do it anymore, because we love Him. We have a very good example of this in the story of Joseph. He always lived with God in this way. He constantly entered into God's feelings and understanding, and this helped him during the temptation in Egypt.

Education, p. 255:

As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God's presence.

Hebrews 4

¹³ All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Habakkuk 1

¹³ [He is] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity.

This thought was Joseph's shield amidst the corruptions of Egypt. To the allurements of temptation his answer was steadfast:

Genesis 39

⁹ How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?
Such a shield, faith, if cherished, will bring to every soul.

The next paragraph also fits:

Only the sense of God's presence can banish the fear that, for the timid child, would make life a burden. Let him fix in his memory the promise,

Psalms 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.

Let him read that wonderful story of Elisha in the mountain city, and, between him and the hosts of armed foemen, a mighty encircling band of heavenly angels. Let him read how to Peter, in prison and condemned to death, God's angel appeared; how, past the armed guards, the massive doors and great iron gateway with their bolts and bars, the angel led God's servant forth in safety. Let him read of that scene on the sea, when the tempest-tossed soldiers and seamen, worn with labor and watching and long fasting, Paul the prisoner, on his way to trial and execution, spoke those grand words of courage and hope:

Acts 27

²² Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you...

²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.

In the faith of this promise Paul assured his companions,

³⁴ There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.

So it came to pass. Because there was in that ship one man through whom God could work, the whole shipload of heathen soldiers and sailors was preserved.

⁴⁴ They escaped all safe to land.



This shows how the people of God lived so close to Him, so understandingly of Him that they behaved accordingly. God was a reality for them. They did to Him what they wanted Him to do to them, and this is the result of it.

I really wish that our thoughts will become orderly, so that first our relationships with each other and then our work will become orderly. It is true that there is a certain order that we can acquire without selfless thinking. The rich man who gathered everything together also had a certain order, but it was not that which builds the kingdom of God. If we want to build the kingdom of God, we need to have order in our minds. That means selflessness first of all. Selflessness always means self-sacrifice, one way or another. If we are not willing to sacrifice self, then we are not fit for the kingdom of God. We cannot educate our children for the kingdom of God. We are speaking of spiritual things here—of the things that really bring people to God—and our children to God.

18. Order in Relationships I

Sabbath, May 19, 2018

WE ARE studying order in the context of child education, but this subject of order also has a lot to do with the order we have in relation to ourselves, our own thoughts, our fellow human beings, as well as the environment around us. Last week we studied the order of our thoughts. Today we will look at the order that we keep in our relationships to others.

What Is Order and Disorder?

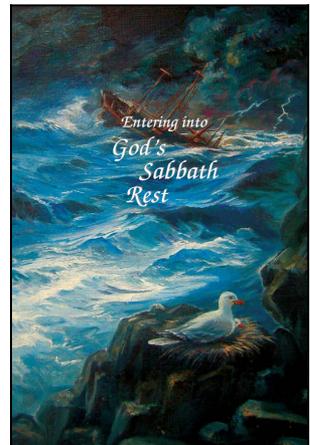
First of all, what is order and what is disorder? We have very good definitions of these in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 14 [NLT]

³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.

What is order according to this definition? It is peace. Peace is contrasted with disorder. What then would disorder be? It is the opposite of peace. Perhaps we could call it confusion, strife, or turmoil. There are many ways to describe the opposite of peace. But order is very clear. God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. Order, therefore, is peace, while disorder is a lack of peace. If we have disorder, we have no peace. If we do not have peace, we have disorder. We all know this from our thoughts. When there is no order in our thoughts, there is no peace in our thoughts either. And when there is no peace in our thoughts, there is no order there.

We also need to define peace. There are basically two kinds of peace. One kind of peace is illustrated by the picture of a seagull at rest amid a storm. We have this image on the cover of the book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*. The image was a



result of an art competition. The artists were challenged to depict peace. The winning image was of a very peaceful seagull amidst a storm. This depicts inner peace. We could apply this by saying that our fellow men are in turmoil and strife—battling, fighting, and so on. Meanwhile, we have peace. This is one kind of peace, which is inner peace. But there is also another peace, which is with other people. We can have peace with ourselves, or we can have peace with other people. What relationship do these two kinds of peace have with each other? In other words, is our inner peace dependent on the peace we have with other people, or vice versa? Is the peace we have with other people dependent on the peace we have within ourselves?

Looking at these two kinds of peace, we may think that they have nothing to do with each other—that if we have inner peace, then it doesn't matter whether we have peace with other people, or not. But practical life shows us again and again that we cannot have real inner peace unless we have peace with other people. When I don't have peace with other people, I often cannot sleep. Should that be the case? Of course. Practical experience tells us that in order to have inner peace, we need to have peace with other people. And vice versa: in order to have peace with other people, we must have inner peace first. If we have no inner peace, how can we have peace with other people? This is often the cause for not having peace with others. Yet we have this wonderful picture of peace in the midst of turmoil. We need to find out what peace really is. We will see that it is connected with order.

What kind of peace was referred to in the text we just read? Was it inner peace, or peace with others? Let's take a look at the context. The entire chapter could also be read.

1 Corinthians 14 [NLT]

²⁶ Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

²⁷ No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say.

²⁸ But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

²⁹ Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said.

³⁰ But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop.

³¹ In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged.

³² Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns.

³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.

This is very obviously speaking of peace with other people. We could even start reading at chapter 11 to see the greater context. There it speaks of the Lord's Supper. There was strife, with some believers eating before others. Paul had to correct them, and he explained how Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Where there is disorder and lack of peace among fellow believers, that communion service brings relationships back into order. The Lord's Supper brings order or peace. That is its purpose.

Chapter 12 speaks about the body and the different members—that each member has its place and how important that is. Chapter 13 is about love, and then chapter 14 is about speaking in tongues, and other church matters such as the role of women. This is very clearly about the relationship with others.

1 Corinthians 14

³³ God is not a God of disorder.

In other words, God is not a God of disorder among you but of peace—peace with other people. God is a God of peace with other people. That is His principle. That is His working. This is what He does. If we want to belong to God, then we will have peace with other people. Everyone desires peace. If we do not have peace

with another person, then it is difficult to speak. We all understand and know this. It is not a pleasant situation to be in.

What Hinders Peace?

We certainly desire peace. It is natural to have this desire. But there is something that hinders us from really pursuing it, even though we desire it. We need to find out what that is. It seems to be difficult to have peace with everyone. Let's read about this.

Romans 12 [NLT]

¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Do everything possible. Another way to say this is,

“If it is possible, live in peace with everyone.”

The *New King James Version* says,

Romans 12

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

“If it is possible.” So, it's not always possible, right? For instance, we may think,

“I cannot live in peace with all people like that other person can, because they always make compromises. That's why they can live in peace. I don't make compromises. I'm straight-forward—I tell people plainly when they are doing something wrong. That's why I can't have peace like others do. It's not possible, so I don't even need to try.”

Those are the conclusions we draw, the excuses we make. But that is not what the Bible text says! “As much depends on you.” Have I really pursued it? That is the big question we need to ask ourselves. If we have not pursued order in our relationships with other people, then we cannot find peace within ourselves either. Then we will not be able to find peace within ourselves. It will be impossible, because our thinking will not be in order. There are other texts that make this very clear as well.

Hebrews 12

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

It does not say with only some people. We think there are certain people we can't have peace with. But no, it says to pursue peace with *all* people. No one is excluded. Pursuing peace means to make an effort, as far as we can.

Psalm 34

¹⁴ Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

This is a very good Hebrew parallelism, meaning that the same point is expressed in different ways. That helps us understand the issue better. Peace is a parallel for good. To do good is peace. To pursue peace is to do good, and peace is good. Again, peace is the parallel for good. And to pursue peace is the parallel for doing good. Evil is the opposite of good—not doing good. To depart from evil is to depart from not doing good, to depart from not having peace. Evil is the opposite of seeking peace. To depart from evil is to seek peace.

We need to understand that peace is a parallel for good. To do good is to have peace. And peace is order. So, to do good is to have order. “Not good” is a parallel for evil or disorder. Evil means disorder. With this understanding, we can turn to another Bible text.

Jeremiah 14

¹⁹ Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has your soul loathed Zion? Why have You stricken us so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but there was no good; and for the time of healing, and there was trouble.

Jeremiah is speaking about Israel's apostasy. Interestingly, he said, “We looked for peace.” Indeed, they did look for peace. They tried to make alliances with the Egyptians against the Babylonians, for the sake of peace. Israel was not an aggressive nation at that time. They were on the defensive, trying to survive as a nation. That is why they looked for the Egyptians to help them.

Jeremiah 14

¹⁰ We looked for peace, but there was no good.

Let's read this differently.

“We looked for peace, but there was no peace. We looked for peace, but there was strife.”

Obviously, there is a way to pursue peace which does not bring peace. We need to understand this. It does not bring peace, because it's done in a disorderly manner. That's very simple. Let's look at this again. Some may say that it's far-fetched to say that good is order. But, of course, we can say this because the Bible says so. Let's read another few verses.

Genesis 1

¹⁰ And God saw that it was good.

What did He see? He saw that it was orderly; that it was peaceful. When God does things, He does them in a very orderly way. In *Genesis* 1:12 the same phrase is repeated:

¹² And God saw that it was good.

It goes on and on. All of this is to say that it was orderly, again and again.

³¹ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

The words are the same in Hebrew. It was very orderly, very peaceful. Here is the same Hebrew word as in *Jeremiah*, where we read there was no good, there was no peace, there was no order. Now we can read about when God created Eve.

Genesis 2

¹⁸ And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone.

It's “not good,” it's *not orderly*. In other words, it's not orderly if we think that we can do everything alone. It doesn't actually matter if we are married or not. It's possible to think we can do

everything alone either way. Some people are not married and think that they can do everything alone. Others are married and still think they can do everything alone. Being married is not the issue. The real issue is that it is not good for man to be alone.

This throws a new light on *Genesis 2:9* as well. God planted a tree in the midst of the garden. It was the tree of knowledge of good and evil—order and disorder. Good and evil are order and disorder. We need to understand better that evil is simply disorder. Good is simply order. Realizing this, we will understand various issues that happen better. We imagine that we pursue order, yet we don't achieve it. Let's read *Jeremiah 14:19* again.

Jeremiah 14

¹⁹ We looked for peace, but there was no order.

Without order we cannot find peace. We may look for it, but we will not find it. We can find it only when there is order—order in our thinking and in relationship with our fellow humans. Looking for peace in the wrong way is one matter. But it is also possible to look for the wrong kind of peace. Let's read about this.

1 Thessalonians 5

³ For when they say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

We know that “peace and safety” will be the religious message of the last days. It will be said that all is well and that there will be a glorious future—with the church ruling the world for a thousand years, Jesus at the head of the church, and all the Jews being converted. That is the peace and safety cry. People will be told not to worry, because this is going to happen and there will be peace. Even if there is some unrest, and even if politicians make wrong decisions, it is said that everything will still go in the right direction, because the church will rule. This is the idea. It's about peace and safety. People don't want to hear that the churches are in a deplorable state, that lying is taking an increasing hold on

people, and that the earth is being ruined because of it. Instead, “peace and safety” is the cry.

We may find this in our small circle as well. We don’t use the terms “peace and safety.” Instead, we say that we have a desire for harmony. Because of that, we don’t confront issues. To be more honest, we should call it fear of what will happen afterwards—fear of consequences, strife, and so on. That fear causes us to hold back the truth. It is a false peace, as we know.

What Is True Peace (Order)?

Now that we see what false peace is, we need to understand better what true peace is. What is peace? What is order? It has something to do with pursuing it with our whole heart, as we read:

Hebrews 12

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all men.

How do we pursue peace in the right way? This is not the way Israel did—Israel did not find lasting peace. We can pursue peace by really having the love of God in our hearts. That is important. Let’s read a text about this.

Matthew 7

¹ Judge not, that you be not judged.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye?

This is the way that leads in the opposite direction to peace. We will not find peace if we strive for peace and order while having the spirit of judgment within us. We will try to get peace, but we will not find it. We will always want the other person to submit to our judgment. And we won’t find peace, because they don’t submit to our judgment. We get angrier and angrier, because they won’t submit to our judgment.

What is the problem? The problem is a lack of love. Jesus tells us what the solution is. He says that the solution is to remove the plank from our eye. Other versions translate the plank as the beam, or the log. When do we remove the plank from our eye, and when do we remove the speck from our brother's eye? Removing a speck from an eye can be a very difficult and sensitive work. But first, we must remove the log from our own eye. Compared with the speck, we have a log. How do we do that? There is a wonderful statement which explains it to us.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 128:

He who looks often upon the cross of Calvary, remembering that his sins placed the Saviour there, will never try to estimate the degree of his guilt in comparison with that of others. He will not climb upon the judgment seat to bring accusation against another. There can be no spirit of criticism or self-exaltation on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary's cross.

Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart. No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word—a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God.

This is a very good description of how to pursue peace.

Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother.

Only then can we start to remove the speck from our brother's eye. Many people think that Jesus meant that we are not to care about the other person.

“Didn't He say not to remove the speck from our brother's eye? Didn't He say never to do that, because it is an evil work?”

No, He didn't say that. Instead, He said that first we must remove the log from our own eye and then we can remove the speck from our brother's eye. In other words, we have a work to do. Of course, we do need to remove the speck from our brother's eye. But first we have to remove the log from our own eye. Then pursue it! Pursue peace.

When there is no peace in the family—between husband and wife, or between parents and children—it is a real turmoil for our inner peace. We understand this very well. In order to gain peace, we must pursue it. We have a work to do. It is described here.

PURSUING PEACE IN THE CHURCH

Let's read a word from Jesus about how to pursue that peace.

Matthew 18

¹⁵ If another believer...

We could also say a child, brother, husband, wife, and so on,

¹⁵ ...sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.

¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

There is another text which says, “If you become aware...”⁴³ At first, we are not aware, but then we become aware that another

⁴³ *Matthew* 5:23.

brother has sinned against us. We then go to him privately and point out the offense. If the person listens and confesses, we have won the person back.

What must the attitude be when we point out the offense? It is exactly what is described in Jesus' words. We are putting the speck out of a brother's eye. That means we are ready to lay down our own dignity, our own life, and everything. We don't see ourselves as being in the right and that they are wrong. No, we let the word of God judge us both. With this attitude we can go to them privately—but only with this attitude. Otherwise we will pursue peace, but there will be no good in it.

If this action is unsuccessful—although in most cases it is successful—then don't give up. Take one or two others and go back, so that what you say can be confirmed by two or three witnesses. Those witnesses are not witnesses against our brother. Rather, they are witnesses for the truth—and that may be against us as well.

Matthew 18

¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

The way that Jesus treated pagans and tax collectors shows that there was no animosity at all.

PURSUING PEACE WITH OTHERS

Let's read another text which expresses the principle of pursuing peace with everyone.

Matthew 5 [NLT]

²¹ You have heard that our ancestors were told, You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.

²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

²³ So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,

²⁴ Leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

Another term for “suddenly remember” is “become aware.” In other words, we have not thought about it. But now, as we pray, it becomes clear to us that someone has something against us. Then we should not hesitate or procrastinate, saying that we will deal with it another day. Instead, we should work on it right away. We should go to our brother. That doesn’t necessarily mean that we have to go physically to them. But we need to take steps. We need to do everything we can to pursue peace again. We become aware that peace is lacking, and we need to pursue it again. If we don’t have peace with other people, then we won’t have peace in our hearts. That won’t be possible.

Verse 23 begins with the word “So.” That is another way of saying “Therefore,” which means “Because.” Because of what? Because of what we read in the previous verses.

Matthew 5

²¹ You must not murder...

Jesus is referring to the commandment, “You shall not kill.”

²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot...

–which is to look down upon them, thinking they are silly or stupid,

²² ...you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

This is what we are *not* to do. When do we get angry with others? It is when we feel as if we were not treated correctly. That’s when we feel angry. What do we do then? We tend to call them stupid, or silly, or other names. Then we are in danger of taking other actions, such as cursing them, and so on. So therefore, be-

fore we do that and before we call them names, are mad at them, or curse them, we should reconcile ourselves to them. That is the opposite. We either are angry at someone, calling them names and cursing them, or else we will reconcile ourselves with them. When we realize that our brother has sinned against us, we should go to him privately and mend the situation. We should seek peace again, which is bringing order again into the disorder and confusion that is there. That is what Jesus says to do.

Jesus is obviously referring to the Ten Commandments in these verses. The sixth commandment is, “You shall not kill.” The fifth is to honor your father and mother. The seventh commandment is not to commit adultery, the eighth is not to steal, and the ninth commandment is not to bear false witness, not to lie. Jealousy is the tenth. We should know the Ten Commandments off by heart. They all describe an orderly relationship with our fellow human beings. A lack of peace means that the commandments are not the basis between us anymore. But if the Ten Commandments are the basis between us, then there is peace and order.

It is possible to understand the Ten Commandments as simply a list of do’s and don’t’s. And we may think we are obeying them, when we simply don’t deal with a specific person. We don’t murder them, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, and so on. But this is not how the Ten Commandments are meant. Jesus has described them further. He says that we are to go to the other person, if we are aware of an issue between us. Jesus explains these Ten Commandments much more deeply. To murder even includes thinking evil of our brother. The same principle is true of adultery and the other commandments.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

There is one issue I want to point out here from the Ten Commandments. The ninth commandment is,

Exodus 20 [NLT]

¹⁶ You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

This is usually known as lying. Lying is a very, very common action in our world today. It has become so pervasive that it is difficult to believe what someone says. This is especially true of politicians. A survey asked people whether they believed politicians, and almost no one did believe them. Everyone knows that lying is the normal order of things. It seems that the only thing that can be relied on is that when a politician says something, it is not the truth. But where does it lead us to? How can we have peace in such confusion, disorder, and disarray?

And how is it with us? It is good when our children are trained to speak the truth always. But how often we are trained from childhood to bend the truth—just a little! If there are two ways to express something, which way will we use? We always use the way that is to our advantage. Of course, we think we have not lied, because there are two ways to express the truth. But the other person is led to imagine that we are good, that we did the right thing, that we have not done anything wrong, and that we are excused. Yet is that the truth?

Think of the example of Adam and Eve, when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—or order and disorder. God asked where they were and why they were hiding. Adam could have answered two ways. He could have said,

“Because I ate from the tree,”

—or,

“Because I am naked.”

Which did he choose?

“Because I am naked.”

Was this the truth? That was not the real reason he was hiding. And so it continued, with one avoidance of truth after another. This is a real problem and it creates disorder. Sometimes we hear several versions of the same story from people, depending on

what puts them in the best light. This already shows us that there is something wrong. Such a problem causes disorder, which creates a lack of peace. The question is really this:

“Are we ready to speak the truth, even when it is to our own disadvantage? Are we ready to speak the truth, even if it causes others to think badly of us?”

Are we ready to do this? Are we? Many are not. But we must come to this place. I want to point to Jesus as our great Example. Let’s read about His conversation with Caiaphas.

Matthew 26 [NLT]

⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, Well, aren’t you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?

⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

⁶⁴ Jesus replied, You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God’s right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, Blasphemy! Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy.

⁶⁶ What is your verdict? Guilty! they shouted. He deserves to die!

Did Jesus know that this would be the result of His words? Yes, He knew very well. Did Jesus withhold the truth, in order to save His life? No, He did not. But how often do we withhold the truth, in order to appear in a better light to other people! But it does not bring peace. Maybe we want to create peace in that way, but we can’t. We have to be so honest that we speak the truth even when it hurts. If it hurts us, then we should be all the more eager to speak the truth because we know that is the truth, for the sake of truth. This is exactly the spirit of true peace—not the “peace and safety” cry. The “peace and safety” cry is based on dishonesty. It’s based on making the others feel better, and making ourselves better in the sight of other people.

Let us turn now to another text about this.

