

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2018: *Oneness in Christ*
Lesson 6 *Images of Unity*

Read for this week's study

1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5, 6; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; John 10:1–11; Psalm 23.

Memory Text

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The People of God
- III. The Household of God
- IV. The Temple of the Holy Spirit
- V. The Body of Christ
- VI. Sheep and Shepherd
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of metaphor in describing spiritual things? Are all spiritual metaphors equally useful? Read 1 Corinthians 12:12. What are the two main ingredients in a spiritual community? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. Read 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 4:20 and 7:6. What metaphors do these texts use to describe the special status of the people of God? How do these images relate to the biblical concept of the remnant? In what way is that term an appropriate description of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? Read Deuteronomy 7:6-8. What prompted God to select the descendants of Abraham as His special people? What does this choice tell us about God? What implications does God's choice have for us today? (Sunday's lesson)
3. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. What key metaphors of the church does Paul emphasize in this passage? What implications do they have for the unity of the church? One New Testament image of the church is that of a family. How big is God's family and how should godly family members treat each other when they disagree? What do you do when your local church is a dysfunctional family? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. What does it mean that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit? What is Paul warning about in verse 17? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. How does the image of one body with many parts apply to the local church? How does it apply to a worldwide organization like the Seventh-day Adventist Church? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read John 10:1-15. How does the metaphor of the church as a sheepfold instruct us with regard to unity? How do we access the "one shepherd" in today's world? When sheep get lost does the shepherd spank them? If not, why not? People don't generally like being depicted as sheep. In what way are sheep an appropriate metaphor for the members of a church? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Which of the images for the church in this lesson did you like the most? Notice some other metaphors for the church that can be found in 1 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 2:3-5 and 1 Peter 2:9. What do these metaphors teach us about unity in the church? (Friday's lesson)
8. "Confidence in our brethren is essential to the prosperity of the church. . . One imprudent step, one careless action, may plunge the church into difficulties and trials from which it may not recover for years." Ellen White, *Testimonies*, volume 6, page 446. Is disunity in a church more likely to arise from the top (church leadership) or from the bottom (membership)? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I will treat them as though they had always been my loyal children. That's all God has ever wanted. But he's had to add a lot of things, hasn't he? And that's Galatians 3. The law was added because of transgression, to be our guardian, our custodian, to bring us to Christ, to bring us back to the place where we say, "You be our God; and we'll be your people. We're willing to listen. We trust you." And God can save and heal all who trust him. If only we could understand that, we wouldn't need so many other aids. But God's a good teacher. If we don't trust him, he'll lay hands on us; he'll discipline us; he'll raise his voice; he'll give us a thousand rules to protect us in our ignorance and immaturity. But all he wants in the end is that we trust him. The whole plan of salvation, the cross, everything, if it does not lead us back to trust him, it will do us no good whatsoever. God can only save those who trust him. The only people who are safe to save are those whom he can trust, and who will behave as described earlier in Jeremiah and all the other prophets.

There's nothing legalistic about that. It isn't even a legal problem. It's a problem of trust, of honesty, integrity, humility, willingness to listen. And God, the Infinite One, has all the power needed to heal the damage done. He's not so concerned with forgiveness as with healing the damage done and restoring us to the condition we were in before sin ever came into the

universe, when there was no need to mention law. It was written on the hearts of the angels. There's a magnificent description here of what God really wants. Are we emphasizing this at this present time? Are we known for this? Well, here's a way to test it. Look at Jeremiah 9:23 in the light of all this:

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this" [be proud of it], "that he understands and knows me,"

"My people perish because they don't know and understand me." Remember how many times that's come up? This is the thing to be proud of. And this is not unspecific. What do we know about God? "That I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the LORD."

