

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2016: *The Role of the Church in the Community*

Lesson 10 “Jesus Won Their Confidence”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 15:6; Numbers 14:11; 1 Corinthians 3:1–9; Daniel 6:1–3; Nehemiah 2:1–9; Deuteronomy 4:1–9; Acts 2:42–47.

Memory Text

“But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities” (Luke 5:15, ESV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Winning Confidence
- III. A Careful Balance
- IV. Social Capital
- V. The Value of Social Capital
- VI. Favor With All People
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will explore the issue of winning the confidence of people whom we aim to serve and win for Christ.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. After discussing the meaning of the Hebrew word *amn* and Greek word *pistis*, the lesson concentrates on a balance in the confidence we seek to win. “We need to, as Jesus did, win the trust and the confidence of the people. But their confidence in and trust in us needs to be directed toward Jesus. We are mere conduits. They see something of Christ in us—be it selflessness, love, caring, self-denial for the good of others—and they are drawn to us. As always, though, if they look at us too carefully, because we are all sinners, they might not like all that they see. Hence, we must always point them to Jesus, in whom they alone can put their full confidence. The rest of us are, sooner or later, bound to disappoint.” (Monday’s lesson)
3. Is it possible to go through life without disappointment? If people look up to God, does it mean they will never be disappointed? How important is to learn to deal with disappointments in life in a healthy way?

4. Two days of the lesson are devoted to ‘social capital’ and its value. “How fascinating that in this case God moved upon the hearts of pagans to help with the advancement of His own work. This should teach us an important lesson. To whatever degree we can, we should be willing to work with others, even those not of our faith, or even of any faith, if it will advance the cause of Christ. Though, of course, we always have to be careful about any kind of alliance we engage in with others, we can carefully and prayerfully work with others whose input can greatly aid in what we want to do for the good of the community as a whole. Oftentimes governments or even private businesses or individuals, impressed by our humanitarian work, will offer their support. This support shouldn’t be automatically accepted or automatically rejected.” (Wednesday’s lesson)
5. So would you accept money from a brewery offering to build a pre-school center? Why, or why not? What does “being unequally yoked” mean (2 Corinthians 6:14)? How can money be “stained with blood” or have a “curse on it”? (MH 340)
6. “What connection was there in the early church between ‘enjoying the favor of all the people’ (Acts 2:47, NIV) and church growth?” (Thursday’s lesson) What is the significance of Eugene Peterson’s translation in the *Message Bible*: “People in general liked what they saw.”
7. It has been said before—we cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time. So what happens if the church sees itself as called to preach the “straight testimony” and considers the fact that everybody is upset about them as a proof that they are right in their position on what the Bible says?
8. How do we reconcile the idea of building good ties with our community and getting a good name, with Jesus’ warning in Matthew 10:22: “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (NKJV)? How do we work through what appears to be a strong contradiction?
9. Traditionally Adventists frowned upon collaboration with other churches. Where does good social capital end and bad “ecumenisms” start? In what ways can you and your church cooperate with other churches and organizations for the good of the community?
10. How can we win the confidence of people in our contemporary society? What does the church need to do in order for that to happen?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When God picks a person in the Bible who exemplifies the highest fulfillment of his ambitions for us sinners, when he finally really wins somebody, and he inspires later writers to say, “If you want to know what God wants, look at him, all the way through the Bible.” It’s Abraham. Over and over it’s Abraham who was what God wanted. And it says of Abraham that he was God’s friend. And what was it that made him such a friend? It always says Abraham trusted God.

Now, a version may say “believed God.” Same word, there’s only one word for belief, trust, faith, all the same word. That’s why we need the different versions. Abraham trusted God, he really did. And God considered him his friend.

Now evidence that he really trusted God, James says, is that he loved cooperating with God and doing what God said. And when God said take your son, sacrifice him; the trust was not, “Well, if you say so God, fine, I’ll do it.” No, he trusted God enough to say, “God, as I know you that will make sense some day. It surely doesn’t now. But I hear you speaking. We’ve talked so often, I know you wouldn’t ask me to do something wrong, or something that will confuse others for eternity, so I’m on my way. But may I reverently ask you why?” And for three days and three nights he asked him why. And he came to a conclusion. God would either resurrect his son or provide a substitute and Hebrews says he was right. He showed he was a friend. And James says see how Abraham, the friend of God, showed his trust. He didn’t just say, “Sure, I believe in God.”

James says the devils do that and it scares them. They’re no friends of God. Abraham’s trust was the trust of a friend, and a friend shows his friendship in certain, very special ways, like being jealous for your friend’s reputation. And when God said I’m going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham said, “God, how could you? As I know you, you wouldn’t. I mean, if there were fifty saints there you wouldn’t. Forty. Thirty. Forgive me if I seem irreverent, but God, shouldn’t the judge of all the earth do what is right?”

They must have been good friends to talk like that. It doesn’t say, “And God rebuked him for talking like that and didn’t speak to him for a month.” No, God says, “Who else knows me that well? I love your jealousy for my reputation. You’re right, I wouldn’t destroy them if there were five saints, but I can’t find that many.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angels’ Messages, #1, recorded October, 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MM3ANGELSM>

The devil is an Adventist. He even believes in the nearness of the end. He believes in God, and he knows all about Creation and the Flood, that’s no virtue. He even has faith, the book of James says. He even has faith in the almighty power of God and whenever he thinks of it he trembles in fear. So, just to lead people to believe in God and to believe in the nearness of the end, and to believe in God’s power is not to succeed, perhaps, in doing anything more than adding someone to the devil’s side. If you believe those things and they scare you. They scare the devil; he knows he has but a short time. And then it says at the end: “The dragon was angry and he went off to make war on the remnant, [as you know], on those who keep God’s commandments and bear testimony to Jesus [or] remain loyal to the truth revealed by Jesus.”

