



Lesson Outline

Introduction

Biblical Background to The Early Rain and the Latter Rain concept

The Early Rain

The Latter Rain

Total Member Involvement and the Latter Rain

Condition for receiving the Latter Rain

The Laity, Total Member Involvement and the Latter Rain

Conclusion

Lesson Objectives

After going through this lesson individual Church members should be able to:

1. Define the Latter Rain and TMI
2. Recall the purpose of the Latter Rain.
3. Inspire and teach others to appreciate the God given roles for the Laity and the Clergy.
4. Commit themselves to TMI and know that God will be with them through the power of the Holy Spirit to finish the work and prepare them for the second coming.



Introduction

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times of dates the father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8)

After sin had entered, in the Garden of Eden, “... the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

However, because of the unfailing and undying love of Jehovah, He “ ... called to the man” seeking reconciliation. Since that day until now, God, the creator of the universe did embark on a mission to seek and save the lost. It is a privilege and an honor, that in the mission, God chose to partner with mortal man. It pleased him to be a co-worker with those who keep his commandments and have the testimony of Jesus in this very important mission. The need gave birth to Adventism. For this special assignment God raised a remnant that is supposed to be a dynamic mission centered movement that is driven by a passion for sharing the good news. As the church prepares for the outpouring of the Latter Rain, The Loud Cry (The Third Angel’s Message), The Time of Trouble and the Second Coming, it is the intent of this camp lesson that the church must not only pray and receive the special endowment of the Holy Spirit (The Latter Rain) but also prepare for the Holy Spirit to use all of us, in the spirit of Total Member Involvement, in finishing the work of God.



Biblical Background to The Early Rain and the Latter Rain Concept

In Israel most of the rain usually fell from December to February. The first rain of the rainy season—the “early rain”—usually came mid-October through early November. This rain softened the ground and facilitated the germination of seeds and the growth of crops. The latter rain came, before the harvest, from early March to April. This rain contributed to maturation of the crop. Therefore, rain was enormously important to Israelite life and was considered a gift from God (Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Matt. 5:45). The lack of rain was often seen as an expression of divine disfavor, a result of the sins and rebelliousness of the people (e.g., Jer. 3:3). **Ángel Manuel Rodríguez: Images of the Holy Spirit (Latter Rain) Biblical Research Institute. Retrieved From www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org**

The Early Rain

Then shall we know, (if) we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning: and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. Hosea 6:3

- As alluded before, In the Bible times, sowing and plowing took place from the middle of October, shortly after the falling of the early rains. These fertilizing first showers would cause the tender shoots to spring up in their fields. These early rains would not only cause the seed to germinate but would also nurture its early growth.
- In other words, the early rains in the natural world are meant to geminate the seed as well as water it to grow. Growth is usually what comes to our minds when we think of the early rains.



- The former rain or early rain is the special endowment of grace that was given upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. **Acts 2:1-4**
- Talking about the Gentiles who had been converted, Peter at the council in Jerusalem says “God who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.” **Acts 15:8**
- When we accept Jesus as our Lord and personal Savior God will come and live with us and in through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- Just as the early rain geminate and supports the growth of a plant, when we are converted, God dwells in us through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit for the sole purpose of helping us grow in faith and be our guide as well as comforter in the Christian journey. **Colossians 1:10-11**
- The pen of inspiration says that “Let Christians ... ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the former rain, and glorious was the result”. —**E.G. White. The Signs of the Times, February 17, 1914.**

The Latter Rain

- **Note:** that the latter rain came almost at the end of spring and would ripen the fruits for harvest.



More abundant than the former rain. The work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies, which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, were again to be fulfilled in the Latter Rain at its close. “Here are the times of refreshing” to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Acts 3:19, 20. The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. ***Great Controversy pg. 611-612.***

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest “in the time of the latter rain. ***Ellen G, White, The Acts of the Apostles, pp., 54, 55.***

- God uses the symbolism of the early rain in that the early rain of the Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost in order to launch the Christian mission.
- The Latter Rain is a special bestowal of “spiritual grace” that will be poured by God to prepare His children for His second coming and the time of trouble.
- It is a special endowment of the outpouring of the Spirit of God to prepare them to finish his work.

So the phrases “early rain” and “latter rain” are agricultural images figuratively applied to the work of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian church and shortly before God’s end-time harvest (Rev. 14:14-20). This leads us to a very important issue the connection between the Great Commission and the Latter Rain.



Total Member Involvement and the Latter Rain

When Jesus promised the disciples, just before His ascension the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the over whelming obsession that stirred His souls was the need for the disciples to fulfill His mission and their need for power to do it.

- Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I -have commanded you. I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20)
- He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation and baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up snakes with their hands, and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well. Mark 16:15-18 (NIV)
- “And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father had promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” Luke 24:47-49 (NIV)
- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- Note that the concern of Jesus was not just fulfillment of Mission, but also the reception of the Holy Spirit power to enable the church to accomplish that mission.



- For the accomplishment of this mission Jesus promised them the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit therefore is poured for action – for the accomplishment of Christ's Mission which is to preach the everlasting gospel.
- We cannot separate and we must not separate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from its function or imagine the accomplishment of Christ's work without its aid.
- Judaism of the first century had become an exclusive club of people who thought they possessed the truth. Salvation, they believed, was assured as long as they had membership in the seed of Abraham. Jesus came and disturbed their exclusiveness, calling them to account for their failure to fulfill His mission. Now Jesus was concerned lest the same thing happen to the Christian Church. It was not our Lord's purpose that the church becomes a navel-gazing institution. He had called this new body into existence for one purpose: to make disciples among ethnic groups.

Burrill R. Revolution in the Church. Pg. 15

- Let Christians.... ask in faith for the promised blessing and it will come. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the former rain, and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant E.G. White; *The Signs of the Times*, February 17, 1914.

Condition for Receiving the Latter Rain

1. Whole-hearted Consecration to the Great Commission

- When we have entire whole-hearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure, but this will not be while the largest portion of



the Church are not laborers together with God. ***E.G. White The Review and Herald July 21, 1896.***

- Note that at Pentecost, the former rain was promised to the disciples by Jesus for the sole purpose that they maybe witnesses.
- As Jesus ended His ministry and returned to the Father, the overwhelming obsession that stirred His soul was the need for the disciples to fulfill His mission and the need for the power to do it. ***Burrill R. Revolution in the Church pg. 15***
- The Latter Rain will not be received by everyone but those who will be in the service of God.

2. Repentance

- As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. ***E.G White. Acts of the Apostles pg. 32-36***
- In obedience of Christ`s command, they waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father ... the outpouring of the Spirit. They did not wait in idleness. The Bible says that they were “continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” Luke 24:53.

3. Unity

- Notice that it is also when the disciples had come to perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place that the spirit was poured out. They were all in one accord. Acts 4:32.



The Laity, Total Member Involvement and the Latter Rain

- And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first born from the dead, and the ruler of the Kings of the earth. To him who loves us and had freed us from our sins by his blood, and had made us to be a Kingdom and priests to serve his god and Father – to him be glory and power forever and ever. Revelation 1:5-6 (NIV)
- You like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)
- But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9
- According to Peter, all Christians belong to the priesthood.
- In the New Testament the Church does not have priesthood – it is a priesthood.
- The main function of all Old Testament priests was to reconcile man with God.
- According to Paul and Peter ministry is the natural result of being a Christian.
- The New Testament Church could not imagine a Christian who was not involved in ministry.



- As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, “the time of Jacob’s trouble”, they will grow in Christ, and will partake largely of His Spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel ***E.G. White. Testimonies to the Church Vol 1 pg. 353.***
- At that time the “Latter Rain” or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out. ***E.G. White, Early Writings pg. 86.***

Conclusion

God has risen up his remnant church for the sole purpose of reconciling mankind to Him. This very important mission was given to everyone who believes and is baptized into the fellowship of all believers. In this Great Commission, the Great Mission is our reason for existence. As the Remnant Church of God, the Lord’s work “...can never be finished until the Church members, gospel workers, and officers unite their efforts. (***Gospel Workers pg. 352***). Hiring pastors to do the work of ministry while the laity pay, attend and observe is not God’s plan for the Adventist Church. ***R., Burrill, Revolution in the Church pg. 30***



By Pastor Francis Mbira





The Effects of Social Media on Adventist Youths

Outline

- Introduction
- Definition of social media
- Advantages and Disadvantages of social media
- Great Controversy motif
- Uses of social media
- Responsible use of social media
- Threats from irresponsible use of social media
- Conclusion

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, the youths should:

- Know some advantages and disadvantages of using social media
- Appreciate the great controversy perspective in the context of social media
- Know the principles that should guide their usage of social media
- Appreciate the threats and dangers of uncritical usage of social media
- Appreciate how they can use social media for evangelistic purposes



MORNING SESSION

Introduction

God created people with the capacity to advance intellectually (Luke 2:52). This intellectual advancement has led to the progression in technology and social media is a product of that development. We are still to witness further development in technology because the biggest room in the world is the room for development and this room can never be fully covered.

The dawn of postmodern social media has witnessed an enhancement in communication, social connectivity and information communication technology (ICT) skills. Connection with the world is just at a click of a button. The world is in the palm of the users of ICT devices.

Change of the order of things

The entrance of sin somehow changed the original order of things (see Gen 3:18). Satan desires to destroy people because he knows that his fate is already sealed (Matthew 25:41) and he attempts to use anything at his disposal to achieve this. He seeks to destroy the youths even by use of positive things like advancement in technology.

Social Media

Definition: “Is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing. Social media creates a virtual community in which people make friends with whom they chat, influence, reason and share ideas”, Pastor Brian Sinyangwe.



Advantages of social media

- Easy access to information: for educational purposes and even general awareness
- Enhanced social connectivity
- Job opportunities (LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter. Social media sites have created thousands of jobs and new avenues of income).
- Communication has been enhanced (faster and efficient)
- Less costly (the major cost is to acquire the ICT device but thereafter it is cheaper to communicate compared to the era where social media was not in use).
- The world in your hands!!!

Disadvantages of social media

- Lacks Emotional Connection: The inability of people to adequately sense the emotions from another person makes social media lack emotional connection.
- Gives People a License to be Hurtful (it is easier to convey hurtful messages through social media than on a face-to-face basis).
- Decreases Face-to-Face Communication Skills (most things done online).
- Conveys Inauthentic Expression of Feelings (one may project false impressions of feelings like LOL or kkkk when it may not be reflective of actual feelings).
- Causes Face-to-Face Interactions to Feel Disconnected (many people will be busy on their phones at the expense of face-to-face interactions).
- Promotes laziness (social media brings conveniences which may cause laziness. Writing styles consistent with social media like shorthand may lead to the youth failing to realize the need for formal writing styles when dealing with formal matters).
- Creates a skewed Self-Image (many youth's project imaginary images of themselves instead of what they really are. (See Philippians 4:8). E.g. profile pictures with posh cars etc.)