Ezekiel 33

¹ Once again a message came to me from the Lord:

² Son of man, give your people this message: When I bring an army against a country, the people of that land choose one of their own to be a watchman.

³ When the watchman sees the enemy coming, he sounds the alarm to warn the people.

⁴ Then if those who hear the alarm refuse to take action, it is their own fault if they die.

⁵ They heard the alarm but ignored it, so the responsibility is theirs. If they had listened to the warning, they could have saved their lives.

⁶ But if the watchman sees the enemy coming and doesn't sound the alarm to warn the people, he is responsible for their captivity. They will die in their sins, but I will hold the watchman responsible for their deaths.

⁷ Now, son of man, I am making you a watchman for the people of Israel. Therefore, listen to what I say and warn them for me.

This is a person who is honest. A watchman is someone who is honest and speaks the truth, no matter what it costs him. How many of God's people have spoken the truth at the cost of their lives? If we avoid speaking the truth in order to save our own reputation, in order to defend ourselves, will we then be able to be a faithful watchman when it comes to that point? We won't. So, it is really important not to consider ourselves. That's a false peace. And it will lead us one day to say that we seek for peace, but we find no good.

Parents need to have this honesty with themselves. They also need to expect this from their children. When I look today at our children, I see a very different attitude here. I am very sad to say this, but many of the children have a totally different attitude. There is no saying the truth at any cost to self: it's simply not there. Why is it not there? I guess it's because we, as parents, haven't been so truthful. Maybe this is the reason. But lying has become the order of things.

Children should feel as soon as they utter a word of untruth that they are about to die. They should feel it. They should really get a sense of it, so that they loath it and hate speaking an untruth. It brings no peace. Peace is based on truth. We cannot have inner peace if we have no true peace with our fellows. If my fellow human beings know the truth about me, if they know the truth about what the word of God says, then I can have peace with them. But if my life is based on a lie, it will not be possible to have inner peace. If I have no outer peace, there is no inner peace. And peace means order. Let us really work to establish order with one another in our relationships.

Of course, there is much more we can say about order. There is also a certain order in the church. There is an order that is described in *1 Corinthians* 12. Here in *1 Corinthians* 14 we have read about an order as well. But all this is based on truthfulness. Everything is based on peace. The same is true when we speak about gospel order. These are all based upon the love of God. The love of God brings peace. It brings order first of all in our hearts and then in our relationship with others.

19. Order in Relationships II

Sabbath, May 26, 2018

Note: Prepare for this study by reading the chapter 41, “In Contact with Others,” in the book *The Ministry of Healing*, by Ellen G. White.

IN PREPARATION for our study today, we have read chapter 41 “In Contact with Others” in the book *The Ministry of Healing*. We will consider it further today.

Romans 14: Varying Views

There is a corresponding text in the Bible, which is *Romans 14*. Let’s read it together.

Romans 14

¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

⁴ Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

The first paragraph from “In Contact with Others” speaks about how we are all different. These verses also express these differences.

But isn’t *Romans 14* somewhat problematic? The first difficulty is that vegans have trouble with it, because it says that those who are weak eat no meat. It labels us as weak. That’s the first difficulty we have with it. Doesn’t this chapter also cause us to judge who is weak and who is strong? Those who are strong eat meat. Those who are weak don’t. We judge according to that standard. We can think that others are weak if they don’t eat meat, and that we are strong because we do. And so it goes on.

This chapter continues by speaking about feast days. And of course, as Sabbath keepers, we do indeed hold one day higher than the others. Another person may view all days as equal. Paul infers that those who view all days to be equal are the strong ones, while those who hold one day above the other days are the weak ones. Again, it's judging.

We could understand this chapter in this way, but that is wrong. Paul obviously doesn't ask us to judge. We need to understand the real point. It's not about plant or animal-based foods. It's about foods which were offered to idols in those days. In the Greek culture, those foods had been offered to idols before they were taken to the market. Those people who were conscientious would ask whether the food had been offered to idols. Those who didn't have an issue of conscience simply ate the food.

When we see it in this light, it no longer has anything to do with being a vegan or not. So we may think that the chapter is obsolete and irrelevant to us because there is no longer an issue with foods being offered to idols. We don't need the chapter anymore, right?

"It's one less issue we have to deal with,"

—we might think. But yes, of course the chapter does still apply. Just as in the days of Paul, we can ask where our foods come from—whether they are produced using certain procedures or not. We may look at particular foods and say that we will not eat them because of those procedures. For instance, perhaps we decide not to drink a certain grape juice because it is produced by a company which also produces wine. We want to know exactly where our foods come from. Others may not have any issue with these points. We could say that those who do take issue on these points are weak, while those who don't are strong. It gives us a reason to call ourselves strong and others weak. *This is all wrong.* It cannot be right.

We could also understand this chapter in a way which makes us indifferent about whether someone is strong or weak—whether they eat or not. It’s none of our business. And it’s none of their business what we eat either. Just so it’s clear from the outset. And since it’s none of my business, we won’t speak about it. We will focus our attention on other more important matters. Indifference is the ultimate result—at least in these areas.

When we look at Paul and the practice of the apostles, we could think that they didn’t even hold to what was written in this chapter. For example, we can look at what Paul wrote in *Galatians*.

Galatians 4

¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years.

¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

In other words,

“Stop all this superstition! I fear that I’ve done it all in vain. You’re still holding certain days higher than others.”

But in *Romans* 14, Paul said that those who hold one day above others are not to be despised. Isn’t it a form of despising to say,

“Stop all this superstition”?

Let’s read a few other texts. The first one is also about food.

Colossians 2

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths.

Paul isn’t merely saying,

“Don’t let yourself be harassed.”

Rather, he is saying that those who teach judgment are false teachers. We also teach through our lives. So, if we say through our lives that food and drink are important, or that one day is more important than the others, Paul says for us not to not be

judged, nor to have a bad conscience. Is that respect towards those who teach otherwise?

There is obviously a right way and a wrong way. It's not trivial if a person holds one day as more important than the others, or if they're conscientious about their food. It does matter, according to what we have read. Let's read another verse, which is about food offered to idols. This was expressed as necessary in the Apostolic Council:

Acts 15

²⁹ That you abstain from things offered to idols.

If we are supposed to abstain from things offered to idols, then don't we have to ascertain whether they have been offered? Don't we have to go to the market and ask? Yet in another text, Paul said that it is nothing at all.

1 Timothy 4

³ Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Paul states more precisely that meat offered to idols is a non-issue in *1 Corinthians* 8, which we will read in a moment.

Romans 14: The True Meaning

We need to put all this together. It seems to be a contradiction. The practice of the apostolic church was clearly to separate from esteeming particular foods highly, from inquiring about them, and so on. Paul said not to do that. Instead, he said to eat with joy and thankfulness for what God has given. Of course, this refers to those foods which were good. Those they were to eat with joy.

Conversely, Paul said that the feast days were in the past, now that Christ had come. It was no longer necessary to esteem certain days more highly than others.

Why did he write what he did in *Romans* 14 then? Why did he give the weak in faith so much freedom that he told them they

should live according to their conscience? Did he also tell the Pharisees to live according to their conscience and to keep their various ordinances? Would he have told them that? No! Why not?

Romans 14

⁵ Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

Did he mean,

“It’s none of your business what I do. You be convinced in your own mind, and I’ll be convinced in mine.”?

No, that was not the attitude of Paul, and that was not what was meant in *Romans* 14. Rather, the point is that we are to be considerate of each other, that we build up, and above all lead to Christ and are missionaries for each other. Missionary work also applies to our brothers and sisters. Indifference is not taught in that chapter. Instead, love, patience and forbearance, self-control, and sympathy are taught. He did not teach that “It doesn’t matter.”

How do you feel when someone tells you that you are still weak in faith? It’s not very nice, is it? We have no problem saying that we are weak ourselves. Everyone has surely said that of themselves. We may say of ourselves that we are weak, stupid, or bad. But no one else is allowed to say that to us. If someone else says it to us, we don’t think it’s right. But if we say it ourselves, then we think it’s okay.

When Paul says that we are weak in faith, then it is something that we must initially accept and let stand. We should not say that we’re not weak. If we defend ourselves and deny that we are weak when we don’t eat meat, for instance, and that we do what we do out of strength not weakness, then we are judging those who do eat meat. When Paul wrote that the believers should not judge those who ate meat, he was essentially telling them to admit that they were weak. Are we really willing to do that in this

context—not just as a blanket statement that we are weak? That is the question.

Let's read a little further on in *Romans* 14.

Romans 14

²² Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy [other translations: "Blessed"] is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

"Blessed is he who does not condemn himself." Is it a self-condemnation when we say that we are weak? It can't be, because Paul said,

²² Blessed is he who does not condemn himself,

—regardless of whether we eat meat or not. He didn't make any differentiation. He didn't write,

"Blessed is he who eats and doesn't condemn himself."

Rather, the verse speaks of both those who don't eat meat and those who do. This means that it is good when we don't eat meat, while having a good conscience. But if we don't eat while having a bad conscience, it is bad. The same is true if we do eat. It's good if we eat with a good conscience, but it's bad if we eat with a bad conscience. It depends on the conscience.

The Edification of Love

What does the conscience tell us? What is the decisive point? It is obviously that we should do what we do for good reasons. What is a good reason? Let's read about this.

1 Corinthians 8

¹ Now concerning things offered to idols: we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

Paul makes a distinction between knowledge and love. One puffs up and the other builds up, or edifies. We can say that

knowledge without love puffs up. Love edifies, and it edifies even more when knowledge is added.

1 Corinthians 8

² And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

³ But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

Those who think that they know a lot can forget it.

⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.

In other words, there is no such thing as sacrificial meat. It doesn't exist. In a purely scientific sense we can say that the chemical structure is exactly the same. Whatever procedure is used, it doesn't matter. But, to continue:

⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

⁶ Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

This corresponds to *Romans* 14 where it speaks of one God.

⁷ However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

This refers to those who have had bad experiences. For example, how would a person who has had an alcohol problem—whether personally or with someone close to them—feel if they were to see a bottle of grape juice which looks just like a wine bottle? They won't have any appetite for it at all. They will think it's inappropriate. They will have an aversion to it and won't like it. That is because they associate it with certain thoughts. They hate the addiction so much that they can't deal with anything which even resembles it.

Children sometimes don't like certain foods either. I once got sick from a particular food. From then on, I no longer liked anything that tasted like that food. That's how it happens. We have such aversions to things from our past. They are weaknesses. And we must admit that these are weaknesses. They are not strengths. It's not simply that we know what tastes good. Instead, it is a weakness we have.

1 Corinthians 8

⁸ But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?

¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Paul shows here what it means to eat or not eat in faith. It actually means to eat or not eat in love.

Why do people eat or not eat certain foods? Why did the Pharisees not eat specific foods, for example? It was so that they would look good, and especially so they would get recognition from the people. That is the reason. And that is what Paul condemned. This is why Paul said,

Colossians 2

¹⁶ So let no one judge you [German: "Don't let anyone make you feel guilty, or have a bad conscience"].

But Paul was not speaking to those who had a bad experience in the past and were keeping away from certain foods for that reason. That was a completely different case. In these verses he was writing to the Corinthians, who had come from heathenism

and were relatively loose in their habits sometimes. Paul had to rebuke them and tell them to be considerate. Essentially, he was saying,

“You think you are free.”

But when we eat because we want to show off how free we are, then we are not doing it in faith. Then we are condemned because we’re not doing it in faith. That is the point. The overriding principle is love. Why do we do one thing or another?

Let’s read another text which shows how strict Paul could be in relation to food.

Galatians 2

¹¹ Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

¹² For before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?

We could say that Peter was being considerate to the people who came from Jerusalem and merely behaved as they were accustomed to. But, actually, he was judging the brethren he had previously eaten with. He would eat with the Gentiles until the Jews came, then he would withdraw and separate himself from them, because he feared the Jews. Did he do that in faith? No, it was out of fear. He wanted to look good. He wanted the Jews to see that he had done something good. It ended up being hypocrisy, or dishonesty. Anything which is not done out of faith is dishonesty. Anything that is not done out of faith is hypocrisy. It is lack of consideration for others. It is selfishness. Selfishness

is, of course, the main heading over all sins. This is the problem, and that is what Paul wanted to address in *Romans* 14.

How to Encourage Order in Children

We now want to consider the main points from *The Ministry of Healing*, chapter 41 “In Contact with Others.” Our broader topic is the question,

“How can we encourage order in our children?”

Related to this is order in our thoughts, as well as order with each other. That’s the reason we are reading “In Contact with Others.” We need three characteristics to encourage order in others. They are:

1. Self-control,
2. Patience and Forbearance, and
3. Empathy.

We definitely need all these, because we are so different. One is weak, but another is not. It is important that we don’t judge those who are weak. We should also not judge those who are strong. This means that the weak ones must admit that they are weak. They can say,

“Yes, I am weak. But if necessary, I will become strong in that area.”

Or, perhaps that very weakness is actually our strength. That is also possible. It is not good to fight against the thought of being weak. Let’s get used to the fact that many of us have weaknesses, and others have strengths. We are different. Paul describes the different members of the body in *1 Corinthians* 12. He says there are strong members and weak members. What happens with the weak ones? We are to give them special honor. And because we do that, we grow. That is the reason; we grow in that way. We are different. And the strength of one essentially balances the weakness of the other. This requires us not to judge each other because

of our strengths or weaknesses. But it is not about being indifferent. Rather, it is about not judging.

If we think about the differences—the strengths and the weaknesses—in which category would you place yourself? Do you think you are strong or weak? I believe most of you would place yourselves in the weak category. That is more comfortable. We don't have to bear responsibility in the weak category. But we do have to bear responsibility in the strong category.

[Audience]: What is a weakness and what is a strength?

A weakness may be not being able to eat a certain food, for example. Or, it may be esteeming one day higher than the others. We could call it being conscientious in areas where others have no issue of conscience. It is when we make an issue of conscience out of a matter which is no issue for others. That is a weakness, because we must abide by it. Another example of a weakness may be not being able to do everything. We simply can't manage it. Of course, if we don't want to be weak, we may perhaps decide that we won't make these matters an issue of conscience for ourselves either. Then we start acting differently. But if we do that, we will get ourselves into trouble.

If we put aside our conscience altogether, we will also get ourselves into difficulty. Disorder enters into our lives—in our relationships with others and in our views. We start to be hypocritical. We are no longer ourselves. We become dishonest. It is important that we listen to our conscience. Of course, our conscience must be directed by the word of God; that is an important point. But there are many issues which the word of God does not address directly. That's why they are not of such great importance. But God's word does address many issues. Perhaps we have not discerned it yet.

BEARING RESPONSIBILITY

Let's come back to our previous point now. We are different. Some are simply weak, while others are simply strong. It is easier

for us to be counted as weak, because then we don't have to bear the responsibility which others bear. What does it mean to bear responsibility?

First of all, let's note that the burden bearers are not those who are initially addressed in the chapter "In Contact with Others." Rather, those for whom responsibility is borne are the ones addressed. This astonished me at first. I would have thought that the burden bearers would have been addressed in such a chapter, just as I addressed the parents over the last few months of studies. I always spoke to the parents about how they should deal with their children. But Ellen White did it differently. She first addressed the children about how they could deal with their parents, so to speak. That's exactly how it is written.

This chapter says that many people cannot put themselves into the shoes of the burden bearers, because they don't bear any responsibility. When we see ourselves as weak, we don't like bearing responsibility. Therefore, we don't put ourselves in the shoes of those who really bear responsibilities. That's why we can't understand them. And that's why we are constantly judging them, complaining about what they are doing wrong. That's very easy for us to do.

What does it mean not to bear any real responsibility? When do we not bear real responsibility? It is, for example, when we deny making a mistake. We don't bear responsibility when we do that. Instead we say,

"No. I have nothing to do with it. It wasn't me. I didn't do it. It can't be my fault. I had nothing to do with it. It must have been someone else."

It is a constant evasion of responsibility. Haven't we noticed it? If we bear responsibility, then we will say,

"Okay, it happened. I will also bear the responsibility."

Perhaps it was us, and perhaps it wasn't. That doesn't matter. We can help bear the responsibility. Self-defense is a way of avoiding responsibility. In many cases in the world, people even go to court in order to avoid bearing responsibility. They think the judge should decide the case.

Another way of avoiding responsibility is to shift it, or push it off. It is saying, for example,

“No, I'm not going to do that. It's too hard.”

Or,

“I just have to be sure that I can't be held responsible for it.”

This is the case with signing medical releases. Doctors want to be sure that they won't be held liable for the procedure. It's very important to them. The releases get stricter and more gruesome, even to the point that the patients don't even want to go through with the procedure. Doctors explain the many problems that might happen—they might make a mistake, or the patient's body might react badly, and so on. Yet the patients are told that they need the procedure, and they are left wondering if the doctors would want to go through with it, if the roles were reversed.

Why do doctors do this? It is because they want to be sure that they cannot be held liable for what may happen. Of course, these days people are more and more likely to sue and want to hold the doctors liable for everything. There can be complications, even when the doctors do everything correctly. Then people hold the doctors responsible regardless of the fact they did nothing wrong. That is shifting responsibility from the other side. Our society is built on shifting responsibility.

“Just don't bear it yourself,”

—is the philosophy. People think it would be great if we could make God responsible for everything. What a solution! That is

shifting responsibility. And that is why there are so few real burden bearers. It is because responsibility is constantly shifted.

That is also why we can't put ourselves in the shoes of the burden bearers. It's so hard to understand what it really means to take up responsibility. The burden bearers are criticized. Ultimately, God is criticized. He is the One who really bears all the burdens and who actually makes himself responsible for everything. Just look at what God said in relation to Job. After Satan was allowed to smite Job, God said that He was the cause.⁴⁴ God took full responsibility for it, even though He wasn't to blame. Yet He took the responsibility. And it was right. He didn't take it as a mere outward form. No, He really bore it. He suffered too. That is a true burden bearer. And when the burden bearer is no longer there, then their service is missed. When others have to bear the burdens themselves, they begin to realize what it means to have such a burden.

A very positive example, which is described in the chapter, is that of David and Saul. Saul was supposed to bear the burden of Israel as king; that was his task. He had responsibility for the people—politically and also spiritually, in a sense. Kings in those days were not only political kings, but also spiritual leaders. Even today, we can say that political leaders are also intellectual leaders. They bear the responsibility of being an example as moral leaders. Saul definitely was. It could be questioned as to whether he was fully aware of that or not. He was not the most ideal king. David could have said,

“Saul's not doing a good job, so I'll do it.”

But that was not David's attitude. He wanted to strengthen Saul in his task. He didn't want to take over that task. David determined to do everything he could to help Saul do his task well. David didn't depose him—even when he had the opportunity. Why was that? It was because he didn't take Saul's persecution of

⁴⁴ *Job 2:3.*

him personally. Instead, he wanted to strengthen Saul to bear the responsibility he had. That is what it means to begin to bear burdens. It is to strengthen those who do bear them.

MAKING GOD OUR REFUGE

The next point in the chapter is that it is not easy to have self-control, patience and forbearance, and empathy when we are wronged. These three attributes are challenged when that happens. But that is when we need them most. That means that we are not to be preoccupied with the wrongs which are done to us. We are not to be preoccupied with them at all. No matter what wrongs are done to us, they are absolutely unimportant. We have no time to think about them.

What does this mean for children? It means that when we are wrongly rebuked, we should not complain and have self-pity. There is no place for that. And when we are correctly rebuked, we should bear it and take responsibility for our mistakes. But we should not mull over the rebuke.

As parents, it is also important not to think about wrongs done, whether imagined or real.

What does it mean to allow our feelings to be wounded? It means to give into them again and again in our thoughts—to let our thoughts run in a certain direction. For example, repeating to ourselves,

“I’ve been wronged. Poor me!”

When we dwell on such thoughts, then we are also nursing our feelings. And when we nurse our wounded feelings, they get worse and worse. We have absolutely no time for this. These things are totally unimportant.

