

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### First Quarter 2014: *Discipleship*

### Lesson 4 “Discipling Children”

#### Read for this week’s study

Ps. 127:3–5; Deut. 6:6, 7; Luke 2:40–52; Matt. 18:1–6, 10–14; Mark 10:13–16.

#### Memory Text

“Do you hear what these children are saying? they asked him. ‘Yes,’ replied Jesus, ‘have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise” ’?” (Matthew 21:16, NIV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Hebrew Child’s Advantage
- III. Jesus’ Childhood
- IV. Healing the Children
- V. A Fearsome Warning
- VI. Suffer the Little Children
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions for Consideration

Moderator: Jerry Winslow

1. Scripture repeatedly calls for celebrating the gift of children, and seems to suggest in some passages that having many children is a special blessing (see Psalm 127:3-5). On a small planet with over seven billion people, is there still a mandate for those who are married to be “fruitful and multiply”? (Gen. 2:28)
2. The Bible uses many metaphors to portray the relationship between the Creator and human beings, such as King and citizens of His kingdom. Perhaps the most tender and vivid of these is the relationship between our Heavenly Father and His children (see Gal. 4:6-7). What does this way of speaking and thinking reveal about the relationship? What might this kind of language obscure?
3. The lesson uses the word “discipling” to describe the way children may be helped to develop a saving relationship with our Lord. What is the relationship between “discipling” and “disciplining”?
4. Ellen White teaches that the kind of discipline parents provide their children represents to the children the kind of God we serve (see *Child Guidance*, p. 240).

What does this suggest about the use of discipline that involves striking a child physically? How can our answer take into account the well-known proverb “He that spareth his rod hateth his son”? (Proverbs 13:24)

5. Did Jesus need to be disciplined?
6. When do children cease to be children and become responsible for themselves? When, in the process of maturation, do they become capable of making their own decisions? The so-called “age of majority” has varied from one historical period to another. It also varies from one legal jurisdiction to another, ranging today from 14 years to 21 years. Is there a principled approach to this question that can be informed by Scripture?
7. Jesus teaches that there are some traits of character adults can learn from children (Matthew 18:2-4). What are these traits?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

LV: I am struck by a bit of incongruity, it would seem, in the Scripture. Where on the one hand, you are talking about us growing up, and then if you turn to the words of Jesus, over and over again He said we should be as little children. And, if we’re not as little children, we can’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven. What do you do with those references, for instance, in Luke and in Matthew where He talked about being as little children and seemed to set up a very high priority on that? And you’re saying, “Why don’t you grow up?”

AGM: Well, when you are putting it especially in the setting of the audience around, and how they were misbehaving and He takes a little child and says, “Unless you’re at least like this, you’ll not see the Kingdom.” I don’t think we should ever lose that; the trust of a little child. The curiosity, the willingness to listen, the willingness to learn. You remember the Laodiceans aren’t willing to listen to anything, though they’re grown up, it would appear. But Ephesians also says that while we should never lose those precious qualities of childish interest and curiosity and willingness to listen, we should not remain as children, requiring much protection. We should become adults who can stand on their own. I think it’s marvelous to see somebody in his seventies, eighties, nineties who still has the curiosity, interest and trust of a little child.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 18, “God Waits For His Children To Grow Up”, Discussion, recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

[http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG\\_B](http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG_B)

Have there been other references in the Bible, in the New Testament, in Paul particularly, to being like a child, to be in bondage to elementary things, elemental influences? Can you think of any? Now 1 Corinthians 13 would be very appropriate, wouldn’t it? In 1 Corinthians 13:11;

maybe we should look at these. I jotted down just a few. I know there are others. But especially where Paul has talked about the behavior of a child; that would be of first importance to us here for comparison, wouldn't it? He's been talking about love, and the person who loves perfectly is a grown up person. He's not impatient, he's not rude, he's not arrogant, he doesn't boast, he's not even irritable. That's the behavior of a mature, grown up person. But one has not always lived this way. In verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 13, he says "when I was a child, I spoke like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child." Have you ever seen the children lined up to go down the slide on the playground? Have you ever seen them say to each other, "now, please, you go first? It would just delight me to have you go ahead."