- Reduces Family Closeness (busy on phones or laptops at the expense of quality family time).
- Promotes sex and sexist lifestyles: By visiting dirty sites or abusing services like WhatsApp video calling. Many youths uncritically get hooked to what is trending on social media.
- Encourages unrealistic comparison between the youths and their friends on social media

AFTERNOON SESSION

Social Media and the Adventist Youth Perspective - Great Controversy Motif

What makes the Seventh-day Adventist church unique from other churches is its appreciation of the existence of the great controversy between God and Satan. Everything that happens in life should be evaluated against this perspective. Satan is fighting hard to deceive and lead people astray. He has redoubled his efforts because he knows that he was given a short period of time (Revelation 12:12). The Adventist Youth should know that whatever they do on the social media platform speaks to the side they are fighting from in this great controversy. Adventist Youths should be wary of sacrificing eternity because of temporal pleasures. Since God gave the devil a short period of time, the Adventist youth should endure and be patient knowing that it's just but for a short while (1 Peter 5:10).

Which side are you fighting from? One cannot stand on the fence in this regard! Whichever side you choose to fight from has eternal consequences. An Adventist youth always keep in focus his or her destination. Being half-committed to the truth is not beneficial. If one is almost saved, THEN he or she is 100% lost. What is trending on social media is formulating the aspirations of youths. This draws the youth away from looking at what the Bible says. The youths should formulate their aspirations not from the influence of social media but from the interaction with the Bible. Be like Jesus:



this should be the GREATEST ASPIRATION for the youths and also to meet Him when He comes (Col. 2: 6-7; 1 Thess. 4:17). This should not be lost sight of!

Reflection: In view of the great controversy, which side have you been fighting from in your usage of social media? Are you aware of the fact that whatever you are doing now has eternal consequences? In judgment, “Every name is mentioned, **every case closely investigated.**” (The Great Controversy: 482.1. Emphasis mine)

Uses of Social Media: The Adventist Perspective

Positive uses

- The youths should take advantage of the social media platforms for mission advancement. Since social media enhances communication, this should be used for evangelistic purposes. (Matthew 28:18ff). This is the essence of any Adventist youth.
- Since human beings are social beings, social media should also be used to foster social relationships in a manner that takes into consideration other biblical principles.

Negative Uses

- Online dating: Deception and delusion often attend online dating because one will not be dating a real person. Of course there can be deception on face-to-face dating but it is more heightened on online platforms.
- Most youths often want to project a false impression of what they are on the social media platforms. Most of them want to be rich and famous but unfortunately ignore principles that sustainably ensure that; like hard work, integrity, trust in God, etc.



- Obsession with social media and its negative influences may lead the youths to fall into various vices (2 Tim 3:1-4).
- Visiting dirty sites: Most youths expose themselves to dangers of immorality and eternal condemnation by visiting dirty sites.
- Peddling of lies: A lot of harm has been inflicted by lies that are unfortunately peddled on social media. Many people have a tendency of believing that whatever is written is true.
- Time consuming: Most youths spend much of their time on the platforms. This takes much time that should have been spent on other more useful and beneficial enterprises.

Responsible usage of the social media

- The youths should not stop to seek guidance from elders.
- They should not rely on peers and social media.
- They should not stop to seek for guidance from the Word of God. **“When faith in God’s Word is lost, the soul has no guide, no safeguard. The youth are drawn into paths which lead away from God and from everlasting life.” Faith I Live By, 7.5).** “The young should not be left to themselves, to think and act independently. They should be guided by the counsel of those of experience...The influence thrown around youth at these critical points in life, determine the character which they shall develop for time; and their destiny for eternity.” (The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” College Records, 1 January 1878).
- Social media should not replace the role of the Bible and elders’ counsel.

Threats from irresponsible usage of social media

Uncritical usage of social media may lead to the following challenges to the body of Christ.

- Anti-church movements (these may take advantage of social media to spread their vitriol)



- Anti-Sabbatarian (there are people who have developed sites dedicated to attack the fourth commandment).
- Anti-Trinitarian movements
- Davidian movements
- Other off-shoot and dissident movements

Principles to consider as one uses social media

- Stewardship: Great care should be taken to ensure that one remains a good steward with regards to time, influence etc.)
- Morality (whatever is accessed should enhance good moral health)
- Truthfulness (any lie, regardless of how harmless it can be perceived, is from the devil. God does not lie; so as we use social media, we should always remember that we need to promote truth and truthfulness: Philippians 4:8).
- Unity: Any use of social media should foster unity in the church.

Pastors, Elders, Parents, and Guardians

- In order to be helpful to the youths in these times; pastors, elders, parents, and guardians should be acquainted with social media platforms and also use them. Pastors should move from the pulpit to the platform.

Conclusion

Owing to the capacity for intellectual growth bestowed upon man by God, there has been technological advancement. This is a good and positive development. However, the entrance of sin brought about some changes to the original order of things and because of that; the devil can use even a good thing for evil purposes. So as the youth, we should be careful when we take advantage of technological advancement. What should be clear in our minds is the fact that there is a great controversy between good and evil but good



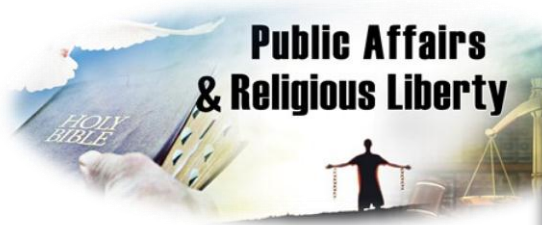
will triumph and this realization should always be manifested in our use of social media.

Let us use social media responsibly knowing that “Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.” {GC 482.1}



By Pastor Phineas Mangwiro





Outline

1. Objectives of lesson
2. Introduction
3. Pillars of Religious Liberty
4. Biblical basis for Religious Liberty
5. Adventism, the Sabbath and Religious Liberty
6. The law and Religious Liberty
7. The Public Affairs factor in Religious Liberty
8. Practical study on Religious Liberty issues
9. Conclusion

Objectives of lesson

At the end of the study the student must be able to:

1. Define what Religious Liberty is and also understand the role of the Department of PARL in the church.
2. Understand that Religious Liberty is a God given right.
3. As Seventh day Adventists, we are called to promote and defend the religious liberty of all human beings regardless of our different backgrounds and beliefs.
4. Influence our communities for good by building bridges and removing all forms of prejudice and be able to fully execute the Great Commission call without hindrance.



Introduction

Without the most basic of freedoms, the freedom of free speech, of assembling with other citizens, of religious observance, of the free proclamation of God's word without let or hindrance, the right to choose and decide actions and purposes of life while respecting the same rights and freedoms for others, are surely fundamental to a free society. God has provided such freedom. God is not a God of coercion. God is a God who has given to man the ability to choose, to decide, to think and to act, act these rights God expects humans to exercise on behalf of their fellowmen. But history is replete with man's repression of his fellowman. Power has been used time and time again to bind the lives and consciences of men and women.

But the big question is: What is Religious Liberty? The non-believers think that it is a religious issue whilst the Christians think that it is a political issue being introduced in the church. Religious liberty - Is it not headline news around the world? Remember Boko Haram and Isis. What is the basis of their war against Christians?

We shall attempt to define Religious liberty in a manner that is understood by non-believers and Christians alike.

Everyone has within himself the instinct to worship something (adoration); everyone wants to live truthfully (authentically); and man is conscious of his limitation and recognizes a higher power - everyone has an ultimate standard for what they value (authority). These concepts are the corner stone of religious liberty.



Who or what do we worship?

Adoration means to adore, to worship or venerate, or to give our highest devotion, praise and love to someone or something. Everyone adores. Whether it's a favourite sports team, a hobby like travelling or God, everyone has something at their core that drives them; that contends for their attention and affections; and that helps anchor their lives and give it meaning. *Read Ps. 29:2, Ps.33:8, Ps. 95:6*

For Christians, worship is not just a habitual practice. Worship is the source of our existence, because Christians believe we are made to worship our Creator.

When understood rightly, religious liberty is directly connected to God's glory, because to freely pursue God's glory, it requires an ecosystem of liberty that allows people to respond to God in ways that honor and esteem Him.

What is true living?

Religious liberty is about genuineness because having the opportunity to act on what drives someone's motivations ensures that someone's deepest convictions aren't restricted and that a person is living truthfully to one's conscience.

Each of us has deeply held convictions and moral codes that we prioritize and use to dictate all of our actions, words and decisions. Religious liberty protects the ability of Christians to live out their convictions voluntarily and genuinely. *Read 1 Cor. 10:31, Col. 3:17, 23; Rom. 12:1-2*

Everything a Christian does is to originate and emanate from our source of meaning: God.



Who has ultimate judgment?

Even non-religious people believe someone, something or some ideology has ultimate say over life's meaning. The nihilist responds that the highest authority is simply non-existence. The atheist responds that rationality is the highest authority. The hedonist pleads for pleasure's highest authority. The Darwinist says that nature's systems and processes are the highest authority. A North Korean citizen believes that Kim Jong-un is the highest authority. The African traditionalist believes that the highest authority is their dead elderly relatives (ancestors).

James Madison (former President of America) said *"it is the duty of every man to render to the creator such homage and such only he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Government of the Universe. And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the General Authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society, do it with a saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign"*.

PILLARS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

I. **We believe in religious liberty (Read Lev 25:10, Luke 4:18, 2Cor 3:17)**

God alone is the Lord of conscience. This conviction is at the very heart of all religious liberty. Simply stated, Religious Liberty is the right of every person to worship God, or not, as they see fit, without any interference from the government, but under the direction of God, to whom all of us will give account.



It is the natural and fundamental and inalienable right of every human being to worship God or not, according to the dictates of His conscience, and, as long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others, he is to be held accountable alone to God for all religious beliefs and practices. Our contention is not for mere toleration, but for absolute liberty. There is a wide difference between toleration and liberty. Toleration is a gift from man, while liberty is a gift from God. God wants free worshipers and no other kind.

We do not believe people should be forced to worship God nor do we believe they should be, in any way, kept from worshiping God.

Religion is a matter between God and individuals: the religious opinions of men not being the objects of civil government, not in any way under its control.

There are some misconceptions about PARL. It does not dilute the Advent message nor does it advocate for ecumenism (principle or aim of promoting unity among world Christian churches). PARL does not promote the unity of the church and the state. Rather the opposite is true.

II. We believe in the separation of church and state (Read John 18:36, Matthew 22:21, Rev 11:15)

A. The state should protect the church's freedom to pursue its spiritual ends

We believe that it is our God given right to express our religious and moral views, and to worship free from any government interference.

- It includes the right of our children to pray wherever and whenever they desire, without school officials illegally penalizing them for exercising their freedom of speech and religion.
- It includes our ability to share the gospel of Jesus Christ without being labelled as intolerant because we hold that Jesus is the only way to heaven. One of the foundational tenets of our faith is the exclusivity of Jesus as the



only way to salvation. Increasingly, what we see as being the good news, the world sees as bigotry and intolerance. Religious liberty means the state has an obligation to protect our right to believe and preach and teach whatever we like.