- We don’t need to defend ourselves.
- We don’t need to deny rebukes.
- We don’t need to be insulted.
- And we don’t need to take revenge.

We don't need to do any of these. In contrast, it is important that we are reconciled with our brethren, and that we seek reconciliation. How do we do this? By resting in God. It is by directing our thoughts to the fact that we are accepted by God. For example, we can read the following text.

Psalm 139

¹ O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.

⁵ You have hedged me behind and before [German: "You surround me on all sides"], and laid your hand upon me.

"You surround me on all sides." What can happen if that is the case? Then we can't become insulted or offended. It won't happen, because we are surrounded by God. And whatever does get through that armor will only serve for our good. It will only be for our best, not anything else. If we keep this clear in our minds, then there will not be any problems. Let's read one more verse in this connection.

Romans 8

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

If we really know that we are surrounded by God and that all things work together for good, then there is no reason to complain. In fact, we grow from what we learn.

FOCUSING ON SERVICE, NOT SELF

I'd like to mention one other point from the chapter "In Contact with Others." That is the habit of expecting understanding from other people. It is good when we give understanding, and when we have empathy. We must learn that. The three attributes are:

1. Self-control,
2. Patience and forbearance, and
3. Empathy.

These are the characteristics we all need—both children and parents. But to expect understanding is something else.

It is because we expect and seek understanding from others that there are so many problems—for we don't receive that understanding. The desire for understanding often becomes an addiction. We constantly ask whether the others understand us. But that's really an incorrect question. Actually, we must have understanding for others, but we must not seek to be understood. Why not? It is because we are already understood by God; we don't need it from people. God understands us through and through, therefore, we don't need to rely on being understood by other people. The only thing we need, is to have understanding for others.

And we must learn how we can be a blessing for others. This must not only be in our thoughts; it must also be in our words. It's important that we remind ourselves again and again that we are understood by God: He understands us. We can also speak of Jesus' willingness to bless us; we can speak of it. And what we speak has an influence upon our thoughts.

SELF-CONTROL UNDER PROVOCATION

A very important aspect of the chapter is self-control. Jesus was our example in the way that He practiced self-control, even while bearing injustice. We need self-control especially when we are bearing injustice. When Paul was brought before Agrippa, he was still very polite, despite the wrong done to him. Courtesy and friendliness amidst the most unjust treatment is true culture. That is a high culture. The people of God will be recognized by that.

When we withstand small issues, we prepare ourselves for bigger matters. One fact must be clear to us. We are seen—in every

situation of life. Perhaps other people don't see us, but we are a spectacle in this world to angels and before God.

1 Corinthians 4

⁹ For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

It is important to act from principle and not from impulse. Acting from principle requires self-control. We often want to act from inclination—impulsively. But it is important to control ourselves and to wait, asking what the principle is. This means that we must direct our thoughts and words. It also means that we do not unnecessarily occupy ourselves with the faults of others—that we don't dwell on them. When they affect us, then we especially don't have any time to think about them.

DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT

How can we deal with people who are difficult? You are always asking how we should deal with disobedient children. There is a very good example given in the chapter, which addresses this. It is the object lesson of the wheat and the tares. Christ said that we are to let both grow together. The way that Jesus dealt with Judas illustrates this very well. But how He dealt with Peter also shows it. And Peter was rougher than Judas. He was a more difficult child, so to speak, than Judas was. We can really learn from how Jesus dealt with Peter.

In this connection, the chapter says that we should see one another as missionaries for each other. It is important that we don't become discouraged, that we bear provocation patiently, and that we share our own experiences with the children. We have spoken about this last point in the past already. We can share our weaknesses and mistakes with our children. But we can also share how we have received forgiveness—how God helped us and gave us the victory.

Courtesy and forbearance are very important as this chapter shows too. They are also well described in the following verses.

Galatians 6

¹ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This is exactly what is described in *Romans* 14. The text speaks of someone who is overtaken in trespass. It expresses how much patience and forbearance there must be. It doesn't say,

"They did something terrible."

No, it says when someone "is overtaken" in trespass. Then it says to restore them with a gentle spirit. This is all exactly what is written in the chapter "In Contact with Others." At the close of the chapter, it mentions that we all are in one web together and that we are dependent on each other. That's why we must bear weaknesses and strengths. This is expressed in our social contact.

The poem which ends the chapter says that the weakness of one will become the strength of all. How does that happen? It is by learning how to deal with the weakness, and by growing from that weakness. When we look at the history of our movement and all that God has shown and taught us, we can say that most of the greatest messages arose out of conflicts, difficulties, and problems. God could lead us through them.

It is important for us not to preoccupy ourselves with being offended, but rather with the fact that God wants to give us a victory out of the situation. It is my wish that we will learn this, and that through this we will gain order in relation to each other. That will help when we implement order for our children. We have actually studied order in relation to the family.

20. Order in our Relation to God

Sabbath, June 2, 2018

WE HAVE studied many things and in this last series we have been looking at order. How do we implement order, or how do we encourage order? How do we challenge children to be orderly?

An Orderly Mind

The first thing we saw is that order begins in the mind—there must be order in the mind. The second thing we saw was there must be order in our relationships with one another. And from there we will continue today. The text that we read at the beginning we will read again now.

1 Corinthians 14

³³ For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Paul here makes it very clear that confusion is the opposite of peace. The *New King James Version* says “confusion,” but the *New Living Translation* says “disorder.” God is not the author of disorder—which is another word for confusion—but of peace, so if this order is in contrast to peace, what then is peace? Peace is order, because you can also say that God is the author of order and peace—or God is the God of order/peace.

We have clearly seen in several instances that peace is connected with order. For example, there needs to be peace in our mind. What does peace of mind, or order in our mind mean? It basically means that we understand why we are in this world, and we follow that purpose with a good conscience. We can do this when there is order in our minds. We cannot do this if there is confusion in our minds, can we? If we do not understand why we are here, or if we do have an understanding of why we are here, but do not follow this way, then there’s confusion or disorder in our minds. Then it becomes complicated, difficult explana-

tions are necessary, and so forth. We must then justify ourselves and our mind does not run in an orderly, calm channel.

So, peace in our mind is one way to express order, but there also needs to be peace between human beings. Peace with one another is also order. If there is constant strife, shouting, hitting, or violence like this in the family, then there's obviously no order.

I will now give you a thesis—and you'll tell me if my statement is correct or not:

*Only when we are at peace with others,
is there order in our mind.*

Do you feel like this? Peaceful only when we are at peace with one another. How often have you experienced strife with somebody, then when this strife is over and you are both at peace again, you find that you settle down with order in your own mind. You can think straight again—but as long as there was strife, you couldn't think straight. That's how it happens—right?

My second statement is:

*Only when there is order in our minds,
can there be peace with others.*

Basically, what I want to do with these two statements is to show how peace and order are interchangeable. They are the same thing really, or two sides of the same coin, you could say.

Now let's consider the first statement:

*Only when we are at peace with others,
is there order in our mind.*

Peace, or a Sword?

So how can we have peace, in view of the following statement of Jesus?

Matthew 10

³⁴ Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶ And a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus makes it very clear that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword. In light of this statement, how can we say that peace is possible—that order is possible? Isn't disorder a necessary outcome? Yet we read that God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. Even though Jesus said that He came to bring a sword, He still admonishes us to make peace,⁴⁵ to strive for peace,⁴⁶ or to seek peace.⁴⁷ This is clear. Let's read a few statements from the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says,

Matthew 5

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

When He says "blessed" that means He wants us to seek peace. Further on in the same chapter, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

⁴⁵ *James* 3:18.

⁴⁶ *Hebrews* 12:14; *Romans* 12:18.

⁴⁷ *Jeremiah* 29:7; *1 Peter* 3:11.

In other words, make order. It's disorderly if you are not at peace with your brother. Go and make order before you pray. This is an important point. We also know the following statement very well, where Jesus admonishes believers to settle difficulties among them:

Matthew 18

¹⁵ Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

In other words, bring order into the disorder that is there, and seek for order—seek for peace—because God is not a God of disorder, but a God of peace.

Yet it is not always possible to keep peace with everyone. This we read in a statement by Paul:

Romans 12

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Again, we are admonished to seek for peace, but here it says, “if it is possible.” The word “if” indicates that it is not always possible. Therefore, *if it is possible*, live in peace with everyone.

How can we have order when we do not have peace with somebody—when it is not possible? We can easily excuse ourselves and say,

“It's not possible to have peace with this guy or that guy,”

—and thereby excuse ourselves from making an effort for peace. This, of course, will not bring any order into our lives. But can there be order even after our best efforts to make peace with someone fails and it's simply not possible? Can we still have order in our minds? It seems very difficult sometimes, doesn't it?

The Peace of God

Now, God gives a different peace. He gives peace, even in the midst of strife. Jesus talks about this:

John 14

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Jesus is obviously speaking here of two different kinds of peace. He says,

“My peace I give you, not as the world gives you. That is another peace.”

Then He says,

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

In other words,

“Don’t worry about the difficulties you face, about the fact that despite your best effort you cannot have peace with everyone, because I give you a different peace. I give you peace in spite of this—peace that is indeed higher than this.”

And as Paul says, it is a peace that is higher than any reason.⁴⁸ Let’s read another statement from Jesus.

John 16

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Therefore, it is possible to have order around you—to have peace in you and around you—in spite of the fact that you cannot have peace with every person. As we know, there will always be those who hate the truth, as Cain did. He killed his brother Abel because he hated the truth. These kinds of people will always be there in the world, but that does not need to disturb the peace that is described here, because,

“My peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives you.”

⁴⁸ *Philippians 4:7.*

It's a very different peace.

“Don't be afraid, don't be afraid of the sword that I bring.”

He says,

“I bring the sword. I did not come to bring peace but the sword. Don't be afraid of this because my peace I give you. This peace that the world gives I take away from you—but I give you another peace—my peace.”

Now what kind of peace is this that God gives us? We need to understand this. It is peace with himself. Let's read about this:

Romans 5

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace with God is to be in an orderly relationship with God. A relationship with God is orderly. That is peace with God. He is not a God of disorder, but a God of peace. Therefore, He gives us peace with himself. Another good text in this connection is:

Philippians 4

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

It simply says, “the peace of God” here. There is another translation that says, “peace with God.” Clearly, the peace *of* God is peace *with* God. The peace that comes from Him is peace with Him. Through the peace with himself that God gives us, He also will accomplish peace with one another. This point is made very clear in *Ephesians*.

Ephesians 2

¹⁴ For He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

¹⁵ Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

¹⁶ And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

This makes it very clear that He in himself—by making peace between us and Him—reconciled both parties to God, thereby breaking down the middle wall of partition. In other words, He made peace between the two parties. The key to order, to coming to one another, and to having peace with our fellow men, is to have peace with God first and to come near to Him. This is also very clearly made by a wonderful statement in *The Desire of Ages*, where it speaks about the disciples and their different characters.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.

Sin Destroys Peace

This brings us to another definition of what sin is. Sin is nothing more than a disorderly relationship between us and God. That's basically what it is. In the past we have said that sin is separation from God, which is true too. But we can also say that sin is disorder in our relationship with God: that disorder is the great problem.

When we speak of sin we need to understand that it always has something to do with God. If a person does not believe in God, the term “sin” makes no sense to them; they wonder what we mean by it. It sounds funny and strange; it’s a relic of an old language for them. However, it does make sense when we understand that it has something to do with our relationship to God. Sin is a disorderly relationship with God. We could express disorder as a synonym for sin. It is disorder in our relationship with God.

When we speak of our relationship with other people, we can also talk about sin in a certain sense. For instance, I sin against you if I steal something from you. Or I sin against you if I lie to you, or if I break a promise. But we need to understand that without God, sin still makes no sense. Even though we sin against another human being, we also sin against God in doing so.

Let’s see how this happened in the Old Testament when Joseph was a slave in Egypt, at Potiphar’s house. Joseph had great privileges as a slave. Potiphar was a powerful man in Pharaoh’s kingdom. He trusted Joseph implicitly, even blindly. Potiphar gave him everything. He trusted his money and his home to Joseph. There was nothing he would not trust him with. That was the relationship that Joseph had with Potiphar.

Genesis 39

⁶ Thus he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

⁷ And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, Lie with me.

⁸ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

⁹ There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

“He trusted me with everything. How can I sin against him?” Who would it be a sin against? It would be against God. We need to understand that every sin against our fellow humans is in fact a sin against God. In other words, it brings our relationship with God into disorder. If we have strife with someone, then we have no peace with God. That is why Jesus said that if we bring our gift to the altar and become aware that there is disorder between us and another person, we should leave that gift and be reconciled first. We would have no peace with God and couldn’t give the offering in peace. It would be impossible. Essentially, Jesus is saying,

“Don’t pretend that you are a person who has a good relationship with God when you are in strife with others. Don’t even pretend it.”

It is not possible.

“If you want to have peace with me, then you cannot transgress against your brother.”

Sin affects our relationship to God in every aspect. It creates disorder in the relationship between God and us.

Surrender to God Brings Peace

What then, is a right relationship to God? What does it look like to have a relationship with God that is characterized by order? What is an orderly relationship to God? In other words, what is peace with God? What does it look like? What is the condition for it? Let’s read some quotes together.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for

they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

This paragraph contains several important statements. First of all, there was perfect peace in the heart of Christ. What was the condition for that? Perfect harmony with God. So, harmony with God means order with God—peace with God. Harmony means to think like Him, to have the same goals, the same attitudes, and so forth. That brings perfect peace. The second sentence from the quote shows what peace looked like and how we can stand amidst difficulties in human relationships.

He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment.

How often we experience disappointment, which is usually caused by other people. They disappoint us. But Christ was not disappointed. He was not dejected by that, because He was in perfect harmony with God. The text speaks of a complete surrender to God.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

To surrender means to trust Him. It means to surrender to Him fully and trust myself to Him. We are not required to surrender to other human beings. But we are required to surrender to God, because that is what brings us peace. It brings us into harmony with God, and ultimate peace.

The Desire of Ages, p. 331:

The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden. So with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light. He who walks in the way of God's commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest.

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and

quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says,

Isaiah 26

³ You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.

Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And that character which expresses the glory—character—of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy.

Here we find the word “surrender” again. They “surrender their souls to His keeping.” “In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest,” or peace. What is acquiescence? It is agreement, submission, or consent. Let’s read another statement about consent.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent,...

“If we consent”—in perfect acquiescence, we consent.

...He will so identify himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.

In other words, if we consent, there will be perfect harmony between God and us. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect peace. There is a perfect, orderly relationship between God and us, if we consent. There is no fear in that relationship. There cannot be fear. It’s impossible.

The Desire of Ages, p. 336:

When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the “Master of earth and sea and sky” that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says,

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

Why was He in perfect peace? It was because of perfect acquiescence. There was no fear in His word, look, or anything else—despite the storm. It was the same situation later when He met the demoniacs. They were wild people and were feared by all. Everyone ran away from them, but Jesus did not. He met them peacefully and calmly, because His relationship with God was in order. As soon as the relationship with God is not in order, then there is loss of that peace and instead, fear comes in, when difficult situations arise.

There is another statement that shows us the condition for this orderly relationship. Jesus was hanging on the cross beside two thieves. One of these criminals felt sorry for his deed and asked Jesus for forgiveness. This paragraph speaks of that penitent thief.

The Desire of Ages, p. 751:

As He spoke the words of promise, the dark cloud that seemed to enshroud the cross was pierced by a bright and living light. To the penitent thief came the perfect peace of acceptance with God.

That's it. When the thief asked Jesus to forgive him and remember him, Jesus answered,

“Truly, I say to you today—here, as I am hanging on the cross—you will be with me in paradise.”

This gave the man perfect peace. His relationship to God was orderly again. And that is what gave him perfect peace—the peace of acceptance with God. It gives us peace to understand that God accepts us.

1 John 4

¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Believing that God loves us, brings peace and mends our relationship with Him.

A Good Conscience

Having a good conscience also means peace with God. Of course, when our relationship to God is not in order, then we cannot have a good conscience. That robs us of our peace. But God wants to give peace back to us again. Let's turn to another scripture.

1 Timothy 1

⁵ Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

⁶ From which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

⁷ Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

This is the main purpose of the Bible's message, in a nutshell—to love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith. It is doing what we do with a good conscience. That is what gives us peace. It puts us in a good relationship with God. The problem is that people often do not do what their conscience tells them to. That robs their peace.

¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

¹⁹ Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.

How important must this faith and good conscience have been for Paul in his letter to Timothy! He mentions a good conscience again and again. That's the main summary of all his teaching.

When we become aware and look at our own thoughts and what the Holy Spirit impresses upon us, we often realize that He warns us of wrong acts, before we commit them. He tells us,

“Don’t do that.”

It’s a quiet voice. It’s not very loud, but it is a warning. It’s there. We can refuse it and take no interest in it, going our way out of eagerness or pride. But that means coming into a disorderly relationship with God. An orderly relationship with God means to listen to His voice. And it means to follow our conscience, clearly.

Another aspect of conscience is that we sometimes need to warn other people of going a wrong way, and this is also very much a matter of conscience.

Ezekiel 33

³ When he [the watchman on the wall of a city] sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people,

⁴ Then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head.

⁵ He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.

The point is that we are conscience-bound to warn people, when we see that they are in danger. We would be very burdened if something happened to them, physically speaking, and we could have warned them but didn’t. We would lose our peace. But if we have warned them, yet something happens to them because

they were careless, then of course, at least we have done our part. This is clearly described in the verses we just read.

When we warn other people, it is also important to warn them in the right way. It will not give us peace if we simply discharge our duty and are satisfied, regardless of how we have done it. We will only have a good conscience if we have done our very best to prevent a person from doing themselves harm, or from being harmed. If we simply shout at them, or hit them, in an effort to warn them, for instance, they may turn away just because we yelled or struck them.

We need to be very wise about how we warn people. We also have to be very clear. We can't talk around the matter. Physicians have a real duty towards their patients. For instance, we could say,

“Well, it would be better if you did this or that.”

Or we could say,

“If you don't stop smoking, you will die.”

We can be either straightforward, or talk around the matter and soften it down. An example of softening it would be to say,

“Well, if you smoke one cigarette less per day it will probably do you good. Statistically speaking, it can reduce the risk of death.”

We can use nice words, but not hit the point. This would be like a watchman who needs to play a certain warning tone, but instead plays a lullaby which may contain that tone somewhere in it. But everyone falls asleep because he is playing a lullaby, instead of warning them. We must give the trumpet a very certain sound. If we don't do this, we won't be able to sleep with a good conscience, when something happens to the others. We could call this principle, giving the trumpet a distinct sound.

Let's imagine that we have warned someone, but they still do what they want and either harm themselves or get themselves into danger. Of course, they have the freedom to do this. We did everything to warn them, but still they went ahead and did it. What happens then? Do we then have a good conscience and say,

“I did my very best—I am free of any guilt. I wash my hands. I am in the clear. I have nothing to fear. I have a good relationship with God.”

Is this our attitude? Has this been the attitude of those who have had this experience? I don't think so. We will always question whether we have really given our trumpet a certain sound. Have we done everything we could? Sometimes at night we will wonder about what we could have done differently—saying something differently, being more friendly or polite, or being clearer in what needed to be said. We think about it. That is understandable, especially in view of the fact that none of us is perfect. None of us knows if we have done everything right. It would be ideal, if God were the One giving the warning. He uses the best words. He knows us in every respect. It is clear when He speaks to us. And God will speak through the Holy Spirit. But He also uses us, and we are faulty. Indeed, He uses faulty instruments to bring out a perfect tune for the needy person, if we have a good intention.