You know how it is there. Or when it's time for recess, and they go out of the door three at a time, do you ever see them giving way? Oh, some little saints sometimes do, and it's very stunning; most unusual. "But we forgive them" we say, "They're just little children." But of course when 60 year olds act the same way, with a little sophistication thrown in, what does that say about us? Are we not still acting like children and reasoning like children? Paul says "When I became a man, I gave up childish ways." And the context for childish ways is the list up above. See, when one is mature and grown up, one is patient, kind, not rude, one doesn't boast. One isn't arrogant, one isn't even irritable. Now when one behaves like a child, one needs the protection and the guardianship of law, doesn't one, to say "now just a minute, line up and behave decently, and one at a time on the slide. And don't push out the door now, let's be civil. One, two, three, and so on. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, part 5, recorded March, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MMGALATIANS66>*

The time of trouble is not for babes in the truth. It's for people who are, going back to the Sabbath school lesson this morning, perfect. Now there's perfection; look how that's been abused. Perfect. The Greek word is mature. It means being grown up. Who wants to stay immature? When we don't grow up physically, we get concerned. When we don't grow up mentally, we get alarmed. When we don't grown up spiritually, we say, "Isn't that precious? Dear sweet babe in the truth. He still has the faith of a little child." And needs to be protected; but there won't be any protection in the end. So Paul wrote to the Hebrews and said, just after a few years, he said, I can't believe it. I want to tell you about Melchizedek, the king of peace, and the king of righteousness, and I can't because you're still babes who need milk, not solid food. "Oh," he said, "Let us go on to maturity. And we will do so as quickly as possible if God permits."

Then he writes to the Ephesians and says, "We should no longer act like children, easily swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," and by every visitor from overseas, or locally or anywhere else who passes through our community. You know, any time a speaker or thinker goes through one of our communities, and leaves the church in disarray, it says we are immature. We should

not be easily swayed by every wind of doctrine. With the trickery of men and their ingenuity in inventing error. He says, in Ephesians, “Rather, speaking the truth in love we should grow up and become like Christ.” Now, he adds another lovely thing. He said, “When at last the church at its heart, not the bus riders, but the people who care, is made up of a group of individuals who because of their faith in God, their love, their admiration of His wise and gracious ways, have grown up and become like Him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Larger View, Session 3, recorded October, 1982, Monterey, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMLVIEW>

The greatest of the gifts is love. Now, what is this like? Love is patient and love is kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on having its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Now, that’s the behavior, not of a child, but of a really grown-up person. Do children tend to be patient? It’s recess and you’ve just released them all, and they rush for the slide. And all the little boys stand to one side and say, “Little girls, please, you go first.” Have you ever seen that on the playground? We say, well, they’re just little children. Have you ever seen a little boy brag, and boast? It’s almost cute! But when it’s the chairman of the corporation, you know, it hardly seems appropriate. That’s what he means below, “When I was a child I thought as a child; I spoke as a child.” He’s talking about being grown-up, perfect, mature people. Were they behaving maturely in the church in Corinth? Jealous, boasting about who had the best baptism, and so on? He’s speaking to this. “Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease;” when we all speak the same language who needs tongues? “As for knowledge, it will pass away” when we really know things. “For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away” but love won’t, you see. “Now when I was a child,” and you Corinthians, as I’ve said above, are behaving like little immature children, “Now when I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” I began behaving as described above. “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So, you see, faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 - 1 & 2 Corinthians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/63MMPOGIA66> (Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/64MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

When Jesus returns He will come to a generation of believers who have experienced Satan’s last supreme attempt to deceive and destroy God’s people. They will have accomplished what one-third of the brilliant angels failed to do. They will have refused to be turned against God by

Satan's lies. They will have been able to say with Paul, "If anyone, even an angel from heaven, should bring a different version of the everlasting good news, he is wrong and we will not believe it!"

These are not babes in the truth. They are grown up believers. They meet the Hebrews 5 description of Christian maturity: they have "their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil." (Hebrews 5:11-6:3, RSV) They have not only the teachable faith of a little child, which still needs much protection, but like Job they can stand alone. Though their faith be severely tested, they will never let God down.

They have welcomed the Holy Spirit, the Teacher of love and truth. He has sealed and settled them so firmly in the truth that they cannot be moved. (See John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:8; Ephesians 4:30; MS. 173, 1902) To be filled with the Spirit of love means to be filled with the Spirit of truth. The loving Christian is not weak. He is a person of strong conviction, and He speaks with the authority of truth.

God is waiting for such firm believers. In Revelation 7 His angels are pictured as mercifully holding back the final winds of strife until the minds of God's children have been unshakably settled into the truth. (Verses 1-3) John describes the marks of God's true people who will endure the time of trouble and welcome Jesus when He comes. Above all, they trust in God and are loyal to His Son. They have accepted the testimony Jesus bore about His Father. They believe that God is just as gracious as His Son. This everlasting good news is what has won them back to faith.