B. The state should not favour one religious group over another

There are some who think that separation of church and state means that the state must be godless. Whether or not its adherents like to admit it, the fact remains true that Atheism is a religion unto itself. Since the separation of church from state means that the state will not favour one religious group over another, it stands to reason that Atheism, being a religious belief system should not be favoured over Christianity. Thus, we would content that for the state to hold that and act as if there is no God, would be to establish Atheism as the state religion.

C. Christians should not look to government to carry on the church's work

As Christians, not only do we object to a church which is governed by the state, we also reject the idea of a state which is governed by the church.

One scholar notes that it is an interesting fact of history that one may find examples of civil governments that are officially, Lutheran, Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Christian, Shia Muslim, Sunni Muslim, or even Atheist.

As Christians we do not believe in a theocratic government, that is, a government which is ruled by religion. We have but to look to some Islamic countries today and to the Roman Catholic Church during the middle ages to see what happens when people try and use government to carry out the work of the church, or try to enforce the laws of their religion on those who do not believe. We do not believe in making converts at the edge of the sword. We have never advocated coercion of any kind in matters of faith.



We believe that God's work is accomplished by God's people through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by the enforcement of civil authorities.

Jesus did not look to the Roman authorities to further His kingdom, neither did the disciples, nor did Paul. In fact, Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world.

One of the dangers inherent in allowing the government to in any way get involved with the work of the church is that if you are not careful, they will begin to control the church.

D. Christians have a responsibility to the state

As Christians, scripture clearly tells us that we have a responsibility to submit to the state, to pay our taxes, to serve when asked to serve, but also, because we are salt and light, we have a responsibility to speak the truth in love when our government is wrong on moral issues, e.g. issues of abortion and homosexuality.

In *Acts chapter 4*, when Peter and John were ordered by the Sanhedrin to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and John answered them in verses 19-20 saying, "***Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.***"

And in *Chapter 5*, after having been arrested for continuing to preach Jesus, Peter said, "***We must obey God rather than men.***" *Philippians 3:20* tells us that our citizenship is in heaven. When the laws of man violate the laws of God, as citizens of heaven we must obey the laws of God. *Read also Romans 13:1, Matthew 22:21*



BIBLICAL BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Liberty of conscience is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God is love, John writes. The very nature of love requires freedom, it cannot be commanded or compelled.

Take a look at the story in *Genesis 3*, and consider what this says about the nature of love and freedom. At the beginning of the story, the woman wanders over to the tree, and is engrossed in conversation by a fast-talking winged serpent. On the way over to the tree, she passed no warning signs: “beware of serpent;” “Poisonous fruit, Do Not Eat!” There was no barbed wire fence. This tree was the most dangerous spot on earth, more dangerous than a speeding locomotive, more deadly than a steep cliff, or a raging rip tide.

In a perfect world, kids do what their parents tell them the first time, without having to be reminded over and over. In a perfect world, Adam and Eve could be expected to follow God’s instructions because they loved and trusted God, and knew instinctively that God was right, that He loved, and that He knew what was best! After all, they did live in a perfect world. Still, God could have put up a fence. *Read 2:15-17*

God knew how to guard the tree of life to keep Adam and Eve away! He could have stationed cherubim at the tree of knowledge. So why didn’t He? Why did humanity have to endure thousands of years of sin and suffering? Because love must be free!

Because love must be free, God risked the life of his one and only Son Jesus. Jesus is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. From the time God first chose to create humanity, He knew what would happen. He knew that creating people would cost the life of the Son of God. He made man anyway! *Read Gen 3:22-24*



Liberty of conscience is not a minor issue in the Great Controversy. It is absolutely central to the plan of salvation!

Jesus defined his own ministry in terms of liberty. *Read Isaiah 61: 1-2*

In the final events of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, the gospel rooted in love and liberty of conscience remains the central issues.

When Satan moves upon the nations of the world to legislate worship on penalty of death, he has invested the god of that worship with his own character. He would have you believe that God demands your worship, or he'll kill you, torture you eternally even, in flames of hellfire.

Christ calls out to a sleeping church, to wake up and answer the knock at the door of your heart. *Revelation 3:20.*

Christ is a gentleman. He doesn't force his way into our lives. He doesn't overpower us with His love. He knocks patiently, persistently, hoping, praying that we will open up our hearts and let Him come in. He doesn't force us to love Him, or to worship Him. Instead of forcing us, He died for us! This is the gospel, and this is the main issue at the end of time.

The gospel of the last days offers a legislated form of righteousness. The church of the last days lacks the power of God, so it seeks to compel people to worship God, and to do right, by force of law, on penalty of death even. This is not the true gospel of righteousness by faith, but a false gospel of righteousness by force.

ADVENTISM, THE SABBATH AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

According to Ellen G White, Adventists are entrusted two missions:

1. To restore truth



2. To promote religious freedom

(Read Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministries, page 197-203; Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Chapter 35: Liberty of Conscience Threatened and Ellen G. White Estate.)

The restoration aspect makes Adventism into a restorations movement, the emphasis being of the restoration of the whole chain of biblical truth, including what has been called present truth.

The promotion of religious liberty has characterised Seventh-day Adventism since the early days of its founders, so much so that an organisation for the promotion and defence of religious freedom was established as early as 1893. Advocating for the right to worship according to the dictates of one's conscience has been part of SDA DNA. This right was defended for all.

Both missions, restoration of truth and promotion of religious freedom are inscribed in the name Seventh - day Adventist. "Seventh-Day" refers to not only the Sabbath of creation which is the commemoration of God's sovereignty as creator according to *Exodus 20:8, 11*. God is the designer and craftsman of everything in the universe. He brought everything into existence. On the seventh-day Sabbath, we are to worship him in commemoration of his creative work. It was also instituted by God as the commemoration of freedom. (*Deut.5:12-15*). The Israelites were delivered by God from Egyptian oppression. They were to observe the Sabbath in commemoration of their independence or freedom from slavery.

Every Sabbath is Independence Day, a day of gratitude for deliverance, a day of fellowship in joy and peace. The Sabbath, more profound and in an unparalleled way and unprecedentedly in the history of religious thought, is connected to human dignity because of the special status of human beings in the created order. At creation God created human beings in God's image according to his likeness. God created the Sabbath for rest and fellowship.



That Jesus came to provide freedom is clear in his inaugural address in *Luke 4:18-19*.

In the Gospel of John he stated that it is the Son of God himself who gives true freedom.

“if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (*John 8:36*)

Jesus’s death, on the cross of Calvary, provides the necessary explanation to release us from the penalty of sin, death, Satan and evil spirits. His resurrection begins an era of true freedom. Death is defeated: communication, relationships and life can truly spring. Freedom is inseparable from the Holy Spirit. Where the spirit is there is freedom, says the Apostle Paul. (*2 Corinthians 3:17*) Christians have been called to freedom (*Galatians 5:1, 13*).

In their bondage, the Israelites had to some extent lost the knowledge of God’s law. The Sabbath was disregarded. The Sabbath or Seventh day stands for rest and liberty. On the first seventh day God rested from all his works and was refreshed. In the seventh or sabbatical year, the Hebrew servants were to be released and ‘go out freely’. In the Jubilee, or the great sabbatical year, Universal liberty was to be proclaimed. And in the great millennial Sabbath, the seventh thousand years, God’s people are to be released from all bondage and oppression, and spend Sabbath rest in the kingdom of God.

THE LAW AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Religious Liberty (freedom of religion) and other human rights are best protected when included in the constitutions of the countries and other legal instruments.



As Christians we are called upon to be vigilant and continue to watch, guard, and monitor and observe the application of these laws and to promote religious liberty through judicial and legislative processes.

Religious Liberty is the right of an individual to determine his or her own relationship to any religious tenet, principle, or requirement, and the right to hold and practice that belief freely.

Many international legal documents support and defend the principles of religious freedom as a basic human right. Most of the countries under the United Nations are signatories to such declarations and such guarantees of religious freedom.

It is important to know what a specific country has agreed to regarding the freedoms for which they have declared and promised their support, and to what extent these are guaranteed in national law.

Supreme among such declarations is the 1948 United Nations “Universal Declaration on Human Rights” which in Article 18 guarantees freedom of religion to a wide extent, including the right to change one’s religion.

Section 60 of the current Zimbabwean Constitution provides as follows:

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, which includes:-*
 - a) *Freedom of thought, opinion or belief; and*
 - b) *Freedom to practise and propagate and give expression to their thought, opinion, religion or belief, whether in public or in private and whether alone or together with others.*
2. *No person may be compelled to take an oath that is contrary to their religion or belief or to take an oath in a manner that is contrary to their religion or belief.*



3. *Parents and guardians of minor children have the right to determine, in accordance with their beliefs, the moral and religious upbringing of their children, provided they do not prejudice the rights to which their children are entitled under this Constitution, including their rights to education, health, safety and welfare.*
4. *Any religious community may establish institutions where religious instruction may be given, even if the institution receives a subsidy or other financial assistance from the State.*

An analysis of the above section from the Zimbabwean Constitution one may conclude that as Seventh Day Adventist in Zimbabwe, we are so blessed to be in a country that recognises and respects an individual's freedom to worship according to his choice. We have witnessed so many questionable acts from the current 'prophetic' churches or ministries but the Government has not interfered or ordered the closure of such ministries or churches.

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS FACTOR

The General Conference working policy, pp.353-355 provides that PARL "Monitors and seeks to interpret prudently current trends that may reflect the prophetic scenario".

Now Seventh-day Adventists have been given a marvellous gift. We have unique insight into the final prophetic events. We know that the mark of the beast will entail the legal enforcement of a common day of rest and worship. So a key question remains: THE question for us to answer is: what are we supposed to do with what we know? What are we supposed to be doing now, before the final crisis? Too many of us have been so obsessed with Sunday laws and the end game of prophecy that we completely miss the run up to the end. We overlook the most obvious issue: we were given prophetic insight for a reason!



We must anticipate the attacks that will come upon Sabbath keepers. According to Ellen White, we will be blasted as enemies of law and order, and calling the judgments of God upon the land. How can those who have proclaimed the immutability of God's law with wonderful power be accused of being enemies of law and order? Because we have been slow to understand the relevance of God's law in the real world, and the importance of applying the law of God to everyday life. There are real battles going on in our culture with respect to commandments besides the Fourth. What are we doing to impact our community with respect to the erosion of the family, the destruction of marriage, the prevailing sexual immorality and violence? Are we serving as salt and light to help people live lives of integrity and purpose and obedience to all Ten of God's commandments? If we are actively ministering in our communities, teaching people how to obey God, to have healthy marriages, happy families, offering hope and healing, we make it very difficult for Satan to make his accusations stick that we are the source of the world's problems.

We can also anticipate the final crisis through building bridges of friendship, understanding and communication with the leaders of our communities. Remember Waco? The Branch Davidians had no one to speak for them when they were branded by the press as whackos (a person whose behaviour is strange and different from that of others). Do you want the leaders in your community learning about who you are and what you believe through the media, in a time of crisis? Reporters work under intense deadlines, and they often have a very poor understanding of religious issues. Do you really want to rely upon journalists to faithfully report our point of view? Is it their job to witness for us? Of course not.

When the crisis comes, don't you want the leaders in your community to be open to sitting down with us, person to person, eyeball to eyeball, and hearing our concerns directly from people they already know and trust as people of genuine integrity, compassion and faith?