I'd like to compare this with medicine. We are constantly attacked with the possibility of getting cancer. There are rays from space hitting our tissues. Our DNA is constantly damaged, which allows the cancer cells to develop. At the same time, there is a constant repair mechanism. Despite that repair mechanism, cells sometimes develop into cancer cells. Then another system, the immune system, comes into play. It destroys the cancer cells, so that they don't multiply and harm the body.

While we are constantly attacked, there is a constant repair mechanism, and this we must be aware of. If we do our best to give our trumpet a clear sound, even with our limited knowledge, then God will repair our faults, so to speak, in order to help that

person who needs to be warned. The condition is that we do our best—that we do not consciously give an unclear sound, nor do so out of fear for our reputation, for example. That will not help. We need to be clear, from our side. But even if we do make mistakes, God will overrule them. As John tells us so ably:

1 John 3

¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

²² And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Our heart often condemns us, when we think we could have done better. We think,

“If only we had known what we know today, how much better we could have warned that person!”

But now it’s too late. God knows all things. God is able to forgive and also to repair. There is a constant repair mechanism working on our behalf and on the behalf of others, so that nobody can say that they have never been warned. The Holy Spirit also speaks to the hearts of the people.

1 John 3

²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

Then our heart does not condemn us anymore, because we understand that God is working on our behalf.

Encouraging Order in Children

How do we induce order in the children? That is the purpose of our study, isn't it? How do we encourage order in children, and in others? If the human mind is sick, because of a disorderly relationship with God—if we have difficulties with another person, because there is a disorderly relationship with God, regardless of where it is—our first effort must be to restore that relationship. This is what we need to understand, first of all. Otherwise, it's no use to go to a person and try to have peace with them. First, we must have peace with God in our heart and in our mind. Then we will have peace with one another. God himself induces that peace. He constantly works towards that peace, as the repair mechanism.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

God was, in Christ, reconciling the world with himself. God is constantly working towards this—a constant repair mechanism.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Paul doesn't say,

“Be reconciled to us,”

—but,

“Be reconciled to God.”

In *Ephesians 2*, he says that there was a middle wall between us and the Gentiles, but this middle wall is done away in Christ. Our work is to implore, plead, and urge people to be reconciled with God. Instead of trying to bring the children into harmony with us, we need to work to *bring them into harmony with God*. This is an error that has often been committed—parents have tried to recon-

cile their children to themselves. But in that way, the children have never learned to establish a relationship with God. I would tell my children,

“You can have whatever relationship with me that you want—you can hate me if you want, it doesn’t matter—but you must have a good relationship to God for your own sake.”

But I know that when that is the case, I will also have a good relationship with my children, provided that I have a good relationship with God. The point is to bring order into our lives. To do this, means to re-establish a good relationship with God.

²⁰ We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.

We must personally seek reconciliation with God, not with other people. That means appealing to conscience, it means appealing to peace of heart, and it means leaving the other in God’s hands. Can we do this? Can we leave them in God’s hands? It’s not easy, because we want to manage everything ourselves, don’t we? This is especially the case with our children.

In closing we will read a text from last week:

Romans 14

⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Our relationship to God must be mended. That is the important point. This we must strive for. If that is the case, then we will also come into harmony with one another. This is basically the message of *Romans 14*. We won’t read it again now because we did last week, but I think you understand that this is the message of that chapter.

21. Academic Education

Sabbath, June 9, 2018

WE WILL continue looking at the education of children today. This time we will consider their academic education. What kind of education can we recommend for our children? What would we give them? What would we pay for it, and how would we go about this?

Many years ago, we started a program for the African youth. We wanted to support them by making a scholarship, so they could gain a good education in school and university. This was so that they would be able to support their families, but even more that they could support the work. We felt that it was necessary for young people to be educated, so they could work well for the cause of God. However, we had to discontinue this program after a few years, because we noticed that as we supported the youth while they studied at university, they very soon lost interest in the work of God. They weren't interested in working for the cause of God anymore.

Of course, that was a great disappointment and we wondered whether it was possible to gain an academic education in the world, yet still be really on fire for the cause of God. Could that ever happen? Then I decided to study alongside some young people in order to support them at the university, in order to bind them to the cause—and I think we have made more progress this time.

Academic Knowledge and Righteousness

However, we need to realize the danger of an academic education. Some think this means that all academic education is bad and wrong, and that all science is bad and wrong. After all, the scientists are the ones who doubt God's existence, don't they? We therefore think that science is bad for our children. This is the logic that is fixed in the minds of some people.

We'll consider some principles which will help us understand the issue better. This portrait is of Hamilton Naki, a scientist from South Africa. He is an example of someone who was not very rich. He basically died poor. He had only six years education, then at 14



years of age became a gardener. He ended up working alongside Barnard, the famous South African surgeon who performed the first human heart transplant. But Barnard said that Naki had better technical skill than he did! Yet when he retired, Naki was given only a gardener's pension. After his death Naki received much praise. Even during his life, he received some awards, but it was in his obituary that he was said to have performed the first liver transplant, that he was such a skilled surgeon, teacher of medical students and so on. Then he also received many other honors from the South African parliament. Would you want this for your child?

Another example is of an Adventist in America named Ben Carson. He also came from poverty, became a surgeon and he is famous too. But he is an educated surgeon. He became famous for some of his operations, such as separating Siamese twins. Now he is in politics. He is a secretary in the United States government, and he even ran for president. Would you want your child to become like this?

So, what should we do? Shall we refuse to let our children have an academic education, so that they will become firmer in character? Or shall we not put so much emphasis on character, so that they can at least earn their livelihood and support their families? Let's read a Bible text which tells us that there is actually no such hard choice to be made.

Psalm 37

²⁵ I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.

That is a promise. But there is a condition, which is “the righteous.” This doesn’t mean that everyone who is rich is righteous. It is a wrong conclusion if someone says,

“My children are well off, so therefore I must have been righteous.”

There are other reasons for being wealthy, as we know. Some of the most unrighteous people are very rich. But this is the promise:

²⁵ I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.

What does it mean to be righteous? It doesn’t mean:

- to be merely outwardly righteous;
- to pretend to be righteous;
- to give the appearance of righteousness to other people.

Rather, it means to be righteous in heart—to have mercy on the poor, to be generous, and to be honest. These are the qualities that make up righteousness. It is natural. It is not because we want to appear righteous before other people.

A Definite Aim

Let’s turn to another story which helps us understand what righteousness means. Righteousness is not just a passive virtue—not lying, stealing, and so on. Instead, righteousness means that we have a very clear, concentrated aim in our lives. This aim is described by Paul.

Philippians 3

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

The main point is,

Philippians 3

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

¹⁴ I press toward the goal.

What is the goal? The goal is to be one with Christ—to lay hold of Christ as Christ had laid hold of him. Paul was constantly pressing forward to that goal.

We know that we [as a church] have a definite aim. It is really important for our children to identify with that aim. If they do not fully identify with that aim, then whatever we do will be in vain. But the question is, do we, as parents, identify with this aim? What is your aim? How would you formulate it? We will read more about this later.

We will now read another statement, which I will slightly alter to fit our topic.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 363:

The gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life's problems. Its instruction, heeded, would make plain many a perplexity and save us from many an error.

How often we find ourselves in perplexity when it comes to the question of professions—whether for our children or for ourselves. There's a back and forth about which one to choose. It's

perplexing isn't it? There are so many possibilities, although not always, of course. Slaves don't have such choices, for instance. But even those who are very poor, without the possibility of an academic education, still have options. We can see this with Hamilton Naki, who began as a gardener. He had an option. Ben Carson came from a poor background too. There are more possibilities than we think. But it is perplexing when we have so many options. Now let us continue the quote, replacing the word "home" with "education":

The Ministry of Healing, p. 363:

It teaches us to estimate things at their true value and to give the most effort to the things of greatest worth—the things that will endure. This lesson is needed by those upon whom rests the responsibility of selecting [an education—this applies very well]. They should not allow themselves to be diverted from the highest aim. Let them remember that the [education] on earth is to be a symbol of and a preparation for the [education] in heaven. Life is a training school, from which parents and children are to be graduated to the higher school in the mansions of God.

This fits very well.

As the [specific education] is sought, let this purpose direct the choice. Be not controlled by the desire for wealth, the dictates of fashion, or the customs of society [or the desire for a career]. Consider what will tend most to simplicity, purity, health, and real worth [and to the accomplishment of your aim].

Think about this.

The gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life's problems.

That is, if we understand the gospel. The gospel doesn't consist of "don't do this or that." The gospel doesn't consist of prejudices against people with an education. The gospel is not consistent with people looking down on others who don't have an education. The gospel is accepting every person as they are. It also is appreciating every person as they are—whether they have an education or not.

I recently read that there was an investigation in the slums of India, looking for highly intelligent people. They found a girl there with an IQ score of 140, which is extremely high. She is one of the most intelligent people, yet she lived in the slums. Looking at places such as the slums, we wonder what the people can do there. Looking down upon those people is one problem. But another problem is to have prejudice against people with a high education. This must all stop. We have to understand that we are fighting in an altogether different league, which is that of our spiritual aim. Let's look more closely at this aim. We need to formulate it better.

Do you have an aim? What is your aim? What do you want to accomplish as young people? What would you like your children to accomplish? Do you have any idea?

[Audience]: To be perfect as our Father in heaven.

[Audience]: My aim is to bring the gospel and science into farming, to live out the reforms in this area, and to present the reforms there. I see that the gospel is not usually in it, and that harms society.

[Audience]: I think of the feeding of the 5,000 and the lesson conveyed by it. I want to feed more than 5,000 with the right lesson.

We are coming closer to the point.

[Audience]: My aim is also to bring the gospel into practical life—for example, in the food area—and to make it understandable for others, so that they can know what the principles behind it are.

Good. Do you choose your own aim? The aim is actually given to us. God has given us an aim. Let's read what it is in chapter 31 "The Lifework" in *Education*. This chapter speaks of "purpose," which is another word for "aim."

Education, p. 262:

The heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world in this generation is the noblest that can appeal to any human being.

The purpose is heaven appointed. It's not something we choose ourselves. Instead, it is something that heaven has appointed. Your answers weren't wrong in themselves. But sometimes answers reveal things. For example, we may say that our aim is to achieve perfection. But how important is our own perfection? How important is it for people to see me as perfect? This can be a real problem. We want our children to become perfect. And we are dismayed and angry at them if they are not perfect. That is a problem. We set our own aims. We say this or that is our aim. But we actually have another aim. There is a *heaven-appointed* aim or purpose. What is that? It is giving the gospel to the world in this generation. That is the main purpose which we must constantly pursue.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where there are different customs and habits. Some people try to escape it, by condemning everything in the world and choosing to live by themselves in their own world and righteousness. That is a righteousness-by-works program. And it does not bring up children in the right way. It will lead the children to break out and want to experiment with something new. They see that it doesn't make them compatible with their peers.

On the other hand, our purpose for our children may be to gain a higher education—to become a wonderful man like Ben Carson, for example. My mother used to tell me everything I could achieve and become. My grandmother also used to tell me that I could do everything that anyone else did. But it is really missing the point if we instill in our children the desire to be someone great. It will also eventually lead the children to seek a career that the world offers. Perhaps that doesn't mean just sitting behind a desk. It could be something that is of great interest to them in the technical world—an engineer, surgeon, or even a farmer.

We can get involved and submerged in these careers and forget about the aim. The aim is appointed by heaven. It is to give the gospel to the world in this generation. Everything we do has this aim—whether as a farmer, a minister, a doctor, or anything else. It must have this aim. If it doesn't, then we are missing the point and our children will go another way. That is for sure.

Education, p. 262:

Such an aim is set before the youth of today.

Those who would achieve success in life must keep this aim steadily in view. That is true in every respect. Let's read the first sentence of this paragraph now.

Success in any line demands a definite aim.

Is this true? Yes, it is—whether we want to become a cook, or a farmer. We need both. We don't just need farmers. What would we eat if we had only farmers, but no one able to prepare the food? We would all be eating directly from the fields. It wouldn't work. We need a diversity of careers; that is for sure. We still have a definite aim when we have a diversity of work. And if we want to be successful, we must work on this aim and diligently apply our minds to it. We must investigate into the subject. To go and study at university is not the solution. At the university, we work from a certain curriculum. We get a certificate at the end and can then start our career if we want to. But this is not the aim! If we have a definite aim—of bringing the gospel to the world in this generation—then we will want to investigate and know even more than the teachers do. We will look into the subject, not just technically, but with a great interest.

When I was in school we studied thermodynamics. The second law of thermodynamics says that nothing becomes orderly by itself. Instead, everything goes into confusion if left to itself. Energy and intelligence have to be put into a matter before it can become orderly. That is a general, universal law. Since that is the case, and since it clearly contradicts evolution, I went to the

teachers and asked them about it.⁴⁹ There was another Christian in my class who also believed in creation. I suggested that he could go with me to talk with the teachers, but he didn't want to.

What are we studying for? We are really studying to understand the issues. Then we have to question everything. We must go and ask. That is the appeal we need to give to the youth. It is not merely to study the subject. Rather, it is to have the aim set before us all the time.

Education, p. 262:

The heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world in this generation is the noblest that can appeal to any human being. It opens a field of effort to everyone whose heart Christ has touched.

God's purpose for the children growing up beside our hearths is wider, deeper, higher, than our restricted vision has comprehended. From the humblest lot those whom He has seen faithful have in time past been called to witness for Him in the world's highest places. And many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God's word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings.

When these statements were read to me as a young person, they were read with a tone that meant,

“Look what you can become! You will be the head and not the tail. These are the possibilities for you.”

Was that wrong? Would you encourage your children to learn with those ideas in mind? There are some parents who refuse to do this. Instead, they tell their children to be satisfied with a low position and to be humble. They say that humility is the main point in life. Therefore, their children are not to think big. They

⁴⁹PP Editor's note: Evolutionists will answer this by saying that the second law of thermodynamics only applies to a closed system, and that the Earth is not a closed system.

are to think small. They are to be humble farmers, for example, and nothing else. The scientific world is to be left alone. But that's the opposite of what we are reading, isn't it?

We imagine that if we stay humble and don't study or learn anything, then others will recognize us. We think that we should keep humble, but that the others will elevate us. Then we will have the final confirmation of how good and perfect we are. No! Forget about all this!

Do we know the context of standing "in legislative assemblies"? It is talking about the fact that in the last days God's people will be severely persecuted. We will be called to answer for our faith. Can we do that intelligently? That is the question. We are to witness for the King of kings as Paul did before Nero, for instance. Others witness under different circumstances. Some will really do something good for society which will be recognized. That is possible, but it is not the main point.

God's Aim, or Our Aim?

The chapter continues by describing how God really desires the end of the world, because of all the suffering He sees. We need to feel with Him. Our main purpose must not be self-confirmation, self-exaltation, and getting a good education and recognition for ourselves. Instead, it is seeing the suffering of the world and how people are hungry and needy. It is stretching out to them as God does.

Education, p. 263:

Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator.

Does sin cause such suffering in us and our children? Probably not. We will never attain to such a depth of keen suffering as God has experienced. He sees much more than we do. But we can at least endeavor to have some sympathy with Him in this.

The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Ev-

ery departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God,—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death,—it is said that...

Judges 10

¹⁶ His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

Isaiah 63

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted...and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.

There is a real suffering on God's part, and it is essential that we feel as He does.

In contrast to this, we read that many are seeking the conventionality of the world. In other words, they look at the world's standard of how things are done. How do others do things? That is the main point for them.

Mark 16

¹⁵ Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,

—is Christ's command to His followers. Not that all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the "glad tidings" to their fellow men.

Education, p. 264:

In view of this command, can we educate our sons and daughters for a life of respectable conventionality,...

That is the phrase—*respectable conventionality*.

...a life professedly Christian, but lacking His self-sacrifice, a life on which the verdict of Him who is truth must be, "I know you not"?

These are the two possibilities. On one hand there is respectable conventionality. What is this? It's a good job, getting paid well, and so on. It is being a professed Christian and being perfect on the outside. It's having a harmonious family, with no strife or di-

voice, for example. Everything is respectable. But what is lacking? Self-sacrifice is lacking. Are we willing to be self-sacrificing?

The paragraph we read earlier, which says the gospel is the simplifier of life, is in the chapter about the choice of a home. The same principles apply to the choice of an occupation. When we choose a home, it's important not to look for something that is most convenient, or most recognized. Instead, we should look for what is best for suffering humanity. That requires self-sacrifice. If that is lacking, respectable conventionality and professed Christianity are nothing.

Education, p. 264:

Thousands are doing this. They think to secure for their children the benefits of the gospel while they deny its spirit. But this cannot be. Those who reject the privilege of fellowship with Christ in service, reject the only training that imparts a fitness for participation with Him in His glory. They reject the training that in this life gives strength and nobility of character. Many a father and mother, denying their children to the cross of Christ, have learned too late that they were thus giving them over to the enemy of God and man. They sealed their ruin, not alone for the future but for the present life. Temptation overcame them. They grew up a curse to the world, a grief and shame to those who gave them being.

We don't teach our children self-sacrifice by demanding it from them, but rather from participating in that self-sacrifice. We will teach it to them correctly only when we exercise self-sacrifice ourselves and let our children participate in that very self-sacrifice which we are practicing. The key word here is not "perfect." It is "self-sacrifice."

Jesus did tell us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect,⁵⁰ but this was said in the context of self-sacrifice.

⁵⁰ *Matthew* 5:48.

Academic and Practical Training

Chapter 31 in the book *Education* continues by addressing wrong methods of education. Too often a distinction is made between academic education and practical education. Academic education is to sit down and study a subject via books and papers. Practical education is actually to work and to have our hands in the dough. Those who learn by having their hands in the dough often say they don't need the paper education. And those who learned by studying books say that they don't need their hands in the dough. But both are wrong. They must come together. It is so important that these two aspects come together.

Another problem is that often we must study books for years and years without the practical application. That is especially the case in the medical field. Then after many years of study, we are suddenly deemed qualified to treat people. Then we think,

“If only I knew how!”

We need to do both. When we study, we must apply what we study immediately. The world thinks differently. They assume that first we must learn everything in theory, before putting it into practice. Other people often imagine that paperwork is not needed. They think that they just need to do the practical work. But both are required. We must also apply our minds to the subject. At times, that means refraining from putting our hands in the dough and to think instead about how it can be done best. Then it can be put into practice again. It's a process of thinking and doing, thinking and doing. Sometimes what we learn in theory doesn't seem to have much to do with the practice. That's a problem for students. But when we apply our minds, we will see connections.

In holistic medicine, everything is connected with everything. If there is a pain somewhere, then the whole body is looked at. Similarly, when we look at a subject, we can see much more broadly than just that one specific subject. We can see more, think more deeply, and think of the connections with other fields. If that is

the case, then we are thoughtful students. This combination of both aspects is described in this chapter we are studying.

Education, p. 265:

Even in seeking a preparation for God's service, many are turned aside by wrong methods of education. Life is too generally regarded as made up of distinct periods, the period of learning and the period of doing—of preparation and of achievement. In preparation for a life of service the youth are sent to school, to acquire knowledge by the study of books. Cut off from the responsibilities of everyday life, they become absorbed in study, and often lose sight of its purpose. The ardor of their early consecration dies out, and too many take up with some personal, selfish ambition. Upon their graduation, thousands find themselves out of touch with life. They have so long dealt with the abstract and theoretical that when the whole being must be roused to meet the sharp contests of real life, they are unprepared. Instead of the noble work they had purposed, their energies are engrossed in a struggle for mere subsistence. After repeated disappointments, in despair even of earning an honest livelihood, many drift into questionable or criminal practices. The world is robbed of the service it might have received; and God is robbed of the souls He longed to uplift, ennoble, and honor as representatives of himself.

This is all because of the separation between learning and doing. Both aspects must go together.

Diligence in the Work That Lies Nearest

We understand the general aim now. It is the hastening of Christ's coming in this generation. That is the aim set before us as young people. In what capacity shall we specifically do this? That is now our question. Should we do this as a gardener? As a surgeon? In the food business? Where shall we specifically do it? The aim is to bring Christ to the world. But where specifically?