Can you name some people in the Bible who were very proud that they knew this? It's being proud of God, rather than of ourselves. Name somebody who was very proud that he knew the truth about God's righteousness. And he wasn't ashamed of it. He says, "I'm proud of it." Look at Romans 1:16. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel". Well, what is the gospel? "It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts, who has faith; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." To everybody. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations*, recorded February, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

It is most significant to know that the word salvation means, essentially, healing. To be saved is to be healed. In one very legal understanding of the plan of salvation, to be saved is more to be forgiven; almost to have your fire insurance paid up, so you can be admitted.

In the trust-healing model, salvation means healing the damage done. This is made plain in many places in scripture. Look at the next two examples on the list, of Luke 18:42, in two different versions. Jesus said to the blind man: "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." That's the *King James Version*. But the *New International Version*, right underneath: "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>

One view sees the plan of salvation and God's gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God, because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, he will go ahead and do this to us; he must. Law and justice require it. And if he doesn't go through with this, the universe will conclude he is unjust. And if he's unjust, you wouldn't trust him, and now you're getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all sixty-six books and has no problems with Ellen White at all, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could not have called him in before church counsel. What had he done? Nothing! Except the most devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that's what he did.

That's how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. **We're not in legal trouble, we're in trouble. We're not in danger of being executed, we're dying. That's the difference.** And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die. But my understanding is, that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this sixty-six book view, we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it.

But he hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims; you offer demonstrations; that's the content of the sixty-six books, God's demonstration of the kind of person he is. And the way he's handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to, not how he treats his friends, but how he treats his enemies. How he treats the sick and the dying; how does he seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful.

So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so he can heal us, which he can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April, 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

Lou: You mentioned as a reference, Ephesians 3:9, 10. In Ephesians 3 are those words, “that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made manifest.” This questioner would like you to elaborate on how you’re using the word *church* here. Are you talking about a denomination—church as an official organization?

Graham: Ah, that’s a fair question. It reminds me of our discussion last time, about all being in the family. Church has many meanings, doesn’t it? Like this building is church, or the organization is church. “Does the church permit thus and so”, we say. And then we have the interesting custom of speaking of Sabbath school and church, or Sunday school and church, church as the 11 o’clock hour. Church has many meanings. What would it mean here? We would have to go back to the original word. And the original word suggests *those who respond* to God’s invitation. It’s almost like *congregation*; we gather together. Or *synagogue*; they gather together. These are all God’s people everywhere, who respond to the invitation and at least profess they are his friends. And God works through these people.

Now, he works and reveals himself through his treatment of everybody. But through certain people, like Abraham, and hence his descendants, God has especially worked. And they call it the *church in the wilderness*. Paul was a member of this church. And Jeremiah was a member of this church. We can all be members of this group of individuals who say “yes” to God, who respond to his call. We still need lots of work, lots of discipline, lots of correction, lots of healing. But at the same time, we have the privilege of joining with him in spreading this good news as to what he is like. And so God, through his church, his treatment of the church, through the cooperation of the church (which is a great privilege), has revealed his purposes and plans. Now, this isn’t any “denomination,” that’s for sure.

Lou: Is this what you’re talking about then, when you talk about being witnesses? And Jesus says, “Ye are my witnesses.”

Graham: Those would all be members of the church, that’s for sure, the church of those who have come to trust in God again. And they enjoy the unity that is inherent in this trust, in Ephesians 4. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2 with Lou Venden, “What Went Wrong in God’s Universe?” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [that's the church, the whole church], until we all attain to the unity [now, isn't that the subject of Ephesians and Colossians, and other places? He wants to bring unity in the family. He wants to make for peace and an end to hostility. All right, until we all attain to the unity that is made possible by the tightly cinched baling wire of rules and regulations and a fear of final judgment and torment. But that's no unity at all, is it? It says] until we all attain [now the versions vary. Mine, the *Revised Standard*, says,], to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

The "unity of the faith." What's that? Now, some would say, "Until they all believe the same thing. They have the creed, and they all subscribe to it. We had to tie a few to the stake, and burn a few, but now we have unity." That's no good either, is it?