Today, Adventists are far too isolated socially and culturally. We live in our own worlds, with a fortress mentality, lest the world should contaminate us. We live in a cultural cocoon, and as a result, we are setting ourselves up for persecution.

The mark of the beast doesn't happen overnight. A society doesn't single out a group of citizens for economic exclusion and the death penalty in an instant. People don't just snap their fingers and say, you Sabbath keepers are the problem, we're going to get rid of you. There is a progression.

There is a steady process whereby a group of people who are otherwise integrated into social life are singled out to become scapegoats, and are identified as the enemy, and subject to increasingly severe legal measures, eventually resulting in their persecution. There is a process whereby a group is separated out and becomes the "them," so that they are not part of "us." It takes time.

Now Seventh-day Adventists are largely aiding and abetting their own persecution by separating themselves out before the crisis, creating our own cultural cocoons, our own ghettos, and our own social isolation.

How can you build bridges for Christ? What is God calling you to do? I cannot answer for you. Christ calls all believers to follow Him, to take up their cross, to devote their best energies to His service, and to proclaim by deed, and occasionally by word, the character of the King and the Nature of His Kingdom. Now is the time to proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ, to proclaim liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof!

Advantages of building bridges using PARL

1. This enables the church to reach out to leaders in communities. There are influential people in society whom we sometimes fail to attract to our church using our conventional evangelism methods yet they are yearning



for the truth. An example in the bible is that of the Ethiopian Eunuch *Acts 8:27*.

2. PARL improves our evangelistic outreach efforts. Christ's method of evangelism is a case in point. We need to desire the good of the people in our societies, show our sympathy to their problems, minister to their needs, win their confidence and then bid them to follow us.
3. PARL acts as the sycamore fig tree in aiding others to see Jesus. There are many walls that have been built by unfortunately, some of our brothers and sisters in the church. These walls prevent others from receiving the Advent message. There are people who are being prevented or blocked from seeing Jesus or receiving the truth because of their disadvantageous status in society. (*Read Luke 19:1-10*)
4. PARL improves our visibility as a church. The church and what we stand for as Seventh Day Adventists must be known, seen and felt by the people. For example if you pick 10 people randomly in the street and ask them to give a list of churches that they know, how would they rank Seventh Day Adventist church on their respective lists. You and I know that you would see the name Seventh Day Adventist church on number 5 or 6. Isn't it sad? But God calls us to be the light of the world. (*Read Matthew 5:14*)
5. PARL is a vehicle through which the church can attract and retain successful members of the society and has a positive effect on the church's stewardship efforts.

PRACTICAL STUDY ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ISSUES

Case studies

1. John is a devout Seventh Day Adventist Church member. He has studied Hotel and Catering at local University. Having completed his studies he went and joined a local hotel as a trainee Hotel Manager. During Interview he was advised clearly that he should be prepared to work on each and every day of the week since Hotels are open 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.



After having worked for 3 months John now seeks to be exempted from coming to work on Saturdays (Sabbath days) because he is a staunch practising Adventist and believer. How can you advise John of his rights as he seeks to champion his Religious Liberty rights against the Hotel?

2. Ellen and Patricia works together at a local private company. Ellen has a social problem which she has been confiding to Patricia. The problem is that Ellen has been failing to conceive after 8 years of marriage. Patricia has not bothered to offer any kind of help even to pray with Ellen. This is despite the fact that Patricia is a well-known and vocal Adventist Church member. Ellen has been approached by Charity who is a well-known member of the Apostolic Faith. Charity refers Ellen to a certain 'prophet' who is a leader of 'Charity's church. Charity convinces Ellen that if she receives 'prayers' from the prophet she will definitely conceive. Indeed Ellen visits the prophet's shrine and received the 'prayers'. Three months down the line Ellen conceives. When Patricia learns that Ellen is now carrying a baby, Patricia tells Ellen that she is carrying a demonic child and that the child has been as a result of evil charms and evil spirits cast upon her as 'prayers' by the prophet. Patricia invites Ellen to a two weeks crusade at the HICC being conducted by an international evangelist so that Ellen learns about the origins and source of these evils powers that helped her conceive a child. Patricia wants Ellen to be baptised and stop receiving prayers from the prophet. Ellen refuses to go to the crusade as she believes; the prophet has every power she needs. Patricia is angry with Ellen's decision and starts spreading bad messages about Ellen to all who cares to listen at the company.
 - a) What are the issues arising here?
 - b) How can we help Patricia and those who behave like her in our church?
 - c) In such a scenario how can you now best approach and evangelise to Ellen to become an Adventist member.



Discussion questions on common religious liberty issues

1. How do we help our fellow Christians from other denominations who genuinely and faithfully believe in Christmas and Easter holiday 'celebrations'?
2. How do we see, relate and talk to Christians who are not Sabbath keepers?
3. How do we relate with our house maids and child minders who are not Sabbath keepers? Do we force them to be baptised?
4. How would you deal with your two children one aged 14 and the other aged 22 who both refuse to go church with you on a Sabbath?
5. Tell us how you would handle your tenant who is a member of the apostolic faith who is in the habit of doing her laundry on Saturdays whilst you are away at church?

Read following bible texts to help you in your discussion:-

Acts 10 – Peter's vision and its intended meaning.

John 4:9 – Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

Acts 10:35

Luke 9:49, 50

Luke 9:50, 55, 56

Matthew 7:1-5

Helpful notes

- It is important for all Christians to live the principles of the kingdom. These principles must be enshrined in the heart of all God's people. Not only are we to seek liberty for ourselves, but also for others, even those who are of the most diverse persuasion from ourselves. We have a God given responsibility to do all we can to assist in the fulfilment of the highest level of liberty.



- It is good that we are all one in Christ, that's what the bible teaches us. But unfortunately, most of us in the church that's not always how we feel about others.
- Prejudice remains a big stumbling block in the great commission. It is very important that there use evangelise understand that we understand that we value them as human beings and that God loves them.
- As Seventh Day Adventist members, we have a lot of work to do so that we do away with all forms of prejudice against our fellow brothers and sisters from other denominations.

Conclusion

Religious Liberty is first liberty granted to us by God. Religious freedom supports free, flourishing societies. It upholds families and allows for faith to be lived out at work, business, in schools and everywhere. It is a fundamental human right that is protected by many Constitutions of several Countries. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are able to observe the Sabbath without hindrance because of religious freedom existing in our respective Countries. PARL enables us to make our church more visible and also allows our church to act as an agent of change. It helps remove all societal barriers and promotes the free proclamation of the gospel of Christ.



By Elder Douglas Pundu





STEWARDSHIP IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PERSPECTIVE



Lesson Outline

- Objectives
- Introduction
- Biblical basis of Stewardship
- God is the owner of everything
- The Great Controversy Perspective
- Where your wealth is, there your heart is also.
- Results of withholding what is due to God.
- Conclusion.
-

Objectives

By the end of this lesson God's children should be able to:

- Acknowledge that Stewardship is a Great Controversy issue.
- Be inspired enough to live a faithful life that is dependent on God.
- Teach others what they have learnt from this lesson.



Introduction

Our God is so consistent; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13: 8). What He has been emphasizing to Israel in the past, He emphasizes the same in our day. What He abhors in the past, He abhors the same in our day (1 Corinthians 10: 14). During Israel's time, God clearly detested unfaithfulness, disloyalty, and idolatry. These sins were always dealt with instant justice such as stoning of the offender to death (Joshua 7: 22 - 26). Suppose the stoning method is still used in our day, how many of us could have been stoned by now for unfaithfulness, idolatry, and disloyalty?

This year's lesson is going to touch on the Biblical basis of Stewardship, which is discipleship. Further to that the lesson is going to highlight the fact that God is the Owner of everything, i.e. the visible and the invisible (Psalm 24: 1). We will also learn more about Stewardship in the Great Controversy perspective, how God has chosen Stewardship as one of the strongest pillars in this battle. The Spirit of Prophecy will be referred to with regards to Stewardship in the great Controversy. Matthew 6: 21 states that, where your wealth is there your heart is also, and the question is where are the hearts of God's children. Finally the results of withholding what is due to God will be discussed in this lesson.

A Quick Review of 2016 Camp Lesson (Only 5 – 7 minutes)

OFFERINGS AS A DIVINE COMMAND

WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM HIS CHILDREN

- ***The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income.***
- ***So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful***



observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity.

- On condition of their obedience God made them this promise: "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field. . . . And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:11.

OBEDIENCE A SOURCE FOR BLESSINGS

Great blessings were promised to Israel on condition of obedience to the Lord's directions.

- ✓ "I will give you rain in due season," He declared, "and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.
- ✓ And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely
- ✓ And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. . . . I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people. . . .
- ✓ But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments; and . . . ye break My covenant: . . . ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.
- ✓ And I will set My face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." Leviticus 26: 4-17.

Biblical basis of stewardship: Discipleship

- God's love and passion for His children has been so consistent for more than 6,000 years, and He calls us to love Him the way He loves us—passionately.



- As His disciples we are to grow in love for God, and this love becomes the dominant controlling factor in our lives. Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30).
- Discipleship has to do with fellowship, a teachable spirit, obedience, and humility.
- (Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:20-21) As we grow in our discipleship journey we discover that Christ begins to produce or “live out” His will in and through us.
- True obedience comes not from our effort to produce right behavior, but from our choosing to yield each and every part of our lives to His transforming power.
- Thus, obedience or doing His will is but the natural by-product of our relationship with Him.
- This is the final or mature discipleship stage where all other stages are working together to produce the maturing Christian life or Christian maturation.

There are two primary discipleship tools—the spiritual disciplines and biblical truth.

1. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation serve to open one’s heart and mind to God and to integrate Him into our lives.
2. Biblical truth, understood in a relational context provides the vision of God and information about Him that can inspire and shape our lives. It also provides the principles and boundaries that can shape and guide our discipleship journey through the written Word of God.

God owns everything

- In 1 Timothy 6:7 Paul postulates that we brought nothing into this world and definitely we will carry nothing with us when we die.



- This helps us to understand that whatever we accrue here will be left here, hence we own nothing, and everything belongs to the Creator.
- Deuteronomy 8:11-18 states that it is He that giveth the power to get wealth.
- He gives it in two ways. First, God gives the raw material; secondly, He gives the wit to use it.
- This, then, was what Moses commanded -- to remember that they owed all to God. What they had, they had of God's free gift. What they were, they were by God's free grace.
- Therefore they were not to boast of themselves, their numbers, their wealth, their armies, and their fair and fertile land. They were to make their boast of God and of God's goodness. This they were to remember, because it was true.
- This we are to remember, because it is more or less true of us. God has made of us a great nation; God has discovered to us the immense riches of this land. It is He that hath made us, and not us.
- As disciples of Jesus, ours is to learn what He wants us to do with the wealth that He has given to us. What He commands we do, what He teaches we follow, what He expects we practice.