This is again not so confusing. The gospel is our guideline. This means that we have a simplifier of life's problems. It means that we do the work that lies nearest. We don't go and invent some-

thing new, in order to do the work. God has already established a work. And workers are needed in this work. When workers are needed, we want the best qualification and education to do that work and even to go beyond that work. The work that God has very clearly given today is not just preaching. Speaking well is one aspect. But it's also the right arm work. We understand from God's word that the right arm work will be in the forefront. The medical missionary work will be the only work, as Ellen White writes.⁵¹

We understand that medical missionary work is broader than just surgery; it is much wider. Medical missionary work also means to supply people with food, to teach them with food, to supply them with the right clothing, and everything which we read in *Isaiah* 58. It is bringing a lifestyle to the people, together with an example of that lifestyle. That is the work which God has set before us.

When we see that this work is there, and when we lay our hands on it—when we have the spirit of self-sacrifice and love for humankind—then we will also discover where our talents are in that work. The problem of not seeing our talents and not finding a place in that work only happens when we have our own aims and ambitions. It happens when we want to be somebody in the world, or when we are lazy about putting our mind into the work. That is the problem. But if we put our mind into the work, then

⁵¹ PP Editor's note: The statement is from the *General Conference Bulletin*, April 12, 1901, a discourse by Ellen G. White. The whole discourse is worth reading, but the particular sentence Andreas is referring to is: "I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work. The work of a minister is to minister. Our ministers are to work on the gospel plan of ministering." She did *not* mean by this that the right arm would take over the body, but she envisioned that ministers who preach the gospel, should also know how to treat disease, and minister to the needs of those around them: preaching and practical demonstration were to be combined. She always taught that the right arm and body should work together, and warned about the right arm supplanting the body. See *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 288-291, "The Medical Missionary Work and the Third Angel's Message."

we will definitely be a part of the right arm work in these last days. And we will do the best with our education.

We have two problems in this world. On one side are the academics who want to have a career—often without effort, and sometimes with it. Some people work very diligently; but they do so for their own self-elevation; they do it for recognition; they want to be recognized by the world. On the other side there are those who want to be humble, but who are lazy in this humility; they don't put their mind into the work. As a result, they accomplish nothing; they are not useful in the right arm work. We need a combination of both aspects. We need both diligence and a clear aim. Again, we read,

Education, p. 265:

...many take up with some personal, selfish ambition.

So, how do we find our specific work? It is by doing our best in the work that lies nearest. That is described well in the following paragraphs.

Education, p. 267:

The specific place appointed us in life is determined by our capabilities.

Then it says that many want to do a great work who don't have the capabilities for it. Others have the capabilities, but don't want the work. What is great work? What is high and what is low? We think that the person at a desk has a high position and those who toil in the field as having a low position. For example, in the hospital we were at in the Dominican Republic, the cleaning ladies were thought to have a low position. That was in contrast to the women doctors who walked around in their high heels, just briefly looking into the rooms, and who were thought to have a high position. But who was doing the real work? Who was doing the more important work—even for the patients? I would say it was the cleaning person in this case. That's not always the case, but it was so in that instance.

What is high and what is low? It is different from God's viewpoint. In His sight, the greater work is done by those who do the most good. That is the work. It doesn't matter whether we are recognized for it in this world or not. We must be able to bear either being recognized or not.

[Audience]: The motivation is described in the following paragraph. "seeking greater honor or a more pleasing task" is the reason they attempt something for which they are not fitted. Then comes either unholy ambition or laziness.

Yes, we can continue reading.

Education, p. 267:

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

We must overcome our natural tendencies. For example, I have to overcome my reluctance to talk with people. Others need to overcome other problems.

The next paragraphs are about Jesus. What profession did Jesus learn? He was a carpenter. He did that for the majority of His short life. Yet He was the greatest teacher the world has ever seen, as well as the greatest doctor the world has ever seen. This is what God wants us to be. He wants us to be someone who is hastening the coming of Christ with what we are doing. The influence of Jesus is amazing.

Church Relationship

There is another important point mentioned in this chapter. It's the last point we will speak about, but it's one of the most important. That is church relationship.

Education, p. 268:

Another obligation, too often lightly regarded,—one that to the youth awakened to the claims of Christ needs to be made plain,—is the obligation of church relationship.

What does this mean? Is it just a harsh requirement that we have to belong to the church? Is it that we must be baptized so that we belong to the church? Is that our obligation? That is an outward appearance. No—forget about that outward appearance! It must come from within first. First of all, this chapter speaks about Christ’s relationship with the church. Christ is the Bridegroom. Then it says,

The church is organized for service.

What is the church, then? The church is a service band. It is a team. In the education of the youth, in our education, and in the education we desire for our children, we need to make this point clear. In the end, everything must be a part of that organization. And that organization is an organization of service for others. So, we have a team. What would the alternative be? It would be being by ourselves, making our own careers. It would mean being important ourselves, being individuals, showing how well we can do things and telling people that they should follow our example. It is saying,

“I can do things so well. And I fulfill my obligation by being an example to others.”

No! We are a team. It’s not that we are all individuals, each one with their own greatness. Instead, we are working in a team. Parents cannot be happy unless their children are also a part of the team in their professional occupation. We may think that since the church is so small and unimportant, then we don’t want to be a part of that team. We may think like that. It would be different if the church were like Google, Facebook, Coca-Cola, or Apple—one of the big corporations. Wouldn’t it be great if our children had a career in one of those companies? A worldly person would not say “no” if their child had the opportunity to have a career at Apple, would they? The same is true of other careers, such as working at Harvard University, John Hopkins Hospital, or other famous institutions. Everyone would be proud if their children were a part of them.

But what about the church? Remember, this is the team that God has set up. It is important to become a part of that team—one way or another. That doesn't mean that we all have to do the same thing. There was a time when I thought that these statements meant that everyone had to become a minister. How would that be possible, since ministers also have to be paid by tithe? How could we all become ministers? I struggled with those statements, but now I understand them much better. We are here for service. We are organized for service. Service generates its own income. That is what God does.

Education, p. 286:

The church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps.

Remember, this isn't just speaking about membership. It's speaking about working in the team.

Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church duties.

“Church duties” mean the right arm work.

This is an important part of one's training; and in a church imbued with the Master's life, it will lead directly to effort for the world without.

The work would actually die if it didn't lead to effort for the world beyond ourselves. It would implode. If we were to have our own closed community, where we eat our own harvest and are self-sufficient, it would be dead right from the beginning. We are interconnected in the world today. Our job is to be there for the world.

Education, p. 269:

There are many lines in which the youth can find opportunity for helpful effort. Let them organize into bands for Christian service,

This is happening in many parts of the world right now.

Education, p. 269:

...and the cooperation will prove an assistance and an encouragement. Parents and teachers, by taking an interest in the work of the young people, will be able to give them the benefit of their own larger experience, and can help them to make their efforts effective for good.

We need church relationship instead of individual accomplishment. And finally, the last paragraphs speak about cooperation not only with other people, but also with the angels. That is what God wants to accomplish for us.

Education, p. 271:

They are co-workers with the angels; rather, they are the human agencies through whom the angels accomplish their mission. Angels speak through their voices.

If our children have this—if the angels work through them—then we will be the happiest people. Jesus asks what good it is if we gain the whole world and lose our souls. What good is it if we have the world's highest recognition but lose our own souls?

Matthew 16

²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Let us remember this as we seek for an academic education. And let us seek to become a team for service, not seeking individual careers for our children. Let us really trust the fact that God is leading His church. He is leading those who band together. Let us join that work. And there is much work to be done. But let us not join in a lazy way, and not in a way that we can profit without giving something into it. We are here for self-sacrifice: that is our work.

22. Epigenetics: How Can We Influence Our Inheritance?

Sabbath, June 16, 2018

WE HAVE been studying about child education for many weeks now. When I look at the different generations that we have seen over time, I wonder how much this will accomplish. Again and again, I see that the children repeat the same things that the parents did. So often I see this—repeatedly—and I’m frustrated. The parents are probably frustrated too, when they see the same issues in their children. Perhaps the children are frustrated as well, when they constantly hear comparisons made between them and their parents. Is it possible to be anything else than what the parents are? That is the question. That’s the reason we are studying this.

Next week we will be studying about epigenetics at university. That will also be our subject today. I will give you the same presentation as I will give to the students, but it will be presented in a different way here, of course.

Shared Knowledge and Experience

I will explain what epigenetics means. Our subtitle is “How Can We Influence Our Inheritance?” That’s the big question. Can we influence our inheritance at all? If so, how? In other words, it seems that some things are fixed. How can we change them? How can we be different from our parents? How can our children be different from us? How is it possible? These will be our questions. Genetics have a role to play—specifically, epigenetics. I will explain more about this later.

To begin, let’s read a few texts.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 83:

It is true that the people of modern times have the benefit of the attainments of their predecessors.

Children benefit from their parents.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 83:

The men of masterly minds, who planned and studied and wrote, have left their work for those who follow. But even in this respect, and so far as merely human knowledge is concerned, how much greater the advantages of the men of that olden time!

These were the antediluvians who lived to nearly a thousand years. Methuselah lived over nine hundred years, as did Adam and many others.

They had among them for hundreds of years him who was formed in God’s image [Adam], whom the Creator himself pronounced “good”—the man whom God had instructed in all the wisdom pertaining to the material world. Adam had learned from the Creator the history of creation; he himself witnessed the events of nine centuries; and he imparted his knowledge to his descendants. The antediluvians were without books, they had no written records; but with their great physical and mental vigor, they had strong memories, able to grasp and to retain that which was communicated to them, and in turn to transmit it unimpaired to their posterity. And for hundreds of years there were seven generations living upon the earth contemporaneously, having the opportunity of consulting together and profiting each by the knowledge and experience of all.



That’s quite remarkable. They lived together for seven generations. Our introductory picture shows four generations. But imagine seven generations living together, consulting with each other,

and profiting from each other and from the knowledge and experience of all. This happened over hundreds and hundreds of years. What a wealth of knowledge these people must have had! It's such a contrast to the theory of evolution, which says that our ancestors were primitive. In reality, they were much, much more advanced.

The fact that they didn't have books is not a sign of primitive-ness. Actually, it was a sign of their ability. They did not need books or computers, because their minds could retain so much. That is incredible. We see similarities today when we look at successive generations. But how much do they benefit from each other? In the scientific world, we benefit from what people, such as Einstein, discovered. Generations of scientists today can go much further and dig more deeply because of the grandfathers of science. Similarly, Einstein and others relied on the discoveries of people like Newton. Without Newton, Einstein wouldn't have been able to formulate his theories.

We think that we are so advanced today. But actually, we are just standing on the shoulders of our ancestors. We are not better, not more intelligent. Yet we live longer, and it seems as if we do better in intelligence tests, for example. It is to do with epigenetics, as we will see.

So, for hundreds of years, there were seven generations living together and having the opportunity of consulting with each other and profiting from each other's knowledge and experience. No one said, "I don't need you" or "I don't want you" or "I want to live separately." Instead, they profited from each other.

Two Theories of Inheritance

I will write a contrasting list about inheritance now. There are two basic theories in everyone's minds. One says that we have inherited everything. The other says that we are in charge of our own destiny. These are the two different sides. Let's consider child education in this context. If we inherit everything, then we believe that children inherit our character. But if we believe that our

destiny is in our own hands, then we believe children are the product of our education. These are the two viewpoints.

Since we are studying child education, we do, of course, believe that we can do something with our education. But then we look at how much gets accomplished by education and see that the children are repeating what the parents did. We get frustrated and think that children must just be inheriting the character of their parents. Which side should we stand on, this or that? We see that we ourselves are the products of our parents. And on the other hand, if we believe that everything can be done by our actions, then we say we are the product of our own doing. Which is really true? That is the question.

We Inherit Everything

- Children inherit our character
- We are the product of our parents
- Disease is fate
- We are dependent on the mercy of others
- We are what we are—there's no hope of change
- Depression

We are in Charge of our Destiny

- Children are the product of our education
- We are the product of our own actions
- Disease is the result of lifestyle
- We are the master of our own destiny
- What we are is the result of our own decisions
- Mania

Let's read a very positive statement concerning the ability to change children by education.

Child Guidance, p. 213:

Your child...needs the hand of wisdom to guide him a right. He has been allowed to cry for what he wanted, until he has formed the habit of doing this. He has been allowed to cry for his father. Again and again, in his hearing, others have been told how he cries for his father, until he makes it a point of doing this. Had I your child, in three weeks he would be transformed. I would let

him understand that my word was law, and kindly but firmly I would carry out my purposes. I would not submit my will to the child's will. You have a work to do here, and you have lost much by not taking hold of it before.

That is a very positive way. Ellen White had a lot of confidence. She said,

“Give me your child for three weeks.”

It reminds me of Daniel who asked the king for a trial period of ten days. This speaks of great confidence. We normally think that it's almost impossible to change a spoiled child, especially if the parents are discouraged after trying many different methods without result. But then someone comes along and says to give them the child for three weeks and they will be changed. That is remarkable, isn't it? I want you to see how confident Ellen White was about the fact that a difference can really be made.

There are other contrasts we can mention as well. Physicians usually think that disease is inherited, that it is fate. Some people are sick and others are not. They think, for example, that if someone gets cancer or an autoimmune disease it's bad luck, but if they don't, then it's good luck. Therefore, we look to treat only the symptoms of autoimmune diseases, because we don't know the cause. We don't know how to change cancer or where it comes from. Diabetes is another example. It is inherited. Indeed, there is a large and proven inheritance factor. Likewise, we see that obesity is also inherited. So, it seems that disease is just fate. But there are others who would disagree and say that disease is the result of lifestyle. If this our stance, though, we may get discouraged when we are sick.

The next point on our list is that we are dependent on the mercy of others. In the religious world, this means that we are dependent on the mercy of God. But some people disagree and say that we are the masters of our own destiny.

Another contrast is the statement,

“I am what I am.”

How often have we said this?

“There’s no hope for change.”

This probably also implies that we are who we are because of our parents. On the other side of our list is the statement,

“I am what I am because of my decisions.”

What mood do you think the people in the first column are in? Those are the people who say that children are a product of their parents, we are the product of our parents, disease is just fate, we are dependent on the mercy of others, and that we are what we are. What kind of mood is this? In one word, it is *depression*.

What kind of mood is described by the other side? Those are the people who say that children are the product of our education.

“Give them to me for three weeks and I will change them.”

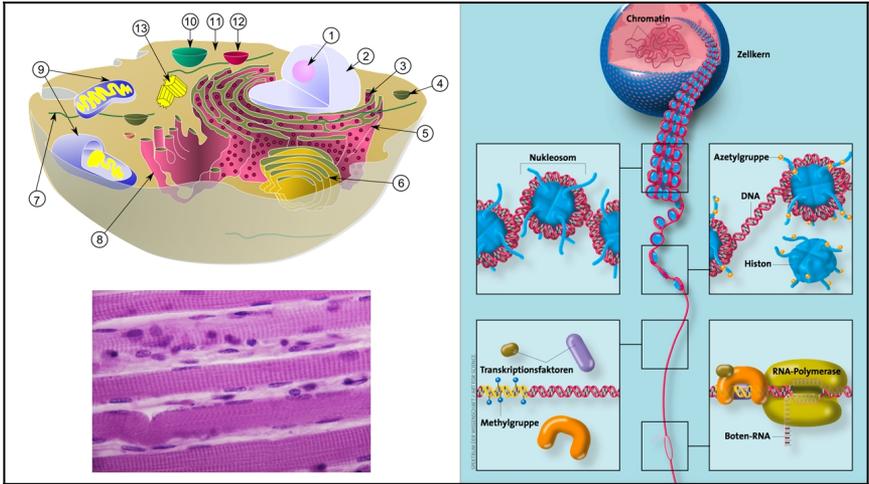
They also say that we are the product of our own choices, disease is the result of our lifestyle and we can change it, we are the masters of our own destiny, and what we are is the result of our decisions. How can we summarize this? It is *mania*. It is saying,

“I can do everything!”

That is mania. We could also say that one side is *pessimism* and the other is *optimism*. But if one side is depression, the other is mania. Both together are manic-depression, which is actually a disease.

Cell Anatomy

What helps us is to understand how we can really change our destiny. Can we even change it? Here we enter into the topic of genetics. We’ll take a look at this medical diagram about epigenetics. We will briefly study about the human body.



Our bodies are formed by many cells. We cannot see them with our naked eye. We have to look through a microscope to see the cells. On the bottom left of our diagram, we have a picture of muscle cells viewed through a microscope. Cells are not always round in shape. Muscle cells are very long in shape. The cells have many components, all of which are essential. One of the most important components is the nucleus. Some cells do not have nuclei, but every cell which can divide itself does. In muscle cells, the nuclei are on the sides of the cells. Some cells have more than one nucleus, but in the top left drawing of a standard cell, which we will look at now, there is only one.

There are billions of cells in our bodies. Most of them are constantly multiplying. They do this by dividing. Human beings begin from two cells—an egg and a sperm cell—which unite. Then this new cell divides into two cells, then four, eight, sixteen, and so on. Our cells are constantly dividing. Some cells divide, and others die off. The fact that cells are constantly dividing is proven by the fact that wounds heal. It is a new construction of cells. Likewise, our hair and fingernails grow. All of those are new cells. Blood cells are also replaced constantly. Again, cells multiply by dividing.

Within the nucleus is the information which tells us what we are. It tells everything about us—what color our hair is, what color of eyes we have, how tall we are, what our attitudes are like, and so on. Everything is told by the information inside the nucleus. Every cell which has a nucleus holds this information within it. And it is the same information in every cell, telling us everything about our bodies. The cell does what it does because of that information. Some cells, such as muscle cells, can contract because of that information. Other cells can produce secretions. For example, the pancreas secretes enzymes for digestion. Other cells can fight poisons or infections. Those cells are highly specialized. But every cell has the information of every other cell.

Why is it, then, that a liver cell doesn't do the job of a muscle cell? It has the same information. And theoretically, it could do the same job. Why do fingernail cells not do the work of eye cells? They have the same information. The reason they don't, is because information is either activated or deactivated.

At the beginning, when we are made up of only four or eight cells—still in our mother's womb—each cell could develop into any kind of cell. Those are called omnipotent cells (or stem cells). All the information of our whole being was in those individual cells. The color of our hair, the color of our eyes, our eventual height, and everything else was part of the information in those few cells.

How does one cell become a liver cell, while another cell becomes a muscle cell and another becomes a skin cell? It is simply by activating and deactivating the information found in the nucleus. Nobody understands how that exactly happens. It is a miracle. While I was studying this in medicine, one colleague told me,

“If you didn't believe in God before, you would now.”

It's amazing! It's simply amazing how the individual cells know what they must become. How do they know that at the very beginning? Now, they do know it because they are already fixed.

Our skin cells still multiply. They know that they must become skin cells. They have this information. They have more information than just that, but they are specialized now.

But how does a cell know what direction to go in the beginning? That is a good question. It has something to do with the influences around them—the neighboring cells. At some point the initial group of stem cells must differentiate: into liver, intestine, bone, and so on. Once they begin to specialize, then they will specialize more and more.

On the right of the diagram, you can see a nucleus with the information inside of it. That information is called the chromatin. When the chromatin condenses, we have the chromosomes which can be seen in a microscope. We have learned that our genetic information is in the chromosomes. It tells us everything we are. But we can see it only when it is very condensed. That usually happens only when the cells begin to divide. At any other time, everything is so loose that it can't be seen. The chromosomes contain proteins, which are surrounded by DNA. The DNA is a double helix in shape. That is where the information is. The DNA is a repetition of certain chemical structures into a specific pattern. It is similar to computers which are programmed with only 0's and 1's. The combinations of 0's and 1's make certain messages. It is the same with our DNA. The information is chemically stored in our nuclei.