So I love, the *New English Bible* has, "The unity inherent in our faith." That would be my preference. "The unity inherent in our faith, and our knowledge of the Son of God." That is, we now know the truth about our God as revealed by his Son, and we like it. And it has won us back to trust and faith. In other words, we all love, trust, admire, and worship the same God. Why, that makes for unity! Doesn't it? Because, what is it about God that has won us? Isn't it that he values nothing higher than our freedom? And all the laws that he's given were just for our protection. And he almost apologizes every time he gives us a law. It is fraught with hazard that we'll misunderstand, and do these things for the wrong reason. I mean, God isn't pleased when I abstain from murdering my mother-in-law because every day I check that law, and it says, "Thou shalt not do it, and if thou doest it, thou shalt be seriously punished in the end." And so I don't murder my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law is not that secure under those circumstances, because one day I might forget to read the rules that morning.

The Lord's goal is that some time, some day, we come to the place where we'd never think of murdering our mothers-in-law. God does not want the citizens of the hereafter to be safe because we read the rules, and we take the Rule Giver very seriously. That's not real unity. That's not the tenth commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not even want to murder thy mother-in-law." And that's the law written in the heart, where a man does his thinking, as well as his feeling.

So this is not a contrived, enforced unity. Here are people who, in the highest sense of freedom, have agreed that God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. He is, instead, precisely as Jesus revealed him to be. And we accept his testimony that if we've seen Jesus, we've seen the Father. He does value nothing higher than our freedom. He hates to add law upon law. He'd rather we'd do what's right because it is right, and his highest goal for us is the recovery of self-control. Why, that adds dignity to life. That's what we all want. Wouldn't you love to live under that kind of government? A government that does not like to add laws, or

rule by law at all? Of course it does mean that God can only admit to his kingdom those who respect this quality of life, so he says, "I cannot save you if you do not like this. Besides, if you want to go some other way, the consequences are serious; even in this life, the results are very damaging." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians & Colossians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/68MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The entrance of God's word is the application of divine truth to the heart, purifying and refining the soul through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The faculties devoted unreservedly to God, under the guidance of the divine Spirit, develop steadily and harmoniously. Devotion and piety establish so close a relation between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian becomes like Him. Through the power of God, his weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. He becomes a person of sound principle, clear perception, and reliable, well-balanced judgment. Having a connection with God, the source of light and understanding, his views, unbiased by his own preconceived opinions, become broader, his discernment more penetrative and farseeing. The knowledge of God, the understanding of His revealed will, as far as human minds can grasp it, will, when received into the character, make efficient men. {CT 37.3}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {SD 23.2}

Christ is ready to impart all heavenly influences. He knows every temptation that comes to man, and the capabilities of every human agent. He weighs his strength. He sees the present and the future, and presents before the mind the obligations that should be met, and urges that common, earthly things shall not be permitted to be so absorbing that eternal things shall be lost out of reckoning. {SD 23.3}

Through the transforming grace of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit are made manifest in the life of those who were once dead in trespasses and sins. In disposition, in words, and in actions, they are seen to be partakers of the divine nature. This wonderful grace was revealed to Paul, and

he worked constantly that others might be brought to a knowledge of these saving truths.
{UL 309.4}

Fallen man is Satan's lawful captive. The mission of Christ was to rescue him from the power of his great adversary. Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan's suggestions, and he cannot successfully resist so terrible a foe unless Christ, the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. God alone can limit the power of Satan. . . . Satan knows better than God's people the power that they can have over him when their strength is in Christ. When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believer in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host. . . . {AG 257.2}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, "God with us." {DA 26.3}

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}

Christ came into the world to represent the Father to man; for Satan had presented Him before the world in a false light. Because God is a God of justice, of terrible majesty, who has power to destroy as well as to preserve man, Satan caused men to regard Him with fear, to look upon