Because of their trust in God, they gladly keep His commandments. That is, they love each other and they love their heavenly Father. Moved by the same Spirit who inspired the prophets, it is their greatest delight to join with every friend of God in bearing witness to Jesus Christ. (See Revelation 14:12; 12:17; 19:10; John 5:39)

It is the mission of the Christian church to help produce such people. In his letter to the believers in Ephesus, Paul explains Christ's purpose in establishing His church: "He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ [a symbol for the Christian church]. And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful men, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head." (Ephesians 4:11-14 GNB).

There is no closer unity than this oneness that is inherent in our faith. Growing up together in love and admiration for the same Christ and the same God, we are bound together by the very truth that sets us free! **God's true church is made up of individuals who in the highest sense of freedom choose to band together for mutual encouragement and for greater efficiency in spreading the gospel to all the world.**

God still waits for His children to grow up like this. He needs better spokesmen than Jonah proved to be. Reluctant teachers of the truth, moved only by fear or obligation, are themselves a sad denial of the content of the good news. God waits for loyal people who are proud of the good news, who look "eagerly for the coming of the Day of God and work to hasten it on." (2 Peter 3:12, NEB) {Graham Maxwell. *The Distinctive Mission of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, May 14, 1977}

Would you trust a doctor who is reputed to be careless with the truth? Would you risk trusting your life to a physician who is said to become angry with his patients and even threaten them with violence?

Ever since the Adversary lied about God in the Garden of Eden, God has suffered from a forbidding reputation. Even those who present themselves as his friends have often pictured God as arbitrary and severe. The Father understands why so many of his children stay away or go to other healers.

That's why before Jesus went out to Calvary to answer questions about the ultimate consequence of sin, he first lived among us for a while. He wanted us to be assured that the one who finally will have to let some of his children go is an absolutely trustworthy Physician and Friend.

He showed how infinitely loving the Father is by loving everyone, including little children. The disciples assumed that the Savior would be too busy to have time for boys and girls. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them." (Matthew 19:14 NRSV)

He showed how infinitely patient the Father is by treating everyone with utmost courtesy and understanding—even though he was often rebuffed in return. One day the disciples asked if Jesus wanted them to call down fire from heaven to consume the rejecters of his love. The Lord rebuked them for their heartless impatience. He had not come to destroy but to heal. (see Luke 9:51-55; 19:10)

Jesus wanted us to know that every detail of our lives is of concern to the Father. In all the excitement following the raising of Jairus' daughter, it was Jesus who made sure she had something to eat. (See Luke 8:49-56) {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, pp. 124-125. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter 9.html>

I think He created everybody capable of choosing one way or the other. And we've proved that all through the history of the human race. And Lucifer chose to be His enemy, but God created him anyway know what it would cost Him.

Now it turned out that the way God has handled His enemies has been a marvelous revelation of the truth about God. But isn't it a shame He had to do it that way? For example, parents could be trying to convince their children that they love them. But one of them is out on the street and a truck's coming and the parent runs out and pushes the child out of the way and dies under the wheel of the truck and the child says, "I never knew my mother loved me that much." That's too bad, isn't it, to have to die under the wheels of the truck to convince your children. I think it's too bad that Jesus had to die to answer the questions of the universe, but He went ahead anyway. And I think the angels ever since have been saying you shouldn't have had to do that. But it was the only way and He was willing to do it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions Young People Are Asking About God, number 6, recorded December, 1983, Redlands, California}

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

Christ reached the people where they were. He presented the plain truth to their minds in the most forcible, simple language. The humble poor, the most unlearned, could comprehend, through faith in Him, the most exalted truths of God. No one needed to consult the learned doctors as to his meaning. He did not perplex the ignorant with mysterious inferences, or use unaccustomed and learned words, of which they had no knowledge. The greatest teacher the world has ever known, was the most definite, simple, and practical in his instruction. {RH, April 17, 1888 par. 7}

Christ watched children at their play, and often expressed His approval when they gained an innocent victory over something they were determined to do. He sang to children in sweet and blessed words. They knew that He loved them. He never frowned on them. He shared childish joys and sorrows. Often he would gather flowers, and after pointing out their beauties to the children, would leave them with them as a gift. He had made the flowers, and He delighted to point out their beauties. {LHU 90.5}

We need to recognize the Holy Spirit as our enlightener. That Spirit loves to address the children, and discover to them the treasures and beauties of the Word. The promises spoken by the Great Teacher will captivate the senses and animate the soul of the child with a spiritual power that is divine. There will grow in the receptive mind a familiarity with divine things which will be as a barricade against the temptations of the enemy. {FLB 271.6}

Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things. {DA 70.4}