Cells are so small that they can be seen only through a microscope. The nucleus inside the cell is even smaller. Within the nucleus are found the chromosomes. The chromosomes are nothing but a very condensed chain of information. We could relate it to a computer's hard drive. This chain of information is around two meters (six feet) long! That is how long each chromosome is. Can you imagine how condensed it must be to fit into a microscopic nucleus? That's incredible! They contain a lot of information. That must be the case, because it's the information about our entire

bodies and what we are. We received that information from our parents.

How is that information turned on and off? The information which is turned on is active. The information which is turned off is inactive. A liver cell, for example, has certain information turned on, so that it functions as a liver cell. Similarly, a muscle cell has certain information turned on, so that it functions as a muscle cell. How does this happen? It happens through chemical switches turned on or off. Those switches are on the histones, which are the proteins that the DNA wraps around. There are little switches on the histones. The switches are divided into acetyl and methyl groups. These switches turn on and off and influence whether everything is more condensed or looser. If it's more condensed, then it doesn't work and is switched off. If it's looser, then it works. On the DNA we also have transcription factors which make information active or not.

Environmental Influences

The point is that certain cells can be influenced to be active or passive. What influences the switches to turn off or on? That is an important question! This is an area where we still know very little. If we understood it all, then we would understand the mystery of life and how cells differentiate in the beginning. But we do realize some aspects. For instance, we understand that the environment has an influence on these switches. The environment includes poisons, noise, stress, exercise, and diet. Indeed, diet has an influence on whether the switches are turned on or off. That is amazing. We are actually constantly changing the information that is in our cells by the environment we are in. The information itself is fixed, but whether or not it becomes active is not fixed. That makes all the difference. That is the crucial point. This is the message we want to convey—the way we live does have an influence on what we are.

We were speaking earlier about depression and mania. Whether we are depressed or not, depends on our environment. And the

environment includes our own minds and how we react to certain situations. It is important to understand this. It also depends on what we eat, how long we sleep, how often we exercise, how much water we drink, whether we surround ourselves with a happy atmosphere, how much we join together with fellow believers or live alone, and more. All of these factors influence the little switches. We need to understand this.

We are discovering that the influence is not just momentary on our histone switches, in order to turn on or off the DNA. The switches can actually be inherited by the next generation of cells. When we influence the DNA in a cell, and afterwards it multiplies, then the same information will be in the new cells that was in the original one. We can secure these changes in new cells. Even more than this is the new discovery that these changes can be inherited by the next generation.

Let's look at an example. If a person is an alcoholic, the tendency or disposition to be an alcoholic will be inherited by their children. If a parent is very depressed, they will pass that tendency on to their children as well. This helps us to understand the responsibility we bear for our children when we form our lives one way or another.

How does this happen?

The period of life which shapes us most is the perinatal period. Perinatal means before and after birth—the time around the birth. It refers to the time between the fertilization of the egg, through the time of pregnancy, up to the first year of childhood. That is the time when the histone switches are most formed. It even includes the time before conception. The sperm and the egg themselves contain the information. This means that life has already begun there. In other words, our children are already in us. Even children already have children within them. The children within us are already formed. They are formed by what we are and what we make of ourselves.

Confirmation from the Bible

This is exactly what the Bible says. Let's turn to a Bible text now.

Exodus 20

⁵ For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me,

⁶ But showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.

This is not an arbitrary action of God. Instead, He says,

“This is what happens. If you live in a way that I'd describe as iniquity, it will have an influence on the children which are in you already. It will have an influence to the third and fourth generation.”

On the other hand,

“If you live in harmony with the commandments of God, that will have an influence too—on thousands.”

Just imagine what a responsibility each of us has! We don't have responsibility for only ourselves, but for coming generations. You may wonder why there is a difference. I would say it is because of God's power and the gospel. Let's read another text which shows this very clearly.

Genesis 9

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.

¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

²⁰ And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of

their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.

²⁵ Then he said: Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants He shall be to his brethren.

²⁶ And he said: Blessed be the Lord, The God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant.

Was Noah arbitrarily fixing the destiny of his children when he said this? Definitely not. Rather, he was foretelling what the law of epigenetics tells us. He was saying,

“You have acted in a certain way and it shapes you. It will shape your children as well.”

We need to understand this. It affects many generations, as we know.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 118:

The prophecy of Noah was no arbitrary denunciation of wrath or declaration of favor. It did not fix the character and destiny of his sons. But it showed what would be the result of the course of life they had severally chosen and the character they had developed. It was an expression of God's purpose toward them and their posterity in view of their own character and conduct. *As a rule*, children inherit the dispositions and tendencies of their parents, and imitate their example; so that the sins of the parents are practiced by the children from generation to generation. Thus the vileness and irreverence of Ham were reproduced in his posterity, bringing a curse upon them for many generations.

Ecclesiastes 9

¹⁸ One sinner destroys much good.

What does “As a rule...” mean? It means that generally speaking “children inherit the dispositions and tendencies of their parents,” but it doesn't mean it is always that way. Children tend to “imitate” their parents' example, but they don't have to. So even when

you have the disposition and tendency, you don't need to imitate the example. We tend to feel depressed when we look at all this. What can we change? Can we change anything here? Yes, of course we can! Our parents have lived in a certain way. But a change is possible. Jesus makes this very clear in the following verses.

Matthew 20

¹ For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

² Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

⁴ And said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. So they went.

⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, Why have you been standing here idle all day?

⁷ They said to him, Because no one hired us. He said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.

⁸ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.

⁹ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

¹⁰ But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

¹¹ And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

¹² Saying, These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.

¹³ But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?

¹⁴ Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.

The last will be first and the first will be last. That is the conclusion of the parable. What does this mean? It means that those who are the most unfortunate—perhaps because of their parents' lives—will be first. The last will be first. This means that if our parents have been alcoholics, for instance, we don't need to be alcoholics too. We can be first, through the invitation of the land owner. The point is that our destiny is not fixed. There's no reason to become manic. Rather, it is a reason to be thankful to God for what He can do to change the situation.

How Can Inheritance Be Changed?

We need to understand how this happens. How can our inheritance be changed? This is the most important point of our study. How can it be changed? First of all, we need to understand how inheritance is changed, generally speaking. Let's read a few statements which explain this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 404:

It is by sinful indulgence that men give Satan access to their minds, and they go from one stage of wickedness to another. The rejection of light darkens the mind and hardens the heart, so that it is easier for them to take the next step in sin and to reject still clearer light, until at last their habits of wrongdoing become fixed. Sin ceases to appear sinful to them. He who faithfully preaches God's word, thereby condemning their sins, too often incurs their hatred.

This statement really shows how epigenetics work. At first there is one cell. That cell multiplies to become two, then four, then eight, and so on. The same information is in each cell. It finally becomes fixed, and the wrong-doing becomes fixed. It progresses step by step. It doesn't happen all at once.

Satan doesn't wait for an opportunity to bring a very strong temptation upon us to make us fall. He doesn't work like that. Instead, he takes every opportunity—every first, little opportunity to tempt us. We can be sure of this. And he doesn't give up, if he's not successful. He continues constantly. That is how epigenetics work. It is constant, through many steps. Changes don't happen because of one big decision in our lives. Instead, they happen through many little changes. Finally, wrongdoing becomes fixed. This paragraph shows that it happens step by step.

Let's read another statement, which describes the positive side.

The Review and Herald, October 9, 1894:

The first step in the path of obedience is to surrender the will to God. This may seem a difficult thing to do; for Satan will present every possible objection, and will manufacture difficulties, and magnify perplexities before the mind; but take the first step, and the next step on the ladder of progress will be easier. This ladder must be climbed round by round; but God is above the ladder, and His glory will illuminate every step of advancement. The path of faith and self-denial is an upward path; its way is heavenward, and as you advance, the misleading clouds of doubt and evil will be left behind.

In the same way that the path goes downward, it also goes upward. That is, step by step. Take the first step in the path of obedience. The problem is that many wait before taking the first step, until they fully understand. They say,

“I don't understand, so I can't take a step now. I will start when I understand. But I am confused at the moment, so I can't take any step.”

But that is a totally wrong attitude. They miss all the opportunities, while they are waiting for great enlightenment. Take the first step in the path of obedience. Take it.

The Review and Herald, October 9, 1894:

...surrender the will to God. This may seem a difficult thing to do; for Satan will present every possible objection.

But take the first step. And the next step on the ladder will be easier. That is the law of epigenetics again. Once we start in the right direction, we open a path for the next step.

The Review and Herald, October 9, 1894:

This ladder must be climbed round by round; but God is above the ladder, and His glory will illuminate every step of advancement. The path of faith and self-denial is an upward path; its way is heavenward, and as you advance, the misleading clouds of doubt and evil will be left behind.

Again, we influence our posterity by doing so. We literally do—not just by example, but by what we are and what we pass on with our genes.

Following God, Step by Step

In summary, the question is, How do we relate to this? Do we understand that there is something that can be changed? It's not something we do in our own strength, rather, it is done by simply obeying what God has told us to do as the next step. When we do that, without getting any reward for it, we have done something; we have made it easier to take the next step. Everything that we do is just in preparation for our next step. It is not the ultimate end. It is not something for which we gain a big reward or recognition. We won't be told,

“You've done something wonderful!”

Rather, we have just made a pathway for the next step, for ourselves and especially for others. Let's turn to another statement that describes this very well.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 402:

This parable [of the vineyard] is a warning to all laborers, however long their service, however abundant their labors, that without love to their brethren, without humility before God, they are nothing. There is no religion in the enthronement of self. He who makes self-glorification his aim will find himself destitute of that grace which alone can make him efficient in Christ's service.

Whenever pride and self-complacency are indulged, the work is marred.

It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals. He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do.

God knows how strong our temptations are and how we've resisted those temptations. He appreciates that. Don't look for recognition of the accomplishments you achieve. You may never get recognition. But it doesn't matter. Forget yourself! The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God, than the greatest work which is done for recognition. Jesus says that those who gain recognition have their reward already.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 402:

Only when selfishness is dead, when strife for supremacy is banished, when gratitude fills the heart, and love makes fragrant the life—it is only then that Christ is abiding in the soul, and we are recognized as laborers together with God.

I'm fully aware that some people won't like this statement much. They say,

“I'm always looked upon as being selfish, but I'm not really. But since I'm always looked upon in that way, I won't talk anymore.”

This attitude is looking for recognition. Forget about this! “When selfishness is dead” means that we forget ourselves. It is taking the next step—the right step because it is right—regardless of what kind of recognition we get for it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 402:

However trying their labor, the true workers do not regard it as drudgery. They are ready to spend and to be spent; but it is a cheerful work, done with a glad heart. Joy in God is expressed through Jesus Christ. Their joy is the joy set before Christ—"to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." John 4:34. They are in cooperation with the Lord of glory. This thought sweetens all toil, it braces the will, it nerves the spirit for whatever may befall. Working with unselfish heart, ennobled by being partakers of Christ's sufferings, sharing His sympathies, and cooperating with Him in His labor, they help to swell the tide of His joy and bring honor and praise to His exalted name.

When people are depressed, they want to end their own lives. That is a real possibility. Why do they want to end their lives? It is because they imagine that when they end their lives, other people will no longer think they are in the way. They want to be out of the way. They think they are a hindrance for others. If they are gone, then other people can live as they want to. That is a problem. Such people look for the acceptance of others too much.

What do we do when everyone tells us that we are selfish? Do we say that we are not selfish? Do we say that we have good motives? Or do we say, "I don't want to be selfish"? This is one way to handle it. Another way is to say,

"Yes, I'm selfish. I'll get out of the way. I won't be here anymore. You'll have one less selfish person."

These are the ways that we react. These are the ways of depression. That is what happens when we think everything is predetermined. When everyone tells you that you are selfish, don't react. Go to God. Go to His word. Take the next step in the right direction. And even if others continue to tell you that you are selfish, still take the next step in the right direction. Still enjoy service. Still do the work that God gives you. Do it because it is the work—it is His work. Do it because you know that Jesus loves you, and because you love Jesus. Do the work.

At the end, God's people will be misunderstood. Their motives will be misconstrued. What do we expect? Do we expect that the world will one day recognize us for the selfless service we did for society? *Revelation 13* tells us differently. Be ready for that.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 403:

This is the spirit of all true service for God. Through a lack of this spirit, many who appear to be first will become last, while those who possess it, though accounted last, will become first.

There are many who have given themselves to Christ, yet who see no opportunity of doing a large work or making great sacrifices in His service. These may find comfort in the thought that it is not necessarily the martyr's self-surrender which is most acceptable to God; it may not be the missionary who has daily faced danger and death that stands highest in heaven's records. The Christian who is such in his private life, in the daily surrender of self, in sincerity of purpose and purity of thought, in meekness under provocation, in faith and piety, in fidelity in that which is least, the one who in the home life represents the character of Christ—such a one may in the sight of God be more precious than even the world-renowned missionary or martyr.

This is how epigenetics works. The text speaks of the Christian who is daily surrendering self and taking a step every day,

...in sincerity of purpose and purity of thought, in meekness under provocation, in faith and piety, in fidelity in that which is least.

We are to do what we do, not because it is seen, but because it needs to be done—not because we receive thanks for it, but because it needs to be done. If that is our attitude, then we have the reward of heaven.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 403-404:

Oh, how different are the standards by which God and men measure character. God sees many temptations resisted of which the world and even near friends never know—temptations in the home, in the heart. He sees the soul's humility in view of its own weakness; the sincere repentance over even a thought that is

evil. He sees the wholehearted devotion to His service. He has noted the hours of hard battle with self—battle that won the victory.

These are the big battles to win, even though no one sees them. But the result is there. And it will be in our posterity.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 404:

All this God and angels know. A book of remembrance is written before Him for them that fear the Lord and that think upon His name.

Not in our learning, not in our position, not in our numbers or entrusted talents, not in the will of man, is to be found the secret of success. Feeling our inefficiency we are to contemplate Christ, and through Him who is the strength of all strength, the thought of all thought, the willing and obedient will gain victory after victory.

And however short our service or humble our work, if in simple faith we follow Christ, we shall not be disappointed of the reward. That which even the greatest and wisest cannot earn, the weakest and most humble may receive. Heaven's golden gate opens not to the self-exalted. It is not lifted up to the proud in spirit. But the everlasting portals will open wide to the trembling touch of a little child. Blessed will be the recompense of grace to those who have wrought for God in the simplicity of faith and love.

This is how we can overcome inherited tendencies. It is very nicely described. And this is the deliverance from manic-depression. This is the way to treat it. With these thoughts we will close for today.

Appendix 1: The Way to Health: Salutogenesis

Sabbath, December 2, 2017

Note: This study is included because this series on *The Education of Children* makes reference to it in the first three studies, so it is included for those who would like to read the exposition of the first presentation of this theme.

WELCOME to our study. We have a very important study today. The reason we are studying this is because of the lecture I will be giving at the university on Monday about life-style. There is a spiritual aspect to this and that is what I will present to you now. At the university we will look at the physical aspect. There are principles that work for the physical as well as for the spiritual.

What Is Salutogenesis?

The word we are using in our title today is the word *salutogenesis*, which I will explain to you. This term was used the first time by a doctor from Israel who studied in social medicine and whose name was Aaron Antonovsky. He used the term *salutogenesis* in order to describe a different approach to health from the one that is usual in medicine, and I will explain this to you shortly. But first I will explain this term, *salutogenesis*. It's a composite Latin term. All medical words originate from either Latin or Greek. The other word I'll explain soon is partly Greek. But the Latin word "saluto" means health, and the word "genesis" as we know, is the name of the first book of Moses and it means creation, beginning, or origin. Therefore, what the professor wanted to look at was the origin of health, or the birth of health.

Today we will look at the origin of spiritual health, not just physical health. The spiritual is our concern here. We want to understand what the origin of spiritual health is and for that reason we will also call it *salutogenesis*.

The typical approach of medicine towards health is described by another word, *pathogenesis*, which is partly Greek. "Patho" means suffering or passion. The meaning of this term is the be-

ginning of disease. We don't want to say it is wrong to look at the origin of disease—why and how it starts—and so forth. It's a proper question to ask, but the point is that we don't want to concentrate on the origin of only disease. We also want to look at the origin of health. Instead of disease, you could substitute "sin." Then you would not call it *pathogenesis*, but *homotose* in Greek and *pecato* in Latin I believe. You could call it *pecatogenesis* or *homotogenesis* if you wish, but there are no such words. We would have to create them.

So instead of origin of disease we could say origin of sin—what is the cause of sin? why did sin arise? and so forth. These are proper questions to ask, but if we were to ask only these questions and that's all, we would have a problem. I will describe this in a moment, so that you understand it better.

Fighting Disease and Promoting Health

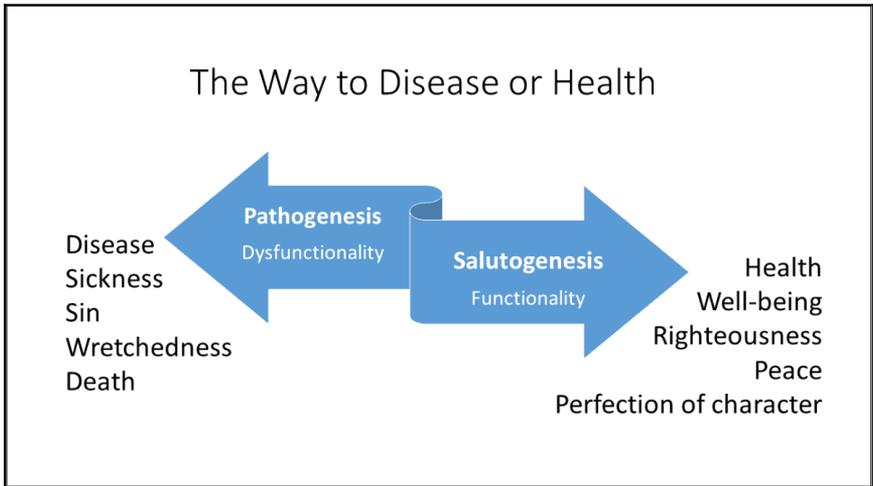
What we want to look at is the cause of spiritual health. Talking about disease and only concentrating on that is a real problem—just as concentrating on only sin is also a problem. We need to have a clear, balanced picture of health. In order to have this, we must first understand that health is not a fixed status, but rather it's a process. Health is something that is constantly increasing. Similarly, righteousness is not simply a fixed status, but it is something into which we grow and continue to grow. Righteousness cannot be looked at as something where I can say,

“Okay, once I have reached that level then I am righteous and that's it, I'll just stop there.”

If you look at righteousness like that, then you are on the wrong track. Righteousness is definitely something which is constantly growing. This needs to be realized in order to understand salutogenesis.

I would like to draw a diagram that will explain the two processes better. We have here the road to disease which we call pathogenesis. On the other side we have the road to health, called

salutogenesis. As a result of salutogenesis we have health, well-being, righteousness—not self-righteousness, but the righteousness of God. That’s important to understand. We are not speaking of a person who is righteous in their own mind.



The pathogenic road leads to disease, sickness and sin, and finally death. Of course, we could describe salutogenesis as functionality and pathogenesis as dysfunctionality.

So with pathogenesis, we concentrate on the disease in order to get away from sickness and sin. We fight against disease by prevention of disease, by curing the sickness—these are the main ways. And in salutogenesis we work for health by promotion of health. Is this difference clear? So there are two different approaches and they both have their value. They both will lead us away from sickness, from sin, and from wretchedness, as Ellen White puts it. In this exploratory study, you are exploring with me.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 17:

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man’s necessity. He “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,” that He might minister to every need of humanity. *Matthew 8:17*. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin

He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character.