The Great Controversy Perspective

- The battle between good and evil, Christ and Satan has been raging on for the past 6000 years.
- Humanity has never been spared in this battle, and as plain as it is, there are only two sides; that of the devil and that of Christ. Where one belongs entirely depends on one's choice.
- When there is no special effort made to resist his power, when indifference prevails in the church and the world, Satan is not concerned; for he is in no danger of losing those whom he is leading captive at his will.



- But when the attention is called to eternal things, and souls are inquiring, “What must I do to be saved?” he is on the ground, seeking to match his power against the power of Christ, and to counteract the influence of the Holy Spirit (Great Controversy Chap. 22 p 518).
- The implication of the above statements from the Great Controversy is that when people chose and decide to obey God, that’s only when they can shake and overcome the devil.
- Choosing to obey God in issues like Tithes and Offerings, Sabbath keeping and observance, self-control, and many more, will be a clear indicator showing where one belongs in this great controversy.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

- In Genesis 2:17 God gave a very clear and elaborate instruction with regards the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- They were to eat from every other tree, but there were not supposed to eat from the forbidden tree.
- The question we have to ask and answer is “What was the significance of this tree to Adam and his wife’s relationship to God?”
 - This was a test of loyalty and obedience to their Creator
 - It was a test of their attitude towards God
 - It was a sample of God’s package of relational instructions
 - It pointed to God as Creator and Sustainer

In the Great Controversy, Satan came and convinced Eve and Adam that if the forbidden tree can be eaten nothing bad will happen to them, in fact they will be like gods and they will not die (Genesis 3: 3 – 5).



After they had eaten of the tree, did they become like gods, and did they not die? Discuss

Results of taking sides with Satan:

- Genesis 3: 11 Nakedness (Shame).
- Blame game (Adam said, “the woman that you gave me” while Eve said “the serpent”).
- The glory departed.
- The world was cursed.
- Thorns and thistles sprouted from the ground.

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY AND YOUR MONEY (WEALTH)

- Where your wealth is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6 v 21).
- The heart is the center and seat of reasoning.
- Anything that we do emanates from the heart, no wonder why Isaiah 14 v 13 “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation Read also Jeremiah 17 v 9. **Discuss**

Moses’ example

- And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.
- Exodus 10:24. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Exodus 10:25.
- Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and



we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither. Exodus 10:26.

- *In the Great Controversy we worship our God with our everything*

The Spirit of Prophecy on Stewardship in the Great Controversy

- I saw that Satan bade his angels lay their snares especially for those who were looking for Christ's second appearing and keeping all the commandments of God.— {EW 266.1}.
 - Remember snares, traps, bombs, landmines, guns and bullets are part of the weapons used in battles. Reflect on what the devil is doing!
-
- Satan told his angels that the churches were asleep.
 - He would increase his power and lying wonders, and he could hold them. "But," he said, "the sect of Sabbath keepers we hate; they are continually working against us, and taking from us our subjects, to keep the hated law of God." — {EW 266.1}
 - Go, make them possessors of lands and money drunk with cares. If you can make them place their affections upon these things, we shall have them yet.
 - They may profess what they please, only make them care more for money than for the success of Christ's kingdom or the spread of the truths we hate.
 - Present the world before them in the most attractive light, that they may love and idolize it." — {EW 266.1}
 - We must keep in our ranks all the means of which we can gain control.
 - The more means the followers of Christ devote to His service, the more will they injure our kingdom by getting our subjects.... — {EW 266.1}
 - Make covetousness and love of earthly treasures the ruling traits of their character.
 - As long as these traits rule, salvation and grace stand back. Crowd every attraction around them, and they will be surely ours. And not only are



we sure of them, but their hateful influence will not be exercised to lead others to heaven.” – {EW 266.1}

- When any shall attempt to give, put within them a grudging disposition that it may be sparingly.” – {EW 266.1}
 - I was shown the awful fact that Satan and his angels have had more to do with the management of the property of God’s professed people than the Lord has. – {1T 199.2}
 - Stewards of the last days are unwise. They suffer Satan to control their business matters, and get into his ranks what belongs to, and should be in, the cause of God. – {1T 199.2}
 - And those who should be wise heirs of salvation almost willingly let their Lord’s money slip out of their hands into the enemy’s ranks. In this way they strengthen Satan’s kingdom, and seem to feel very easy about it! – {1T 199.2}
 - When the one who ministers in word and doctrine sees the people pursuing a course that will bring this curse upon them, how can he neglect his duty to give them instruction and warning? – {CS 104.2}
- Every church member should be taught to be faithful in paying an honest tithe. – {CS 104.2}

NB. IT IS EXPECTED THAT EVERY CHURCH SHOULD HAVE A STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE WHICH IS CHAIRED BY THE HEAD ELDER. REMEMBER WE ARE IN A WAR SITUATION, AND THE CHURCH MEMBERS MUST ALWAYS BE READY TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

THE GOOD NEWS

- ✓ In the last extremity, before this work shall close, thousands will be cheerfully laid upon the altar.
- ✓ Men and women will feel it a blessed privilege to share in the work of preparing souls to stand in the great day of God, and they will give hundreds as readily as dollars are given now. – {CS 40.2}



- ✓ If the love of Christ were burning in the hearts of His professed people, we would see the same spirit manifested today.
- ✓ Did they but realize how near is the end of all work for the salvation of souls, they would sacrifice their possessions as freely as did the members of the early church.

Matthew 6:19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. Matthew 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Results of withholding what belongs to God

- The Lord sometimes opens the eyes blinded by selfishness by simply reducing their income to the amount they are willing to give. . . In many cases God tests man with blessings, and if unfaithfulness is manifested in rendering to Him tithes and offerings, His blessing is withdrawn. 4T.p. 484
- **Haggai 1 vs. 5** Now therefore saith the Lord of hosts; “Consider your ways.” vs. 6 “You have so much, and bring in little; you eat but you have not enough you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earns wages to put into a bag with holes.” vs. 7 “Consider your ways”, says the Lord of hosts.

Discuss the above consequences in relation to our situation today.

Conclusion

It is high time for God’s children to exhibit the highest level of faithfulness, love, trust, obedience and loyalty to God. While seminars and weeks of spiritual emphasis may be conducted in churches, it is very frightening for a



professed Christian to be found wanting in issues of tithes and offerings. The main point as highlighted in the lesson is that we are indeed in a Great Controversy, and the side one chooses to be determines who they are fighting against. Tithes and Offerings are another source of the war between Christ and Satan. When Eve chose to obey Satan, she and Adam rebelled against their Maker; in the same light, if we do not bring Tithes and Offerings to our God, we have taken sides with the Devil, and rebel against our Maker.

APPEAL

Is it your desire today to obey God with all your possessions and give to Him that which is due to in Tithes and Offerings?

REVELATION 22 vs. 14

Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

References

New King James Version

The Great Controversy (Chapter 22. P518)

Early Writings (266.1)

Counsels on Stewardship (104. 2)

Testimonies Volume 4 (p484)



By Pastor Dennis Munaiwa





COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Lesson Outline

- ✓ Lesson description
- ✓ Lesson Objectives
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Definition of terms
- ✓ Who participates in courtship? What is the goal of courtship? When should a man initiate a courtship? Where does the couple carry out the courtship? How should accountability be established during courtship? Why is courtship the best choice as a means to find your marriage partner? Courtship Is the First Step Toward Marriage. The Initiator of the Courtship Has Special Responsibilities
- ✓ Wrong ideas of courtship
- ✓ Ellen G. White and Courtship
- ✓ What should be discussed when in courtship?
- ✓ Unequal yoking
- ✓ Who is an unbeliever?
- ✓ Results of marrying someone from your faith
- ✓ The Symbolism of Marriage
- ✓ Principles of Marriage
- ✓ Leaving one's father and mother (Genesis 2:24)
- ✓ Marriage Tips



- ✓ Appeal and Conclusion
- ✓ References

Lesson Description

The lesson aims to study fundamental principles of courtship and marriage from a Christian stand point. Some key concepts and principles of courtship and symbolism of marriage, leaving one's father and mother, wrong ideas of courtship, unequal yoking are going to be examined. Included also is results of marrying someone from your faith, marriage tips, Ellen G White and courtship, and a conclusion.

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, youths should be able to:

1. Know what courtship is all about i.e. from a Christian perspective.
2. Acknowledge that marriage was instituted by God from the very beginning of human history, and that it is a permanent union that should never be broken.
3. Have an appreciation that marriage was designed to meet man's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs, and that they should also know principles of marriage from a biblical perspective.
4. Be inspired to be exemplary when it comes to courtship, Christian living, not to be unequally yoked, and be able to put into practice what they have learnt.



Introduction

Courtship is an important stage of one's life, and due importance should be given. Young people should never enter into courtship until **they are at a stage in life when marriage is a realistic possibility**. Families from both sides should also play an important role of their children during courtship.



Marriage was instituted by God from the very beginning of human history. It was designed to meet man's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. It still stands today at the very core of human society; at the very heart of family life. Undeniably the strength of any family or society depends very heavily on the strength and stability of the marriage relationship.

It would appear as though young people put maximum effort when it comes to material acquisitions as opposed to the effort that they put during courtship and eventually marriage. "Many people often show better judgment in selecting a used motor car than selecting a wife or a husband. This is one reason why many marriages turn out to be unhappy". Robert J. Wieland, p. 46. Courtship is paramount before one gets into marriage.

Marriage is a sacred vow. We are to enter into it with utmost reverence and the highest respect. We cannot make jokes about it or consider it lightly. Youths should be prepared for this very, very sacred step. One of the reasons why the world is in a distressful condition is that fathers and mothers have not prepared their offspring for one of the most important relationships that God has created for humanity. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge". Hebrews 13: 4.

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



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

“A house with love in it, where love is expressed in words and looks and deeds, is a place where angels love to manifest their presence, and hallow the scene by rays of light from glory. . . . Love should be seen in the looks and manners, and heard in the tones of the voice.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 417. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7).

Definitions of terms

- ✓ **Courtship** is the act, process, or period of courting. (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2015).
- ✓ Courtship is the activities that occur when people are developing a romantic relationship that could lead to marriage or the period of time when such activities occur. (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2015).
- ✓ Courtship is a relationship between a man and a woman in which they seek to determine if it is God’s will for them to marry each other. (<http://iblp.org>)
- ✓ **Marriage** is the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law
- ✓ Marriage is the mutual relation of married persons i.e. wedlock
- ✓ Marriage is the institution whereby individuals are joined in a marriage



- ✓ Marriage is an act of marrying or the rite by which the married status is effected; *especially*: the wedding ceremony and attendant festivities or formalities. (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2015).

Who participates in courtship?

- An unmarried **man**
- The unmarried **woman** to whom God has drawn his heart
- Both sets of **parents**
- Other Godly counselors and family members may be invited to offer insight as both families seek to discern the will of God.

What is the goal of courtship?

- A man and a woman enter into courtship to discern if God is leading them to marry one another as part of His plan to fulfill His purposes in their lives and in His Kingdom.

When should a man initiate a courtship?

- A courtship should commence when God has confirmed that this is the right time for the man to pursue marriage and that this woman could very likely be the helpmate God has been preparing to be his wife.
- God often confirms His direction through His Word, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and the approval of God-given authorities. (See Matthew 4:4, 2 Corinthians 13:1, John 14:26, and Proverbs 6:20–24.)