The Greek can go either way and both make good sense. The point is they accept what Jesus said is true, and they are loyal to Jesus and to his Father, and the enemy wages war against them. For man's enemy and God's enemy are the same. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Understanding the Mission of the Church, #1, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMUTMOTC>*

This morning there was emphasis, and rightly so, on growth and getting the gospel to the world and winning many, as many as possible. We wonder why we don't do too well. Look for example at the other quotations on law, authority, obedience and fear, and just the last few lines to close:

The reason why it seems so difficult to win souls for Christ, is that Satan is continually engaged in misrepresenting the character of God to the human mind. Christ came to reveal the Father to the world in his true character, that the false conceptions which men entertained of the divine character might be swept away.

Because that's the only way to set people right and keep them right. Then we'll never succeed in evangelism until we first clear up the picture of God. And once we've presented the truth about God we've done our evangelism because that's the good news.

The good news is that God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. He is, instead, precisely as the Son revealed him to be. And we Adventists say we can prove we're God's true people because we accept the testimony of Jesus. And his greatest testimony was the one before his death. You want to know what my Father is like? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. And then he went a little further, something I'd like to consider at a later meeting. He said, "If you disciples are ready for this there's something I'd like to tell you." In John 16:26 he said, "If you're really my friends, you would be ready for me to tell you something plainly about my Father." He said, "You know there's no need for me to plead with the Father for you, for the Father loves you himself."

Now how do we explain that? And the disciples should have said, "Say that one more time. You gave us the whole priestly system, didn't you? You gave us the picture of intercession. You told us there should be someone in between. What do you mean there's no need for you to plead with the Father? You've given us great comfort with the thought that you, the gentle one, are up there pleading with that, you know, somewhat forbidding but very just one to be sure. We want you up there. We'd be scared if you're not up there pleading with him."

And Jesus said, "If you still feel that way I failed. I came to reveal the Father to you. I've told you if you've seen me you've seen the Father. Does anybody need to plead with me?"

“Oh,” they said, “you’re different. You’re Gentle Jesus. We’re talking about that other one.”

You see, that’s denying the testimony of Jesus. Now how about our explanation of the ministry of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary? Using the whole Bible, now, not leaving anything out and thanking God for the whole ceremonial system and all the pictures, every last one. What did Jesus mean? Was he throwing it out or was he saying, well what was he saying? I thought that might make a good subject for tomorrow. At this stage in my life the most important thought, the most breathtaking news comes from John 16:26, that though God gave us the whole picture of priestly intercession he really doesn’t want anybody in between. And he doesn’t need anybody in between.

And in case some of you have to go home tonight could I leave you with this? We have had someone in between. We call him Jesus the Son of God, but who was he? God. Then who was the one in between but God? Then has there ever been anybody in between? No. So why do we picture somebody in between? God bridged the gap. The bridge maker between God and the angels has been the bridge maker between God himself and sinners. God has always been the one between. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Understanding the Mission of the Church, #2, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMUTMOTC>*

Further Study with Ellen White

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

God gives sufficient evidence to every soul. He does not promise to remove every doubt, but he gives a reason for faith. {RH, January 24, 1899 par. 7}

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good,

that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.—Letter 12, 1890. {2SM 56.1}

Jesus assumed humanity that He might meet humanity. He brings men under the transforming power of truth by meeting them where they are. He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their nature and interest is complete. The truth came from His lips beautiful in its simplicity, yet clothed with dignity and power. What a teacher was our Lord Jesus Christ! How tenderly did He treat every honest inquirer after truth, that He might gain admission to his sympathies and find a home in his heart. {TM 190.1}

“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:17. Looking upon men in their suffering and degradation, Christ perceived ground for hope where appeared only despair and ruin. Wherever there existed a sense of need, there He saw opportunity for uplifting. Souls tempted, defeated, feeling themselves lost, ready to perish, He met, not with denunciation, but with blessing. {Ed 79.2}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in “the beauty of the Lord our God.” Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man’s true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life. {Ed 80.1}

Christ bound them to His heart by the ties of love and devotion; and by the same ties He bound them to their fellow men. With Him love was life, and life was service. “Freely ye have received,” He said, “freely give.” Matthew 10:8. {Ed 80.2}

The precious graces of the Holy Spirit are not developed in a moment. Courage, fortitude, meekness, faith, unwavering trust in God’s power to save, are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right the children of God are to seal their destiny. {MH 454.1}

But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before. “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,” and He will help us to the end. 1 Samuel 7:12. Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender

mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage. {SC 125.1}

Christ stands before us as a pattern Man, the great Medical Missionary—an example for all who should come after. His love, pure and holy, blessed all who came within the sphere of its influence. His character was absolutely perfect, free from the slightest stain of sin. He came as an expression of the perfect love of God, not to crush, not to judge and condemn, but to heal every weak, defective character, to save men and women from Satan’s power. He is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the human race. He gives to all the invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” {WM 53.3}