So these are the three things mentioned here—disease, wretchedness, and sin. He came to remove these. What did He give? Health, peace and perfection of character. We cannot look at perfection of character as one fixed status, as if to say,

“Now I’ve reached perfection and I can’t reach more.”

When you have reached perfection of character, you can still reach perfection of character even more. Jesus said,

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

We will never be as perfect as God, but we can always become more like Him. There are two ways of doing this. We will read more in the following paragraph.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 17:

Varied were the circumstances and needs of those who besought His aid, and none who came to Him went away unhelped. From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole.

“Whole” and “healing” are from the same origin. The question is now, how did Jesus do this? Certainly, He did not just go in one direction—He did not just prevent sin from coming upon the people. He did not just cure them, but He also promoted righteousness—perfection of character—peace and health for them. Jesus worked in both directions and we will see this.

Perfection Means Growth in Righteousness

First of all let us understand how the Bible defines sin—what is the concept of sin in the Bible. For us, sin is just the transgression of the law. Of course, it is not just what we do, but what we are. According to *Romans 7*, sin is not only an action, but also what

we are in the heart. The meaning of the word “sin” in the Hebrew and in the Greek means “missed,” as in missing the mark. In the English language we also have “miss” in misbehavior, for example, or misconduct. That means a missed aim. When you try to hit a mark with a ball and you miss it, that is the word for sin. So what do we miss when we sin? We miss perfection of character, peace and health. We could also add that we miss fellowship with God. We don’t have it. We miss it. We have failed to have that privilege.

That is a view of something positive—health, peace and perfection of character. This is the positive side, and this is what we concentrate on—what we look at. This is what we want to achieve and to do so it’s important not to look simply at the sin as such, as though sin were a power in itself, but to look at righteousness in its fullness. Let us turn to a statement of Paul’s.

Philippians 3

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul plainly states here that he does not see righteousness as a fixed thing, which once he has attained it, that’s all. When can we stop saying,

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on...?

Never! If we were to stop saying this, then we would slip back at that very moment. It’s not possible to claim that I am perfected and that I don’t need any more improvement. We most definitely need improvement, even when we are with God in heaven—even then we will continue to improve. But that does not mean that sin

exists in heaven. We will not miss the mark up there, but we will definitely continue to grow in righteousness.

Paul also says,

Philippians 3

¹³ ...forgetting those things which are behind...

What does he mean by this? It's an important statement. First of all, can you forget those things that were in the past? Is this possible? In a certain sense it's impossible. If you have Alzheimer's, or some kind of dementia, you do forget, but I'm not speaking of that. We will definitely not forget the things that have happened and Paul did not forget either. He said,

"I persecuted the church and that is the reason I am not worthy to be called an apostle."⁵²

So he did not forget, in the sense of obliterating this from his mind. What does it mean to forget these things? It means that I am not concentrating on such things anymore, because I know that Jesus has forgiven me and I rest in His forgiveness. It is not that Paul didn't care about the past, but that he rested in the fact that he had been forgiven. I think we understand this, don't we? It's really important to see this point. Now, on the other side, his concentration was going forward to the things which lay ahead. What are the things that lie ahead? They are health, peace of mind, and righteousness. In other words,

"I am not constantly dwelling on my past sins, but I am constantly dwelling on the righteousness of Christ. I press forward to the goal of the prize."

This is salutogenesis that Paul is describing here. This is exactly what we need in order to do it in the physical as well. We really need to look at what a healthy lifestyle is. Good food, for example, is a healthy lifestyle. I don't need constantly to study what ingredients junk food has and how bad it is. Of course, I need to

⁵² 1 Corinthians 15:9.

teach the people. I need to know something about it. I need to know what I was saved from and also what I can save others from as a doctor—definitely—but more importantly, I must understand the benefits of good food. I need to concentrate the most on this. That is salutogenesis—I forget the things that are behind and press forward to the things which lie ahead.

The Power of Righteousness

We will read another statement, which expresses the same thing.

The Desire of Ages, p. 490:

Henceforward Christ's followers were to look upon Satan as a conquered foe. Upon the cross, Jesus was to gain the victory for them; that victory He desired them to accept as their own. "Behold," He said, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

This is health. This is righteousness—to have power to tread on the serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy. That is not a fixed status, but it's a constant process. How do you achieve this? Do you achieve it by constantly looking at how you have missed that mark? Certainly not. Let's read the next paragraph.

The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper.

This is an extremely important statement which really describes salutogenesis. First of all, we can do all things through Him who strengthens us, not in our own power. I will come back to this.

Also, don't try "to adjust all the difficulties"—which would be the case if we just looked at pathogenesis. Pathogenesis has a

place. There is a place to look at the difficulties and to avoid them—to prevent disease and so forth. But...

The Desire of Ages, p. 490

...do not wait to adjust all the difficulties.

You can't do that. You always have temptations—always. What you need to do is look to Jesus your Helper. This is the salutogenic way—look to Jesus your Helper. Look to health.

The Desire of Ages, p. 493:

There are Christians who think and speak altogether too much about the power of Satan. They think of their adversary, they pray about him, they talk about him, and he looms up greater and greater in their imagination. It is true that Satan is a powerful being; but, thank God, we have a mighty Saviour, who cast out the evil one from heaven. Satan is pleased when we magnify his power. Why not talk of Jesus? Why not magnify His power and His love?

The pathogenic approach, to focus only on disease, is like constantly talking about Satan and his power—to think and speak about the power of Satan all the time. Please don't misunderstand me here. We should not underestimate the power of Satan. It's not that we should say,

“Oh Satan has no power. He is a beaten foe. We don't need to fear him anymore.”

Of course we need to fear him, but it is not good always to think and speak about the power of Satan. By doing so, we would magnify him. In the same way we can magnify disease, by constantly thinking and speaking about my disease. Ponder and reflect on this. When I constantly talk and think about my disease, what will happen? The disease will loom up ever larger in my mind and when it does so, what will happen to my body? It will correspondingly get worse. This reminds me of another statement of Ellen White's, to which we will come back. This is not applying salutogenesis.

Instead of “adversary” let’s substitute “sickness” in the quote above.

“They think of their sickness, they pray about their sickness, they talk about their sickness, and it looms up greater and greater in their imagination. It is true that sickness is a powerful entity...”

It’s not exactly a being, but maybe in a certain sense. Some people talk about their sickness as though it were their being, and it certainly was.

“...but, thank God, we have a great physician who can heal, and who has healed. Satan is pleased when we magnify his power, [and sickness is his power]. Why not talk of Jesus? Why not magnify His power and His love?”

That is a very valid question.

Now let us look at this Spirit of Prophecy statement about the bath.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 69:

If your mind is impressed and fixed that a bath will injure you, the mental impression is communicated to all the nerves of the body. The nerves control the circulation of the blood; therefore the blood is, through the impression of the mind, confined to the blood vessels, and the good effects of the bath are lost. All this is because the blood is prevented by the mind and will from flowing readily, and from coming to the surface to stimulate, arouse, and promote the circulation. For instance, you are impressed that if you bathe you will become chilly. The brain sends this intelligence to the nerves of the body, and the blood vessels, held in obedience to your will, cannot perform their office and cause a reaction after the bath. There is no reason in science or philosophy why an occasional bath, taken with studious care, should do you anything but real good. Especially is this the case where there is but little exercise to keep the muscles in action and to aid the circulation of the blood through the system. Bathing frees the skin from the accumulation of impurities which are

constantly collecting, and keeps the skin moist and supple, thereby increasing and equalizing the circulation.

This shows us how we can suppress health, by dwelling in our minds on sickness. In the same way you can suppress righteousness by dwelling in your mind on sin—the same way—and if you think that a measure God sends you to aid your healing will harm you, then it will harm you. For example,

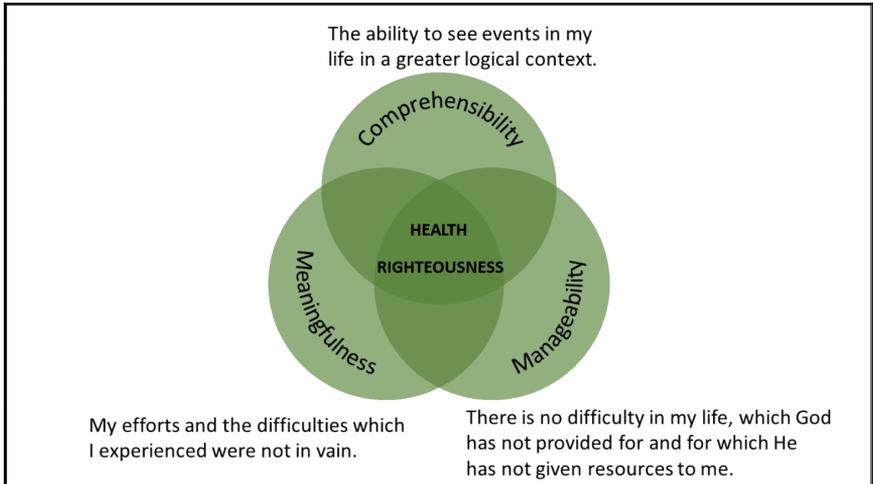
Revelation 3

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...

This is in the verses about Laodicea. And if you think that this rebuke will harm you, it will harm you. Why? Because your mind is telling you that. So, what you need is a deliverance from that kind of thinking—from that pattern.

Three Aspects That Promote Health

Dr Antonovsky listed three main aspects which promote health. We can apply them to the spiritual realm in the following diagram.



The three aspects are comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Antonovsky formulated these aspects after investigating the cases of concentration camp survivors. He discov-

ered that their health was much better than he'd anticipated. He expected them to have lasting physical and mental scars, just as traumatized soldiers today often suffer diseases of both mind and body. But to his surprise, Dr Antonovsky discovered that the concentration camp survivors were unexpectedly healthy. He wondered how that was possible. The model he formulated showed that they had comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. That means that health is promoted when these aspects are present. That is the way to salutogenesis. In the context of our study, we can say that's the way to righteousness.

1. COMPREHENSIBILITY

Comprehensibility is the ability to see the events in our lives in a more logical context than just that of our own personal experience. What does this mean, spiritually? It means that we see beyond the situation we are in. Let's think of Job, for example.

Job experienced very tough times. His children died, he lost his health and his possessions, and then his friends came and accused him of being a sinner and so forth. That is tough. But the wider context is shown in the book of *Job*. It stemmed from an argument that Satan had about the children of God on this earth. If Job could have read the book of *Job* before he'd had those experiences, he would have comprehended. However, that was not possible. He understood it all afterwards, when God answered him. You can read this in *Job* 38 and onwards. We are told this so that when we come into similar situations, we will look at the bigger picture, which will make our experience more logical.

Let's read another story in this line.

Luke 24

¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

These were two of Jesus' disciples, from Emmaus.

¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

¹⁷ And He said to them, What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?

¹⁸ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have you not known the things which happened there in these days?

¹⁹ And He said to them, What things? So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

²⁰ And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.

²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

²² Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us.

²³ When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.

²⁴ And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.

Did these disciples have comprehensibility? Certainly not. They had a tough experience too. They had followed a Man who said He was the Messiah, and who they believed to be the Messiah. But it seemed this Man disappointed them by dying before He had achieved anything great. The higher their hope was, the greater their disappointment. They were really pressed. They had hoped He would deliver Israel. So they poured out all their complaints upon this supposed stranger. That was the sure recipe for disease, or for unrighteousness. We should understand this. They needed to be corrected, which is what Jesus did. He used some tough words.

Luke 24

²⁵ Then He said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.

²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to stay with them.

Did Jesus have comprehensibility? He certainly did. His comprehensibility enabled Him to give these disciples comprehensibility. They asked Him to stay with them. They began to understand that the death of Jesus was in a wider, logical context. They understood much, much better. Jesus himself said,

Luke 24

²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things?

In other words, it is determined. It must happen. And rightly so. In the larger context that's exactly what needed to happen. It wasn't something which happened outside of the plan. It was the plan. That is comprehensibility. If Job could have seen that it was the plan, he would have been happy about it.

Another example we can consider is that of John the Baptist. When John was alone in the dungeon, he didn't comprehend either, which made him sick in a certain sense. He didn't see Christ clearly anymore. He asked Jesus if He was the One for whom they were waiting. But once John saw that clearly, and once he saw the context, his attitude was totally different. Let's read the summary of that story.

The Desire of Ages, p. 224:

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dun-

geon. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” *Philippians* 1:29.

And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.

This is exactly what John the Baptist rested in. He was ready to live or to die.

The Desire of Ages, p. 218:

The principle of the Baptist’s own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah’s kingdom. John well knew how foreign all this was to the principles and hopes of the leaders in Israel. That which was to him convincing evidence of Christ’s divinity would be no evidence to them. They were looking for a Messiah who had not been promised.

They did not understand their experience in a wider context. They did not have comprehensibility. Neither did John the Baptist at first.

John saw that the Saviour’s mission could win from them only hatred and condemnation. He, the forerunner, was but drinking of the cup which Christ himself must drain to its dregs.

The Saviour’s words, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me,” were a gentle reproof to John. It was not lost upon him. Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ’s mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved.

This is comprehensibility. It is understanding the situation more clearly—in the context of John’s own experience. He didn’t just have a general understanding. He also had an understanding of his own experience in relation to the great controversy.

2. MANAGEABILITY

The next aspect we will consider is manageability. Manageability means that there is no difficulty in my life for which God has not provided and given us resources. Dr Antonovsky said that this means you know you have the resources to manage the situation.

But in our spiritual context, it means that there is no difficulty in our lives which we need to fear that we can't handle. We can handle it because we can pray and go to God. We know that He has provided for these difficulties. Instead of fearing such situations, we can look forward to them. Consider marathon runners who always want to run the next race, despite having just exerted tremendous effort and despite the difficulties of their sport. Do they just love torturing themselves? No, they are absolutely happy.

I am currently going swimming in the mornings at 6 AM. I often meet an elderly man there, who says that he is so happy to go swimming early in the morning, even though it's difficult for him to get up at that time. It's incredible. How do people have such joy? It is manageability—looking forward to the task because you know that you can manage it. That's an important point. We have a Bible text for this as well.

1 Corinthians 10

¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

“He will make a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.” This is manageability. It promotes health when this is in our minds and when we know we can manage it—not in our own strength, but because we have this promise.

3. MEANINGFULNESS

Let's consider the third aspect of health or salutogenesis now, which is meaningfulness. Meaningfulness shows us that all our efforts and difficulties are not in vain, but have a purpose. And this purpose is not merely so we go to heaven one day. Our suffering achieves a purpose—for example, it may lead someone else to eternal life or open their eyes. This is the point. And that is exactly what Jesus experienced. He said to the Emmaus disciples,

“Ought not the Messiah to suffer that?”

In other words,

“It had to be like this.”

For what purpose? Why? What is the meaning of the whole thing? The meaning is our salvation. For that reason, He suffered willingly and He bore it victoriously. Why? Because there was meaningfulness to it. When Jesus was in Gethsemane, His mind was so darkened that at that moment He couldn't see through it. He didn't see through the portals of the tomb until He began to see the meaningfulness of His suffering. Then He said,

“Yes, I will drink the cup.”

Let's read this together.

The Desire of Ages, p. 690:

Turning away, Jesus sought again His retreat, and fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to my Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done.”

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the

power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made.



So His decision is made. On what grounds? He sees the effect of His work. In other words, He sees the meaning of His sacrifice, and this helped Him make His decision. In the Bible, we read this in *Isaiah*.

Isaiah 53

¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

This means He will see the labor of His soul. Typically, when we speak of labor, we think of when a woman bears a child. When I was in the Dominican Republic, I saw women in hard labor giving birth, I thought they would never want to have another baby again. But as soon as the newborn was in their arms, they were so happy that they did not even remember their suffering just moments before. They were then willing to go through it again in the future. Interesting, isn't it? Why? Because they saw

the result of their labor, and this made them so happy that they did not focus on the pain anymore. So the women were not traumatized, as you might think, from the experience they had had giving birth—not at all. They saw what was accomplished by their labor. They saw meaningfulness in this. That is the important point.

Summary

So coming back now to our diagram—this is salutogenesis. This is the way to health and to righteousness. The three aspects of this way are:

1. To understand, in faith, because God says so;
2. To be able to manage the experience, because God makes it manageable; and
3. To see the meaningfulness behind it.

With these thoughts I will close. I hope that we understand the way to health and righteousness better. If we want to promote this, we need to labor according to this model. If you want to help someone else obtain righteousness and health, it takes labor to do this. Give them comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. That is the key.

Appendix 2: Touching the Fruit

By Frank Zimmerman

IN Chapter 1, in the section “The Fall of Man,” Andreas made the statement that Eve was misstating God when she said to the serpent, regarding the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,

Genesis 3

³ God has said, You shall not eat of it, *neither shall you touch it*, lest you die.

While it is true that there is no previous mention about “touching the fruit” in the Bible, we cannot draw the immediate conclusion that Adam and Eve did not receive some kind of warning from God regarding touching the fruit, for many things were told them which are not directly recorded. First, we can look at direct statements which are recorded in the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen White writes:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:

Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. *Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles.* They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

Certainly, touching the fruit would constitute an attempt to investigate the nature of the tree. Let’s look at another statement written a few paragraphs after the one above.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:

And he [the serpent] insinuated that the Lord jealously desired to withhold it from them, lest they should be exalted to equality with himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from *tasting or even touching it.*

Now this is a statement from the serpent [Satan], who certainly would have been glad if Eve misunderstood or overstated God's warning. So even though he argues that God had prohibited them from "even touching it," this might have been merely a reiteration of what Eve said, and not an accurate account of God's actual warning. Here is another statement that conveys a similar thought:

The Story of Redemption, p. 34:

The tempter assured Eve that as soon as she ate of the fruit she would receive a new and superior knowledge that would make her equal with God. He called her attention to himself. He ate freely of the tree and found it not only perfectly harmless but delicious and exhilarating, and told her that it was because of its wonderful properties to impart wisdom and power that *God had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it*, for He knew its wonderful qualities.

Once again, this is the argument of the serpent, who might just have been reiterating what Eve said, and so it is not conclusive proof. Another statement:

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 42:

The Lord would not have them *investigate the fruit* of the tree of knowledge, for then they would be exposed to Satan masked. He knew that they would be perfectly safe *if they touched not the fruit*.

Here we are definitely told that God did not want them to even touch the fruit, as a part of investigating it. So Eve was not entirely wrong in her description of God's warning.

Temperance, p. 283:

God made only one restriction. "The fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, *neither shall you touch it*, lest you die." They would forfeit their life, if they did not obey the restriction.

This is an interesting statement, because here Ellen White quotes the exact words of Eve, and states that they were a repre-

sentation of the restriction that God laid on them. But, before we jump to the seemingly obvious conclusion, let's look at some contrary evidence.

The Review and Herald, February 24, 1874:

Eve had overstated the words of God's command. He had said to Adam and Eve, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for in the day you eat thereof you shall surely die." In Eve's controversy with the serpent, she added the clause, "*Neither shall you touch it*, lest you die." [italics original] Here the subtlety of the serpent was seen. This statement of Eve gave him advantage, and he plucked the fruit, and placed it in her hand, and used her own words, "He has said, 'If you touch it, you shall die.' You see no harm comes to you from touching the fruit, neither will you receive any harm by eating it."

This seems to be a contradiction to what we have read in the previous two quotations. How can we reconcile this? First, we must accept that God *did* actually tell them *not to touch* it, for it would put them on the tempter's ground.

"Should they attempt to *investigate its nature*, they would be exposed to his wiles."

"The Lord would not have them *investigate the fruit* of the tree of knowledge, for then they would be exposed to Satan masked."

To touch the fruit with the intent of investigating it, to see if it was good or not, would be entering into temptation. The Lord wanted them to keep a safe distance from the ground of temptation and so warned them not to go near to the tree, or to touch it with the intent to investigate it.