Where does the couple carry out the courtship?

- Each courtship is unique. Sometimes the individuals live in the same town, but in other cases, they live thousands of kilometers apart. If possible, the couple should spend time with both families, especially participating in activities with their parents and siblings.



- Group activities with family and friends can provide safe environments in which the couple can get to know one another and observe how each responds in different situations.
- Depending on the individuals, e-mails, letters, phone calls, and having private time together in a setting that both avoids an appearance of evil and provides accountability also may be appropriate.

How should accountability be established during courtship?

- ❖ Since each courtship is unique, parents whose children are entering a courtship relationship should communicate with one another to establish guidelines of accountability for the couple.
- ❖ In some cases, it may be appropriate to involve close friends and a pastor.

Why is courtship the best choice as a means to find your marriage partner?

- Courtship is a commitment to honor God as you seek a life partner and to protect both individuals in the process of confirming God's will.
- It focuses on obedience to the principles of God's Word and the fulfillment of His plan in the lives of the man and woman. (See Matthew 6:33.)
- It honors the authorities He has placed in your lives and provides the unique protection they can offer.
- The process of courtship seeks to avoid many of the pitfalls that often exist in dating relationships, which are frequently focused on the selfish pleasures of gaining entertainment or sensual gratification. A man and woman engaged in dating often do not share a long-range goal for their relationship. The couple is often seeking momentary pleasure, and consequently they do not assume proper responsibility for their behavior toward one another. (See 2 Timothy 2:22.)



Courtship Is the First Step Toward Marriage

- Do not enter into courtship until **you are at a stage in life when marriage is a realistic possibility**.
- Understand the importance of the decision you are making regarding marriage, and establish commitments about your relationships prior to entering a courtship.
- Until you are ready for marriage, ask God to lead you in developing friendships with Godly men and women, but do not try to win the affections of those friends.

The Initiator of the Courtship Has Special Responsibilities

- The husband, who is the head of the family, has unique responsibilities. Similarly, the man who initiates the courtship has unique responsibilities.
- He should have **a dynamic walk with God prior to marriage**, so that he can be the spiritual leader of his family. God prepared Adam for marriage through His personal relationship with Adam—*before* He provided Eve as a helpmate.
- He should follow the admonition of I Timothy 5:1–2 to **treat all young women to whom he is not married as sisters, with absolute purity**. The man should take care not to treat any woman like his wife who is not his wife. Of course, he must get to know his courting partner well enough to make a decision about marriage. However, prior to the decision to marry, he should always interact with her in a way that he would be happy for other men to interact with her.
- He should **demonstrate leadership** and a willingness to bear the risk of rejection by defining the nature and pace of the relationship. He also should seek to ensure that an adequate amount of time is spent with their families, other couples, and friends.



- He should **determine how he will provide for his future family's basic needs**, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. Prior to the union of Adam and Eve, God made provision in the Garden for all of their basic needs. (See Luke 14:28–30.)

Wrong ideas of courtship

- “The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage. They follow impulse and blind passion. The courtship is carried on in a spirit of irritation. . . . The youth trust altogether too much to impulse. They should not give themselves away too easily, nor be captivated too readily by the winning exterior of the lover. Courtship as carried on in this age is a scheme of deception and hypocrisy, with which the enemy of souls has far more to do than the Lord. Good common sense is needed here if anywhere; but the fact is, it has little to do in the matter.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 55.

Ellen G. White and Courtship

- 1. Avoid becoming lovesick. “Imagination, lovesick sentimentalism, should be guarded against as would be the leprosy.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 123.
- 2. “Turn your mind away from romantic projects.” —*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 249.
- 3. Do not daydream. “Think right thoughts, and you will perform right actions.” —*The Youth's Instructor*, April 21, 1886.
- 4. Do not keep late hours. “These hours of midnight dissipation, in this age of depravity, frequently lead to the ruin of both parties thus engaged.” —*The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1888.
- 5. Do not trifle with hearts. “To trifle with hearts is a crime of no small magnitude in the sight of a holy God.” —*Ibid.*, November 4, 1884.
- 6. Avoid the first downward step. “When one commandment of the Decalogue is broken, the downward steps are almost certain. When once the barriers of female modesty are removed, the basest licentiousness does not appear exceeding sinful.” —*The Signs of the*



Times, December 30, 1880.

- 7. Do not step into forbidden ground. Do not permit familiarity. . . .
“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
- 8. Obtain vigilant self- instruction and bring yourself under self-control.

What should be discussed when in courtship?

- ✓ Spiritual health of the new family
- ✓ Past boyfriends and girlfriends
- ✓ HIV and AIDS tests
- ✓ Family planning (if it's going to be a childless marriage what is going to be the way forward?, number of children, gender of children, when to have the children, how to space the children, family planning methods i.e. natural and unnatural)
- ✓ Family backgrounds, religion, culture, values, diseases, friends.
- ✓ Present marital status of your parents i.e. married, separated, divorced, remarried, widow, widower.
- ✓ Personality issues
- ✓ Accommodation (Where are you going to be staying and why?)
- ✓ Career issues (Are you carriers compatible and if not, what are you going to do?)
- ✓ Diet issues (Vegetarian or not)
- ✓ Financial management
- ✓ Dealing with in-laws and extended family members
- ✓ Conflict management as a couple
- ✓ Academic and professional growth
- ✓ Bridal price/lobola issues
- ✓ Equalitarian roles
- ✓ Christian wedding, kupereka and honeymoon
- ✓ Realistic expectations
- ✓ Children and parenting



Unequal yoking

- “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” 2 Corinthians 6:14
- Unequal yoking is unequal partnership.
- Unequal (***heterozugeo***) denotes persons of a different kind.
- Getting into any binding partnership with unbelievers confronts the Christian with the alternatives of abandoning principle or enduring difficulties occasioned by differences in belief and conduct.
- To enter into such a union is to disobey God and to bargain with the devil.
- Throughout the history of God’s people, the violation of this principle has inevitably resulted in spiritual disaster.
- Separateness from sin and sinners is explicitly set forth throughout the scriptures.

Unequal yoking maybe in the following areas:

- Religion, Age, Profession, Culture, Education and in Lifestyle

Who is an unbeliever?

- Those that don’t believe in Christ.
- Those that have a different outlook on life than that of believers.
- Those that tend not to tolerate a pattern of conduct that tends to restrict their own ways of living, or implies that their concepts and practices are evil or inferior.
- An unbeliever is someone who doesn’t share the same religious believes as you.



- A Christian who truly loves the Lord will under no circumstances unite with an unbeliever, even in the pious and otherwise commendable hope of winning him to Christ.
- Going out or marrying an unbeliever is like sitting on a thorny sofa/chair/couch.



Results of marrying someone from your faith

- From the perspective of research conducted during the past several years, social scientists overwhelmingly agree that marital satisfaction and stability are substantially higher if husband and wife have the same religious affiliation, similar theological beliefs, and similar patterns of church attendance (Heaton 2002; Chinitz and Brown 2001; Heaton and Pratt 1990).
- Also important to note is the fact that as **religious similarity increases**, the degree of marital conflict will **decrease** and marital stability will increase; and that lower risk of domestic violence by both men and women is positively associated with partners who share identical denominational affiliations (Ellison, Bartkowski and Anderson 1999).

The Symbolism of Marriage

In scripture marriage serves as a symbol of the intimate relation between God and His people (Jer. 3; Eze. 16; Hosea 1-3). God woos and weds Israel; the relation is tender and intimate. Israel's apostasy is called adultery. In the NT,



marriage is a symbol of the relation between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22, 23). The consummation of all things is called the “marriage of the Lamb,” when Christ takes His “bride,” the church, to be with Him (Rev. 19:7-9). Thus, scriptural symbolism teaches that marriage is to be “held in honor” Heb. 13:4

Principles of Marriage

- The principle of unity, Gen 2:23, Amos 3:3.
- The principle of Interdependence, Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5.
- The principle of endogamy, 2 Corinth 6:14.
- The principle of Monogamy, Gen 4:19, 1 Kings 11:1-4, Gen 16:1-6.
- The principle of Permanence, Matt 19:6.
- The principle of Privacy, Gen 2:24.
- The principle of Exclusivity, Hosea 3:1, Isaiah 50:1, Isaiah 54:5, Jer. 2, Ezek. 16.

Leaving one's father and mother (Genesis 2:24)

- "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."
- The Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:24 for "leave" means to abandon or break off completely. God is saying that before a significant new relationship can begin, the old parent-child relationship must cease. By this God means that in issues of authority the parents no longer have responsibility.
- Leave – geographical and psychological
- Wives leave home, parents, siblings, friends, name, culture and all.
- The man has not learnt to leave.
- Live in your own house; make own decisions.



- Don't abandon parents.
- Take care of them while they live in their own houses. Avoid taking them into your own home until they are aged. (Mk 1:29-30 Peter's mother in-law).
- Treat them as "Honored guests"

Marriage Tips

- God is the author of marriage. Consult Him before making a life commitment.
- Marriage is the closest relationship on earth. In fact, your spouse is not your relative. Brothers, sisters & parents are.
- "Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." Prov 19:14. Favor: Prov 18:22.
- Marriage is not a contract which can be broken. A contract is conditional. It has an escape clause.
- A marriage is a total commitment, pledge, and covenant. It involves the total giving of yourself to another person. This requires daily attention and nurture.
- Love has eyes. It is not blind. "Let those contemplating marriage weigh every sentiment and watch every development of character in the one with whom they think to unite their life destiny." MYP435, 449
- Great care should be taken in choosing life companions. "Take heed, lest what you now think to be pure gold turns out to be base metal." MYP 436. Don't be fooled by smooth pleasant words. p.441
- Don't enter into marriage hastily. MYP 438. Consider past record.
- It is not sinful to break an engagement or to postpone a wedding until you are certain.
- Double your prayers. MYP 460



- Avoid sexually tempting situations. Limit your touch. Protect your virginity. Lot's daughters had never slept with men. Can your mum or father say that about you? Gen 19:8. Mary was a virgin in Nazareth. Lk 1:26-27

Appeal

- **Psalms** 1:1 Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.
- **Proverbs** 4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.
- **Proverbs** 24:1 Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.
- **Jeremiah** 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Conclusion

Courtship is an important stage of one's life, and due importance should be given. Young people should never enter into courtship until **they are at a stage in life when marriage is a realistic possibility**. Families from both sides should also play an important role of their children during courtship

Marriage was instituted by God from the very beginning of human history. It was designed to meet man's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. It still stands today at the very core of human society; at the very heart of family life. Undeniably the strength of any family or society depends very heavily on the strength and stability of the marriage relationship. God expect humanity to honor the institution of marriage, know symbolism of marriage, not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, do courtship the God way, respect principles of marriage as enshrined in the Bible.



References

Bible

Chinitz and Brown 2001;

Ellison, Bartkowski and Anderson 1999

Heaton 2002;

Heaton and Pratt 1990

Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2015

Wieland Robert J. Will Marriage work in today's world?

White Ellen Gould. *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1880.