Him as a tyrant. Jesus had been with the Father from the everlasting ages, before the creation of man, and He came to reveal the Father, declaring, "God is love." Jesus represented God as a kind Father, who careth for the subjects of His kingdom. He declared that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of the Father, and that the children of men are of more value in His sight than many sparrows, that the very hairs of their head are all numbered. {LHU 36.2}

Satan had clothed the Father in his own attributes, but Christ represented Him in His true character of benevolence and love. In the character in which Christ presented Him to the world it was as if He gave a new gift to man. . . . {LHU 36.4}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. {FLB 76.4}

Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. {FLB 142.2}

The strength of God's people lies in their union with Him through His only-begotten Son, and their union with one another. There are no two leaves of a tree precisely alike; neither do all minds run in the same direction. But while this is so, there may be unity in diversity. Christ is our root, and all who are grafted into this root will bear the fruit which Christ bore. They will reveal the fragrance of His character in the talent of speech, in the cultivation of hospitality, of kindness, of Christian courtesy and heavenly politeness. {6BC 1083.3}

Look at the flowers in a carpet, and notice the different colored threads. All are not pink, all are not green, all are not blue. A variety of colors are woven together to perfect the pattern. So it is in the design of God. He has a purpose in placing us where we must learn to live as individuals. We are not all fitted to do the same kind of work, but each man's work is designed by God to help make up His plan (RH July 4, 1899). {6BC 1083.4}

Communion with God gives a daily experience that does indeed make our joy full. {UL 295.2}

The church is the object of God's tenderest love and care. If the members will allow Him, He will reveal His character through them. He says to them, "Ye are the light of the world." Those who walk and talk with God practice the gentleness of Christ. In their lives, forbearance, meekness, and self-restraint are united with holy earnestness and diligence. As they advance heavenward, the sharp, rough edges of character are worn off, and godliness is seen. The Holy Spirit, full of grace and power, works upon mind and heart. {HP 283.5}

Christ has made provision that His church shall be a transformed body illumined with the light of heaven, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. {HP 283.6}

Having undertaken the work of man's redemption, the Father would spare nothing, however dear, which was essential for the completion of His work. He would make opportunities for men; He would pour upon them His blessings; He would heap favor upon favor, gift upon gift, until the whole treasury of heaven was open to those whom He came to save. Having collected all the riches of the universe, and laid open all the resources of His divine nature, God gave them all for the use of man. They were His free gift. What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world! What manner of love is this, that the eternal God should adopt human nature in the person of His Son, and carry the same into the highest heaven! {TMK 19.2}

All the heavenly intelligences were watching with intense interest the warfare that was going on upon the earth—the earth that Satan claimed as his dominion. Every moment was big with eternal realities. How would the conflict end? The angels looked for the justice of God to be revealed, His anger to be aroused against the prince of darkness and his sympathizers. But lo, mercy prevailed. When the Son of God might have come to the world to condemn, He came as righteousness and peace, to save not merely the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but all the world—every son and daughter of Adam who would believe on Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What an exhibition of the love of Jehovah! This is love without a parallel. {TMK 19.3}

Jesus says, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The peace spoken of by the great Teacher is larger and fuller than we have imagined. Christ is ready to do large things for us, to restore our natures by making us partakers of His divine nature. He waits to link our hearts with His heart of infinite love, in order that we may be fully reconciled to God; but it is our privilege to understand that God loves us as He loves His Son. When we believe in Christ as our personal Saviour, the peace of Christ is ours. . . . Entering into communion with our Saviour, we enter the region of peace. {LHU 332.2}

But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands. {PK 570.4}

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all

men unto Himself. He bids them, "Follow Me," and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth. {DA 480.1}

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him. {DA 480.3}

Recommended Reading: *Desire of Ages* Chapter 52 – "The Divine Shepherd"

<https://egwwritings.org>