But then, in what sense did Eve "overstate the words of God's command"? To reconcile this, we have to separate the *touching* of the fruit from the warning: "you shall surely die." The warning of death was tied to the *eating* of the fruit, not to the *touching* of it. Eve overstated the words of God by associating the death sentence with the touching of the fruit. This opened an avenue for

the serpent to place it in her hand, and then tell her that because it did not kill her, God's command was false.

Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, p. 38:

The tempter plucked the fruit and passed it to Eve. She took it in her hand. "Now," said the tempter, "you were prohibited from even touching it lest you die." He told her that she would realize no more sense of evil and death in *eating* than in *touching or handling* the fruit. Eve was emboldened because she felt not the immediate signs of God's displeasure. She thought the words of the tempter all wise and correct. She ate, and was delighted with the fruit. It seemed delicious to her taste, and she imagined that she realized in herself the wonderful effects of the fruit.

Now, let's look at one last statement, which is very similar to the quote on the last page from *The Review and Herald*. Only in this case, the phrase, "lest you die" is left out.

The Signs of the Times, February 13, 1896:

It was when he was in conflict with man that Satan gained his first victory. Changing his appearance, assuming the disguise of a serpent, in the most subtle, artful-manner he assailed Eve, saying,

Genesis 3

¹ Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

² And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

The woman erred when she entered into controversy with the serpent. The Lord had *not* said, "*You shall not touch it.*" He had said,

Genesis 2

¹⁶ Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat:

¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *you shall not eat of it:* for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

Does it seem confusing again? Did God tell them not to touch it, or didn't He? We must accept what the testimony of the Spirit

of Prophecy said in the previous quotes, that not touching the fruit was part of the counsel of God, to prevent them from entering into temptation. But the sin, which leads to death, would consist in *eating the fruit*. Look again at the two statements. God said,

Genesis 2

¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.*

This is very clear: eating would *surely* result in death. “Surely” means absolutely, without a doubt. Now compare this with Eve’s statement:

Genesis 3

³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, *lest you die.*

“Lest you die,” does not convey certainty. It means, “you *might* die.” That is, death is on the way; you are on the path to death; but the sin which brings immediate death has not yet occurred. On this particular text, many Bible translations agree with the *King James* rendering of the verse. Some translations state the prohibition even more strongly,

“...or else you will die.”

But the *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition* states:

“...lest perhaps we die,”

–which conveys the thought:

“You are on the path of temptation. You are in danger! If you don’t turn around, you will be led to sin, and when sin has conceived, death will result.”

And this is how we must understand it in order to harmonize all the various statements. So, where Eve went wrong, was to link the warning of touching the fruit (entering onto the ground of temptation), with the instant result of death. But in God’s mind,

the result of death was linked with the sin of eating the fruit. The warning against touching it was just to keep them off the ground of temptation, and it only applied in the event that they went out of *curiosity*, to *investigate* the tree. Had Eve, at any time during the temptation, refused the fruit, and left the ground of temptation, there would have been no sin, and thus no death. Eve mixed up these two instructions, and associated touching the fruit with death. It is in this way that she misstated God’s command.

Warning About Temptation	Warning About Sin
“Do not touch (investigate) the fruit.”	“Do not eat the fruit.”
Result	Result
“You will be tempted to sin.”	“You will die.”



Let us suppose that they went there with the firm intent of destroying the fruit, so that they would never be tempted by it. Would they have been in danger? Not at all! Let’s look at an example of this in the New Testament.

Acts 19

¹⁸ And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

¹⁹ Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

²⁰ So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

These books of “curious arts” are called, in other translations, “books of magic,” “books of sorcery,” “books of occult arts.” Those who practiced such arts, were called, in *Deuteronomy* 18:10-12, “an abomination unto the Lord.” Therefore, these are not the kind of books which should be picked up by a curious hand, in order to investigate them. Instead, we would warn people to stay off this ground of temptation.

But in the scripture above, the people touched the books, but were not harmed by them. Why so? Because they picked them up with the intent to destroy them! So the mere act of touching does not constitute sin. It all depends on the intent, and where that intent could lead to.

As stated, had Adam and Eve approached the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as these believers approached their books of magic in *Acts* chapter 19, with the intent to destroy the fruit, then there would have been no danger at all. Touching the fruit, in such a case, would not have led to temptation, and certainly would not have been sin.

Although in the quote from *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1896, the phrase, “lest you die,” is left out, it is included in a very similar quote from *The Review and Herald*, February 24, 1874. The *Review and Herald* text shows that “lest you die,” is implied in the *Signs* quote. And so, by putting these two statements together, the conclusion is the same: God did warn them about touching the tree, but He did not associate the act of touching, with the sin of eating. Eve made a false association between these two, and this is where she erred. It was a mistake in her understanding, but not yet a sin.

Similar examples could be considered from the New Testament, regarding Jesus’ touching of the leper (to heal him), or his “eating with sinners.” These were actions that could have rendered Him “unclean,” had He done these with the wrong intent. But because He came to give life to sinners, and not to partake in their sins, He never entered upon the ground of temptation.

How careful we must be to understand the words of God aright, and to be aware of our tendency to substitute our own limited understanding in place of the actual intent of the word of God, lest we be tempted with false views of God’s character.

Appendix 3: Educating Children for Service

Messenger and News Review, May 1993

By Andreas Dura

Isaiah 8

¹⁸ Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.

ONE of the important truths that we learned in connection with the child salvation message is the principle that the family is the very first mission field.

The Review and Herald, April 23, 1901:

Wherever the people of God are placed, in the crowded cities, in the villages, or among the country byways, there is a home mission field, for which a responsibility is laid upon them by their Lord's commission. They are to take up the duty that lies nearest. First of all is the work in the family; next they should seek to win their neighbors to Christ, and to bring before them the great truths of this time.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 195:

There are fathers and mothers who long to labor in some foreign mission field; there are many who are active in Christian work outside the home, while their own children are strangers to the Saviour and His love. The work of winning their children for Christ many parents trust to the minister or the Sabbath school teacher, but in doing this they are neglecting their own God-given responsibility. The education and training of their children to be Christians is the highest service that parents can render to God. It is a work that demands patient labor, a lifelong diligent and persevering effort. By a neglect of this trust we prove ourselves unfaithful stewards. No excuse for such neglect will be accepted by God.

There is simply no sense in contemplating a large missionary endeavor until this first field has been successfully worked.

In this connection I would like to point out that the Sabbath days especially play a decisive factor in this missionary work. Understandably, we all look forward to seeing our fellow believers on this day, but this should not lead us to neglect our children. We should not allow ourselves to become so absorbed in conversation that the children are forgotten and have to spend Sabbath afternoon alone without the guidance of their parents. In such a case it does not take long before they think of some games to play and one soon finds them immersed in a game of football or some other pastime while the adults are busy with themselves. This presents a sad picture, and is a neglect of the first missionary field—a mistake which the Spirit of Prophecy warns us against.

The Review and Herald, September 19, 1854:

Parents, above everything, take care of your children upon the Sabbath. Do not suffer them to violate God's holy day by playing in the house or out of doors. You may just as well break the Sabbath yourselves as to let your children do it, and when you suffer your children to wander about, and suffer them to play upon the Sabbath, God looks upon you as Sabbath-breakers. Your children, that are under your control, should be made to mind you. Your word should be their law. Will not parents wake up to their duty before it shall be too late, and take hold of the work in earnest, redeem the time, and make unsparing efforts to save their children?

Under God's guidance, parents can learn how to have an interesting nature study with their children, a study which will point them to the Creator and lead them to commune with Him.

Whoever perceives this first and most important of all duties and accomplishes it, will not only reap a rich reward in born again, well-educated children, he will also be richly blessed himself. However, in the performance of this work we should never lose sight of what its real purpose is. When we give our family our first priority, it is so that we and the family can thereby give a better service, first in the Church and then in the world.

Satan knows how to divert us from this noble goal. He is quite agreeable for us to concentrate on our families in such a way that selfishness will be strengthened and no room be left for service to our neighbors. This attitude is all too widely spread in the world. The general opinion is that as soon as a wife is pregnant, everything should revolve around her, and in many cases this is just what she expects. The ego is elevated, and it is often this social upgrading that is the reason for the wish to have children. Once the children are born they are often neglected and left to themselves, or overly protected by giving their real or imagined needs the first priority. The latter belief leads people to look upon any opposite views as being unfair to children or unreasonable. And the message seems to convey the same expression: "Children first" is the motto. But the truth is far from it.

Above all considerations of competitiveness on the one hand, or inferiority complexes on the other, the Christian father is only interested in one question:

"How can I serve better?"

In order to give an effective service the Christian father needs a family whose members are born again and well-educated; a family which offers an open home for the hungry souls of the world—a home in which people will feel comfortable and where they can learn of Christ.

In this dark world a light is necessary which will go far beyond the walls of one's own house. And when children are well-educated, they will gain a love for service—service which stretches beyond their own family to the Church and the world.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 196:

This is true home missionary work, and it is as helpful to those who do it as to those for whom it is done. By our faithful interest for the home circle we are fitting ourselves to work for the members of the Lord's family, with whom, if loyal to Christ, we shall live through eternal ages. For our brethren and sisters in Christ

we are to show the same interest that as members of one family we have for one another.

And God designs that all this shall fit us to labor for still others. As our sympathies shall broaden and our love increase, we shall find everywhere a work to do. God's great human household embraces the world, and none of its members are to be passed by with neglect.

Wherever we may be, there the lost piece of silver awaits our search. Are we seeking for it?

The Ministry of Healing, p. 352:

The mission of the home extends beyond its own members... Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives.

Luke 14

¹² Then He also said to him who invited Him, When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.

¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Appendix 4: Master and Servant

Present Truth, December 5, 1895

By E. J. Waggoner

PP Editor's note: This article is included for two reasons: 1) The training of children is the training of servants: those who serve the world with God's grace; 2) It is common for people to lament their childhood, and how their parents did not raise them correctly; but this article shows that once you become the Lord's servant, you are no longer a slave, and instead should rejoice in the heritage of your new family. The article explains how this all works out in practical life.

Psalm 116

¹⁶ O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, and the son of your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.

FROM this we may learn that the Lord's servant is a free man. The Lord looses the bonds of those who acknowledge themselves to be His servants, and that freedom which He gives them is what binds them more closely to Him.

Servants by Redemption

Every soul on earth might, if he would, say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am your servant," for the Lord has purchased all mankind with His own blood.

Titus 3

¹⁴ [He] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us.

1 Corinthians 6

¹⁹ You are not your own;

²⁰ For you are bought with a price.

1 Peter 1

¹⁸ You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,...

¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ.

And He has proclaimed liberty to all who are bound.

Isaiah 61

¹ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent

me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

It matters not who the man may be, he is the Lord's servant; for Christ has bought all. He tasted death for every man.

Hebrews 2

⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Two Classes of Servants

But there are two classes of servants,—those who serve, and those who do not serve,—the “good and faithful” servants,⁵³ and the “wicked and slothful” servants.⁵⁴ The fact that a man does not acknowledge himself to be a servant, does not diminish his obligation to serve.

He who does not acknowledge himself to be the Lord's servant, is a slave.

Romans 7

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.

John 8 [RV]

³⁴ Everyone that commits sin, is the bondservant of sin.

2 Peter 2

¹⁹ Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is He brought in bondage.

Isaiah 52

³ You have sold yourselves for nought, and you shall be redeemed without money.

This last text shows not only that all who do not serve the Lord are slaves, but also that those who serve Him are free. Whoever says from the heart,

⁵³ *Matthew 25:21.*

⁵⁴ *Matthew 25:26.*

Psalm 116

¹⁶ O Lord, truly I am your servant,

–may also as truly say,

¹⁶ ...You have loosed my bonds.

1 Corinthians 7

²¹ He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man.

So the sum of the matter is that all men, from the greatest king to the humblest peasant, are in truth the Lord's servants:

- Those who do not acknowledge the Lord as their Master, are slaves, even though they be kings; while
- Those who yield themselves to the Lord's service, are free, even though they be servants.

Only One Master

Matthew 23

¹⁰ One is your Master, even Christ.

He is the only rightful Master.

Matthew 4

¹⁰ You shall worship the Lord your God, and *Him only shall you serve.*

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.

The rendering in the margin of the *Revision* is equally true:

Ecclesiastes 12 [RV]

¹³ ...this is the duty of all men,

Luke 20

³⁸ ...for all live unto Him.

This is what is written in the law:

Luke 10

²⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

We are not obliged to distinguish between different lines of duty, for the law is one, and love is its fulfilling. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is part of our duty to God. If we do not love our fellow-men, it is because we do not love God. Our one anxiety should be to seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.

Romans 14

¹⁷ The kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;

–and,

¹⁸ He that in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let it not be forgotten that the Lord is the only Master. This is shown by the fact that we are to serve Him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind. So if we do our whole duty to God, we have no strength for any other service than His. If all our strength is given to the Lord, there can be none left for anyone else. And to this end the Apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 7

²³ You are bought with a price; be not the servants of men.

Serving Christ Through Earthly Masters

Yet the same one who wrote, “be not the servants of men,” wrote also,

Ephesians 6

⁵ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

–and,

Colossians 3

²² Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.

There is no contradiction here. The secret is found in the last clause of each verse quoted, and in what immediately follows.

²³ Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; *for you serve the Lord Christ.*

And so also in *Ephesians* where servants are exhorted to serve...

Ephesians 6

⁵ ...in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

⁶ Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

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

If all servants acted on this plan, regarding themselves not as servants of men, but as servants of Christ alone, no employer would ever have occasion to complain of unfaithful service. With such a servant it would make no difference whether his master were present, or not; his real Master is Christ, who is always present.

Christ the Master Laborer

There is in this thought encouragement for every laborer, no matter what his employment. Somebody has well said,

“Whatever you know how to do best, God knows how to do it better.”

That is, God knows far more than we do, even of that of which we may think ourselves masters. The master of workmen in any line of work is one who knows all about that work. If he is a competent master, he knows more about it than any of those who are under him. But the Lord is the Master of us all, so that no matter

what the business may be, if we are in trouble we may go to Him with confidence that we shall find...

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ ...grace to help in time of need.

To give us confidence in coming to Him, He came to this earth as a servant, and passed a thorough apprenticeship as a laborer. He knows how to help.

The dignity of service depends much on the Master whom one serves. The servant partakes of the dignity or dishonor of his master. If one serves a mean master, then his is a mean service. Without any play upon words, we may truly say that such service is menial. But the one who realizes that in all things he serves the Lord Christ, can never have any degrading work. The humblest service is noble and dignified, when done to the Lord, and not to man. As George Herbert quaintly put it:

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.⁵⁵

Not Two Masters

Matthew 6

²⁴ No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.

The servant who thinks to follow two lines, making a distinction between service to Christ and his Master according to the flesh, will become hopelessly confused. No matter what our grade of service, nor what the rank of our earthly master, we have only to consider what will please the Lord. He who does this, will render to man every service that he has any right or duty to give.

⁵⁵ George Herbert, Poem: *The Elixir*, 1633.

If two servants are together, and one of them is unfaithful, that is no excuse for the other one to be unfaithful also. If a dozen servants refuse to serve, that does not warrant another in neglecting his duty. Even though the others, being in a majority, persecute the faithful servant, and threaten him with the worst kind of treatment, it is evident that he is not justified in neglecting his duty.

Proverbs 1

¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, consent not.

It makes no difference whether the enticement be in the shape of gifts if we yield, or of threats of vengeance if we do not, we are forbidden to be a party to sin.

Exhortation to Earthly Masters

Remember now that all men are alike servants to God. After the exhortation to servants, the apostle addresses masters, saying,

Colossians 4

¹ Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Still more emphatically,

Ephesians 6 [RV]

⁹ You masters, do the same things unto them, and forebear threatening; knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respecter of persons with Him.

Both masters and servants are therefore servants of one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. If some servants do not acknowledge their obligation to serve Him that does not in the least diminish the obligation.

Suppose that the master so far forgets his duty to the one Master, as to demand that his servant shall do that which is sinful, and shall offer large inducements for such acts; we have the injunction,

Proverbs 1

¹⁰ If sinners entice you, consent not.

The fact that the servant who is entrusted with greater responsibilities refuses to serve, does not warrant the more humble servant in neglecting his duty.

We have the following instruction for such a case as that:

1 Peter 2

¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

¹⁹ For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

If a servant did everything that even the wicked master told him to do, he would have no occasion to suffer. But the fact that he is exhorted “for conscience toward God” to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” shows that one may be obliged to refuse obedience to some command, since it will involve sin against God. If he is indeed a faithful servant of the Lord Christ, that very fact will keep him from yielding to a simple requirement. In that case, he must suffer patiently the buffeting that may follow. The Lord, the real Master of both, will settle the case when He comes, for He has told what shall be the fate of that evil servant who smites his faithful fellow-servant.

Same Principles for Earthly Kings

These principles apply equally in the case of rulers and subjects. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Revelation 1

⁵ [He is] the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Just as servants are exhorted to be obedient to their masters according to the flesh,

Ephesians 6

⁵ ...with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ,

–so with kings.

Psalm 2

¹⁰ Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

If they do not serve the Son, then destruction will be their portion. Jesus Christ is anointed...

⁶ ...King upon [the] holy hill of Zion,

Ephesians 1

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

1 Corinthians 11

³ The head of every man is Christ,

–and not any earthly power. To Christ, both rulers and people alike owe allegiance. The service of the humblest peasant is due directly to Christ, and to none other.

This obviates the necessity of laying down rules as to how far we may go in our duty to civil rulers, without infringing on the rights of God. But that way of putting it implies that earthly rulers are to be considered before God. The fact is, that Christ is the direct head of “every man.” He is Lord and Master of all. To Him is supreme allegiance due, and whoever faithfully discharges his duty to the Lord, will never fail in any particular of respect that is due to any that are “in authority” on earth. He will never be found in the ranks of anarchy and lawlessness in opposition to government; for he delights in the law of the Lord, which tells him not to resist even oppression, to...

1 Peter 2

¹⁷ Honor the king,

–and to...

Titus 3

² ...speak evil of no man.

When Earthly Laws Oppose God's Law

But suppose those servants who are “in authority” refuse to serve the Lord, or, professing to serve Him, ignore and trample upon His law, and threaten punishment upon those who will obey it in all particulars; what then?

Proverbs 1

¹⁰ If sinners entice you, consent not.

If some servants refuse to serve, that is no reason why others should forsake the Lord's service.

This settles the whole question of Sunday laws. God's law says to all men,

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.

It places the first day of the week commonly called Sunday, among...

Ezekiel 46

¹ ...the six working days,

–which are to be habitually devoted to labor, in distinction from “the Sabbath of the Lord,” which is to be invariably devoted to rest from ordinary labor. A clear distinction must be observed between it and them. But the governments of earth, being infected with the spirit of the Papacy, have presumed to defy this law of God, and to prohibit the use of the first day of the week as “an ordinary working day.” The amount of deference which they require paid to the Sunday differs in different places; but whatever the amount, it is in direct defiance of the one...

Romans 10

¹² ...Lord over all.

If now someone says that, no matter what the law of the land is, we must obey it, we have only to reply,

“We must serve Christ.”

If His servants in the highest places refuse to serve Him, that will not justify us in being unfaithful to Him.

“But it is so common to keep Sunday; almost everybody keeps it.”

What of that? The Lord has anticipated that condition of things, by saying to us,

Exodus 23

² You shall not follow a multitude to do evil.

It is true that many do not know that they are doing evil. So much the more reason for faithfulness on the part of those who do know. Once more,

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.

The line of duty is very simple, when we know that we have but one Master. Then we need not and shall not have any fear of the consequences, for His servants are as free as He himself. Even when in prison for His sake, they are free; for since He has the power to deliver them at any moment, it is evident that they remain there only during His pleasure. In such case they may, with Paul, rejoice that they are prisoners of the Lord.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ **Ephesians 4** ¹ I therefore, as the *prisoner of the Lord*, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