The Review and Herald, September 25, 1888.

The Review and Herald, November 04, 1884.

The Youth's Instructor, April 21, 1886.

Testimonies, vol. 2

Testimonies, vol. 5.

Messages to young people

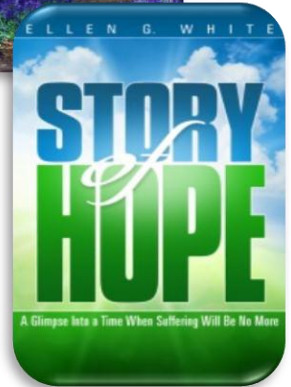
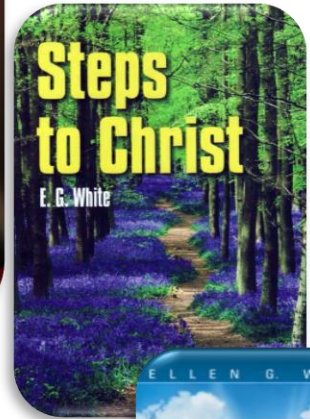
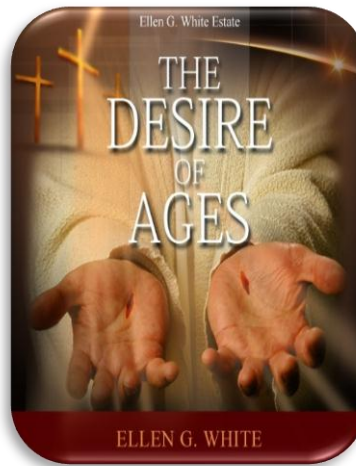
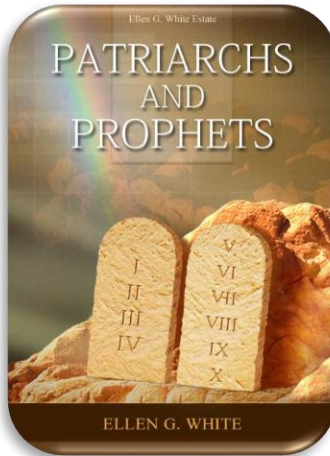
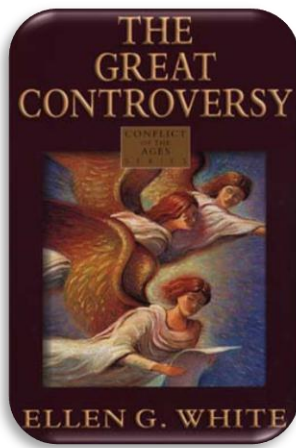
The Adventist Home

<http://iblp.org/questions/how-courtship-different-dating>



By Dr. Robert Muzira





THE PLACE AND ROLE OF ELLEN WHITE'S WRITINGS IN THE SEVENTH - DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Lesson Outline

- A. Introduction
- B. The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift
- C. The Calling of Ellen Goud Harmon (Ellen G. White).
- D. The Testimonies
- E. Her Contribution to the Church
- F. Conclusion and Appeal

Lesson Objectives

At the end of this lesson church members will among other things:

- ✓ have a clearer picture over Ellen White and her writings
- ✓ be inspired to have confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy Writings
- ✓ be able to place Ellen White and her writings in the correct perspective
- ✓ adopt a culture of reading the Bible in conjunction with the Spirit of Prophecy writings on a daily basis



INTRODUCTION

The Seventh –day Adventist church was favoured by heaven in many ways. One of these is that she was given the special privilege of preaching the three angels message of Revelation 14:6-12, a work unique to this church. This work will prepare all nations to meet Christ at His second coming. To fulfil this mandate God gave us the gift of prophecy which was channelled through His messenger, Ellen Goud White. The gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church of God hence it must be given its rightful place after being well understood by all concerned. It is the purpose of this lesson that all church members be fully schooled in the prophetic gift in the Seventh –day Adventist Church, know its role, contribution and purpose, so as to appreciate its rightful place in the church order.

A. THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE PROPHETIC GIFT

The class is encouraged to read the following guiding texts before the whole lesson unfolds.

- ✓ **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**
- ✓ **Ephesians 4:11-13**
- ✓ **Rev 12:14**
- ✓ **Rev 19:10**

In his innocence man talked with his creator face to face while in Eden and before Genesis chapter 3. With the entrance of sin this method ceased and God began communicating with mankind through other means which included the prophets which He raised. Beginning with Moses who wrote much on history about the love and power of God, we see various persons chosen upon whom the gift of prophecy was bestowed. These wrote under divine influence, ministered with and for God and declared His will. The closing of the Scripture canon did not mark the cessation of Heaven's



communication with mankind. Christ bestowed upon His church until the end of time, some spiritual gifts for the edification and up building of the saints. Paul speaks of them saying: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations but the same Lord (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The same Holy Spirit which inspired the divine word, the Holy Bible is the same Holy Spirit who reveals Himself through the spiritual gifts. Acceptance of the Word of God leads also to the acceptance of the spiritual gifts. The gift of prophecy deserves a special take in this paper since it is misunderstood by many. In 1 Corinthians 1: 4-8 we see God making direct reference to the church which will be awaiting Christ’s soon return. In this church the testimony of Jesus was confirmed. This is the Spirit of Prophecy or the prophetic gift (Rev 19:10). This gift of prophecy has been manifested in the works of Ellen G. White and is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.

B. THE CALLING OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen White was called to minister after Hazen Foss and William Foy had rejected the call by God to become His special chosen messengers. God then chose Ellen Goudy Harmon to work with in this very crucial spiritual journey. Ellen Goud Harmon was a twin sister to Elizabeth Harmon. Ellen had accepted the Adventist teachings under the preaching of William Miller. She had been a Methodist since childhood.

At this time Ellen Harmon was in failing health and her condition was very serious. Her physician reported her to be afflicted with dropsical consumption. Her right lung was decayed, her left lung was considerably diseased and her heart was also affected. This physician said that her life



would be cut short, and her condition was such that Ellen would die at any moment. Ellen's physical strength was greatly reduced by frequent attacks of coughs and haemorrhages of the lungs. For her to breathe with ease Ellen G. Harmon would be placed in a semi-reclined position much of the time.

It was this suffering girl that the Lord chose to reveal Himself, and through her to restore the gift of prophecy to His remnant. The miracle was that Miss Ellen G. Harmon did not die as predicted by the physician but was sustained by Heaven so that she could proclaim the revelations given her of God. She live on and on until seventy one years later. Ellen White lived from 1827-1915.

C. THE TESTIMONIES OF ELLEN G. WHITE

The following texts lead us to an understanding of how God gave the testimonies to His maid servant, Ellen White.

‘Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world’ (1 John 4:1-2).

Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dreams” **Numbers 12:6**

- ✓ In 70 years (1844 -1915) Ellen White had about 2000 visions and dreams. We can divide the visions into three categories as follows:



1. Visions given in public, and accompanied by the marked physical phenomena.
2. Visions given during the hours of the night, often referred to as prophetic dreams.
3. Visions given during periods of prayer or writing, unaccompanied by physical phenomena.

While some of Ellen White visions lasted for more than an hour, and on one occasion, four hours, others were very brief in duration; these were only for a few minutes or seconds.

Let us hear from eye witnesses accounts on how E. G. White behaved while in vision:

a) J. N Loughborough at the General Conference in 1893 says:

“I have seen Sister White in vision about fifty times . . . She has been examined while in vision by skillful physicians, and we have testimonials from them which declare that the phenomena of her visions are beyond their comprehension” (GC Bulletin, Jan. 29, 1893).

b) Mrs D. H. Lamson said that on 26 June, 1854, Ellen White was in vision, two physicians were called in, and they examined her and concluded that she did not breathe during the vision. As they closed that part of their examination, she arose to her feet still in vision, holding a Bible high up, turning from passage to passage, and quoting correctly, although the eyes were looking upward and away from the book she could place her finger upon the exact quoted passage and correctly utter their words with a solemn voice (Spiritual Gifts Vol 2. P. 78-79).

c) C. S. Glover also had this to say: “I was present when Sister White had the vision in Waldron’s Hall, Hillsdale. In addition, I heard the doctor say



that Sister White's condition in vision was beyond his knowledge. He also said that this was something supernatural about that" (Signed; "C.S. Glover, Battle Creek, Michigan, Jan 19, 1891").

✓ **Below are other phases of E.G. White's works which attest to the genuineness of her divine call.**

- 1. The County Treasurer and His Embezzlement** "Elder J. Loughborough talks of what took place at Oswego, New York, in the winter of 1849-1850. A revival was started by the county treasurer, a layman in the congregation. In vision Ellen White was shown the true character of the man and she spoke of it to Mr. Patch. She told him she was instructed to inform him. She said: "Wait a month, and you will know for yourself the character of the persons who are engaged in this revival, and who profess to have such a great burden or sinners. He has no real burden for sinners", she said.

It so happened that after two weeks that the treasurer fell sick from a burst blood vessel and was confined to his bed. When others took over the work at the county treasurer's office, a shortage of \$1000-00 in county funds was unearthed. He was found guilty of embezzlement. This fulfillment in just two weeks inspired confidence in the hearts of those who witnessed the issues unfolding.

2. The Ecumenical Movement

Ellen White wrote the following statement, "When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when under the influence of this three-fold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its constitution as a Protestant and Republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of



papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near”(5T 451).

In 1948, 351 delegates from 147 Protestant churches gathered in Amsterdam, Holland, to organize the World Council of Churches. On March 29, 1994, forty leading evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics – men like Pat Robertson and John Cardinal O’Connor – signed a document entitled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium”. “Christians Herald New Era” “Catholics Embrace Evangelicals – Conservatives of Both Faiths Agreed to Accept Each Other As Christians.

Mrs. White lived in New England, Michigan, Switzerland, Australia, and California. She traveled extensively, but the fruit of her life and labor attest to her godliness, sincerity, zeal, and earnestness, and her own Christian conduct and experience.

- ✓ The way God used her to raise up this church
- ✓ the wonderful insights she received
- ✓ and the contributions she has made to this church

D. ELLEN WHITE’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SDA CHURCH

1. **Church Organization** “The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. . . The danger of those travelling whom God has not called, was shown me” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882], 97, 100).



By 1860 the very first Adventist church was established in Michigan

2. **Health – 1863 Otsego Vision:** In May of 1863, Ellen G. White had one of her most important visions. It was on healthy living. As the early Adventists studied their Bibles, prayed and talked about how lifestyle issues relate to Christianity, some became convinced that pork, caffeine, and smoking were bad for their health. But to help others also make good choices, God sent a special message about health to Ellen White. God showed her the natural remedies which we now call the eight doctors of the Adventist Advantage. The natural doctors or life principles are nutrition, sunlight, exercise, fresh air, rest, temperance, water and trust in divine power. These are contained in detail in the book, *The Ministry of Healing*, authored by Ellen G. White.

Some Ingredients of the Otsego Health Vision were later confirmed by renowned physicians as real life issues which are still being recommended today to save lives. The principles God gave in that 1863 health vision promised God's people more energy, more zest for life, less sickness, and greater appreciation for spiritual things if they would choose to live by them. We may still check on the following evidence as from both the pen of inspiration and confirmed by a doctor: "Tobacco is a most malignant poison" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 327). Dr. Ochsner also confirmed that tobacco is highly noxious and fatal. Ellen White had been shown all this quite early in the nineteenth century, decades before the physicians could be made aware of it.

On medical missionary work she hinted: "I was shown that we should provide a home for the afflicted and those who wish to learn how to take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness. . . . Our people should



have an institution of their own, under their own control, for the benefit of the diseased and suffering among us who wish to have health and strength that they may glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His." (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols.1:489 – 492).

3. The Twin Tower Blast

It was in the year of 1909, Ellen Gould White, a major voice of the Second Great Awakening in the 1840s was visiting the city of New York. In the midst of the night, a visionary experience compelled her to write the following manuscript in the early morning hours. It is concerning what she saw as “buildings” that raised “story by story into the heavens. These buildings were built for the glory and power of their owners yet even though they were considered to be fireproof, they were consumed by a fiery inferno. The fire departments were unable to do anything and their engines were destroyed in the conflagration.

Considered a visionary, touched by the gift of the divine to witness beyond the veil that limits humanity from witnessing the great workings of the divine, she saw that this moment of time was in a time in the future, during the “Last Crisis” upon Planet Earth.

Strange as it may seem, written when she was at the age of 81 years, this account was printed in the “9th Testimonies” as a warning to her people, and even more strange the document began on the “11th page” that was first compiled in print in 1948, the year of the Declaration of the Zionist State of Israel. Was this a prophetic imagery of the future September 11, in the year 2001? You will be the judge! Now you can read the “rest of the story”.



“On one occasion, when in New York, I saw in the night season called upon to behold buildings rising story after story toward heaven. These buildings were warranted to be fireproof, and they were erected to glorify their owners and builder. Higher and still higher these building rose, and in them the most costly material was used. Those to whom these buildings belonged were not asking themselves; “How can we best glorify God? The Lord was not in their thoughts. The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fireproof building and said: “They are perfectly safe.” But these building were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction. The firemen were unable to operate the engines”.

4. World Mission

God gave Ellen White some visions on Publishing, Education and world missions. On world missions we glean the following,

“We have no information that the Third [Angel’s] Message is at present being proclaimed in any country besides our own ... our land is composed of people from almost every nation.” (Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald* 3. Feb., 1859, 87) “Much can be done through the medium of the press, but still more can be accomplished if the influence of the labors of the living preachers goes with our publications. Missionaries are needed to go to our nations to preach the truth in a guarded, careful manner. The cause of present truth can be greatly extended by personal effort.” (*Life Sketches*, 205).

5. Theology

We also see the Lord giving guidance as follows,



- ✓ “The Lord has shown me that the message of the third angel must go, and be proclaimed to the scattered children of the Lord, and that it should not be hung on time; for time never will be a test again. I saw that some were getting a false excitement arising from preaching time; that the third angel's message was stronger than time can be. I saw that this message can stand on its own foundation, and that needs not time to strengthen it, and that it will go in mighty power, and do its work, and will be cut short in righteousness” (RH, July 21, 1851).
- ✓ Deliverance has come! Here are two messages from Mrs. White. The message was written in the context of the Kellogg Crisis.
- ✓ "No one can imagine," recounts Daniells, "the eagerness with which I read the documents that had come in the mail while we were in the midst of our discussions. There was a most positive testimony regarding the dangerous errors that were taught in The Living Temple." (A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 337).

“I must take a minute this morning to tell you what a wonderful blessing your communications have been to our Council. Never were messages from God more needed than at this very time; and never were messages sent from Him to His people more to the point than those you have sent to us. They have been exactly what we have needed, and have come at just the right time from day to day in our Council.” (Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White — *The Early Elmshaven Years: 1900-1905*, 299).

- ✓ “But the most wonderful of all was the message we received yesterday morning, written August 4, and copied October 12,



addressed to the leaders in our medical work. Dr. Kellogg had been with us two or three days. His attitude had brought more or less confusion in the minds of a number of our ministers--men who do not really know where they stand. Your message came on just the right day--a day earlier would have been too soon. I read it to the council yesterday, and it produced a most profound impression.” (Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White — *The Early Elmshaven Years: 1900-1905*, 300).

6. The Gist of the Matter

The similarities of Ellen White’s visions to the visions given to the prophets of old refer to the physical manifestations under which many of these visions were given, duplicating the experience of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. The Lord did not give to her long lines of prophecy as He did to Daniel and to John the Revelator because in these days such kind of revelations were not necessary. Mrs. White was given the position of a great teacher in Israel as was Samuel, of a great reformer, as did Elijah, of a special messenger of God as did John the baptist. Since Ellen White was sent by God during a special time when people were turning away from the Bible to follow traditions of men, she was commissioned as a special messenger to turn humanity back to the Holy Scriptures.

Just like the prophets and messengers of old, White’s work belongs to the prophetic order. Just as the SDA Movement is a fulfilment of Bible Prophecy, so Mrs. White’s work meets the divine prediction that the spirit of prophecy will be connected with the Advent Movement of prophecy (Rev 12:17;19:10).



“Ellen White added nothing new in doctrine but exalted the Scriptures, and gave them a central position in all her writings. Hers was the work of a magnifying glass, simply making the details of the observed object stand out in clearer lines, showing its original beauty more perfectly. Hers is sort of an inspired commentary on the Bible” (Believe His Prophets, p. 98).

7. The Adventist Church in the 20th Century

On July 16, 1915, Ellen White died. The prophetic voice was silenced. It was now no longer possible for the church members and leaders of the Work to ask her for “advice from the Lord.” Her voice was silenced. However, what she had written would continue to exert a great influence on the life of the Church.

At her death there were 24 books in circulation that she had written. In addition there were about 4500 articles in various Church magazines inexistence. Already, during her lifetime, but especially after her death, the question of her inspiration and the relationship of her writings to the Scriptures arose.

8. The 1919 Bible Conference

In the more than 100 000 pages of her writings that EGW left behind, she often wrote about the same topic, but not always in the same way. Thus sometimes contradictory interpretations arose and the question of the role and interpretation of her writings became even more important.



Even though Ellen White had clearly explained that her writings were no substitute for the Bible, some Adventists believed that her writings were verbally inspired. To this effect Ellen White had written,

“Brother J. would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the Testimonies is an addition to the Word of God, but in this he presents the matter in a false light. God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His Word, to give them a clearer understanding of it”.

Others were of the opinion that she had written all her visions without help from other books, with the exception of those books which she expressly mentions. At the Fall Council of the General Conference in 1911 her son, Willi White, had clearly and explicitly refuted both of these opinions:

“Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father, or Elder Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner, put forth this claim. If there were verbal inspiration in writing her manuscripts, why should there be on her part the work of addition or adaptation? It is a fact that mother often takes one of her manuscripts, and goes over it thoughtfully, making additions that develop the thought still further”.

He explained that she described in her own words what was shown her and that she often used other books because they offered a good summary of what she had seen, without citing them. He further asserts the following,

“Mother has never claimed to be authority on history. The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flashlight pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence



of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of past, present, and future history in its relation to this work. In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavouring to present”¹

In 1919 about 50 Administrators, Editors, as well as Bible and history teachers came together in Takoma Park from June 1-21 to a Bible Conference, which was followed by a three week long meeting of Bible and History teachers. The question of the inspiration of E.G. White as well as the relationship of her writings to the Bible was tackled at this meeting of the Bible and History teachers.

The General Conference President, A. G. Daniells, spoke briefly on this topic and then invited those present to ask questions. In his answers, he repeatedly rejected the verbal inspiration of her writings, but stressed the practical value of the Spirit of Prophecy in the development of the Church—Doctrines, World Evangelization, support of the work, brotherly love, health, education—these things convinced him of the authenticity of the gift. It was also repeatedly confirmed that, concerning historical facts, Ellen G. White was not considered to be an authority.

Other interesting points that were addressed at this conference were:

1. She did not claim that the King James Version of the Bible was the only correct translation.
2. She had no light concerning “Daily” (Paganism or Christ’s Service in Heaven).



3. The Health Message should not be presented in an extreme manner. When J. White became very ill in Texas, Ellen G. White cooked for him every day a good piece of venison.
4. In reference to the many historical quotes in some books that were compiled with assistance from several secretaries, she said that her assistants and the editors should take care of them.

The transcript of the conference covers 2400 pages. They were at first not published, but so well stored that they were only rediscovered by accident in 1974. The section dealing with the discussion about the Spirit of Prophecy was published in 1980 in *Spectrum*.²

E. CONCLUSION AND APPEAL

“The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out--the chaff separated from the precious wheat.” (*Selected Messages*, 3 vol. 2:380).

Needless to say that some critics always find an abundance of pegs upon which to hang their doubts. These see only the human element in God’s work and fail to see God working through the human element. Occasion for doubt may be found in every work where the human element exists, if the seeker hunts for doubt. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that the remnant church will meet great opposition because of its adherence to the great commandments of God and to the Spirit of Prophecy. We should therefore be extra careful that we do not share in any measure the spirit of this opposition. Remember even Moses received opposition from his own family. Also Thomas Paine and Robert G. Ingersoll could discourse



eloquently upon the mistakes of Moses, yet utterly failed to appreciate the great principles for which he stood.

“Refusing to hear because you are prejudiced against the message or the messenger will not make your case excusable before God. To condemn that which you have not heard and do not understand will not exalt your wisdom in the eyes of those who are candid in their investigation of truth. To speak with contempt of those whom God has sent with a message of truth is folly and madness” (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 32-33). “The voice of the Spirit of God that speaks in the Scriptures is heard in the Spirit of Prophecy. We are not here equating the writings of Ellen G. White with The Scriptures, but we recognise in these writings the same authoritative voice of the Spirit of Christ. Look inside the books themselves. Read *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* or *The Ministry of Healing*, or *Christ’s Object Lessons* then you will testify that the witness of The Spirit is present” (Sprit of Prophecy Treasure Chest, p. 69).

Ellen White further warned the church when she said, “Many are going directly contrary to the light which God has given to His people because they do not read the books which contain the light and knowledge, in cautions, reproofs and warnings” (Testimonies vol. 4. p. 390-391).

Recommendation

- ✓ We therefore recommend that every member devotes time every day to read the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy references relating to the same scripture passages you would have read.
- ✓ Take time to read the Spirit of Prophecy quotations recommended in the Friday section of our Sabbath School Lesson study guide every week.



- ✓ Preachers are encouraged to include simple Spirit of Prophecy quotations as part of the enriching process in their biblical discourse. Here the Bible texts are read first and then the Spirit of Prophecy references second (in that sequence).
- ✓ Each congregation to devote one Sabbath each month to read one of the Spirit of Prophecy books of their choice so as to edify the saints. Send each other some relevant and contextualised Spirit of Prophecy quotations (from a chosen area without quoting these out of their context) to enhance our devotional lives.

These are some of the many simple suggestions to keep the church ablaze. You are



By Pastor Clifford Chaukura

