

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2020: *Making Friends for God: The Joy of Sharing in His Mission* Lesson 2 “Winsome Witnesses: The Power of Personal Testimony”

Read for this week’s study

Mark 5:15–20; Mark 16:1–11; Acts 4:1–20; 1 John 1:1–3; Galatians 2:20; Acts 26:1–32.

Memory Text

“ ‘For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’ ” (Acts 4:20, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Unlikely Witnesses
- III. Proclaiming the Risen Christ
- IV. Changed Lives Make a Difference
- V. Sharing Our Experience
- VI. The Power of a Personal Testimony
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The lesson states that there is a difference in value between sharing what Jesus has done for someone else and sharing what Jesus has done for you personally. What is the unique value of a personal testimony of what God has done for you? What are the dangers in such an approach? How can the sharing of personal details in your life enhance or detract from the picture of God? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Mark 5:15-20. Why do you think Jesus sent the man into the Decapolis to witness to his family and friends rather than keeping him close to nurture his newfound faith? Why do you think the people were more afraid after the healing than before? What is there in your own conversion story that changed your picture of God? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Mark 16:1-11. What was Mary’s response when she discovered Christ was risen from the dead? When was the last time you were rebuffed in your witness? How did you respond, and what have you learned from that experience? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Acts 4:1-20. What happened when the authorities tried to silence Peter and John? What was their response? What relationship is there between knowing Christ and sharing Christ? How do you put the themes of this lesson together with our emphasis on the picture of God? What was the key event that transformed the apostles and their witness? Why did that event make such a big difference in their way of speaking and witnessing? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read 1 John 1:1-3 and compare it with Galatians 2:20. What similarities do you see? How is John's experience similar to Paul's? Is conversion a one-time experience or a day to day, continuing process? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 26:1-11. How did Paul begin his witness to King Agrippa? Then read Paul's conversion story in Acts 26:12-18 and notice its effect on Agrippa in Acts 26:26-28. (Thursday's lesson)
7. If only the Holy Spirit is truly capable of converting anyone, what can we do to assist the Spirit? (Friday's lesson)
8. Why do you think our personal testimony is so powerful in influencing others? Why is a godly life such a powerful part of our witness? (Friday's lesson)
9. If you were asked the question, "What difference has Jesus made in your life," how would you answer? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Anyone have a version that doesn't have it this way? "Don't detain me." "Don't delay me." "Don't cling to me." "Don't hold me." That's the Greek. By the way, when I first learned that in Greek, it was 1938, I wondered what Ellen White had done to it; so I looked up John 20:17 in the scriptural index, and it wasn't there. And I thought, "I'm sure the story is told in *Desire of Ages*, so I looked in the back, in the scriptural index. No John 20:17. You know why? Because those who prepared the index just couldn't find what she actually had Jesus say, in any version, so they couldn't quote it. So I looked up the story. You know what it says in *Desire of Ages*? Jesus said to Mary, "Detain Me not; for I have not yet ascended to My Father." I love that. She didn't know any Greek, but she had real insight into these things, and it's absolutely correct. "Detain me not." Very politely and graciously he said to Mary, "Don't detain me now, Mary." Greetings took a little time in those days. "I am not yet ascended to my Father."

He was to go to heaven, and hear the good news that when he said, "It is finished," it really was. But he said, "Go and tell the disciples." What a privilege, to go and tell them. They were in such deep depression. Tell them the Lord has risen. Was it one of the Twelve who had the great good news? No, it was the woman who was known as a wicked woman in the town. But my wife loves to add, had she not been there, the Lord could not have given her the opportunity. I like that. You see, she did want to be there; and so God could honor her. And did you notice

that Mark says—I think Peter cherished this. In Mark 16, what did the angels add to Jesus’ statement, “Go and tell the disciples that the Lord has risen and will meet them tonight,” what does Mark add? “And tell Peter,” right in Mark 16. What do you think of the treatment of Mary, with her reputation, and Peter, with his performance the last twenty-four hours? Jesus’ treatment of Mary, and his treatment of Peter, is really a revelation of the truth about God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – John, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/57MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/58MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

While we don’t look to people in the Bible as our primary examples, they could be encouraging, couldn’t they? You know, primarily we look to God, and say, “If we just see what God is like, and we admire him, it’s a law we’ll become like him.” Well, I would like to look in the Bible and see some people who admired God, and did become more and more like him. And Peter is one. Remember John, who changed from a son of thunder to the beloved apostle? He really changed. Look at the change in Paul before and after Damascus—an incredible change in the man. He totally reversed his methods, because he changed his picture of God. So it is encouraging to see this. Is that one testimony the final generation will give? You know, that’s one of the understandings of the mission of the church in the end. It’s not only that we survive the time of trouble. It’s not only that we bear witness to others, and we have the privilege of doing what Job did and saying of God what is right; but we could actually add confirmation of what God has said, “I am able to heal people who trust me.” By showing a generation of people who have been wonderfully healed, it doesn’t win the great controversy for him, but it just adds further confirmation of the truthfulness of his statement, “There is no condition I cannot heal. I can take a person in the worst possible condition, if at least he’ll say, ‘Please help me, and I trust you enough to listen.’” He took Manasseh, after all those years of being such a wicked king, and apparently transformed him. And I doubt that Peter was an easy job. And Paul was probably much harder. But he did change these people. And we have that additional privilege, then, of adding confirmation that we have a very good Physician. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1&2 Peter and James, recorded July 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/75MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/76MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I believe that our special work in the world, and one of high privilege, is to warn the world about the dangers of trusting might and power. And to teach the world, rather, that the only safe basis for trust and faith is truth and evidence of which we have so much.

Our privilege is to explain to the world the truth about God's use of power. And that's great good news to those who live in fear, for many devout people are scared of God. And they obey him because of his might and power. God is indeed an infinitely powerful person but he is equally gracious. And he values nothing higher than the freedom and the dignity and the individuality of his intelligent creatures that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given. Such things as that are not produced by force or might or power but only by the persuasiveness of the truth. And so God says, "Not by might, nor by power, I have an infinite amount of both, but I cannot get what I want the most, something I've given my life to keep and preserve. I cannot get it those ways, only by the methods identified with the Holy Spirit of love and of truth and of freedom." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *God's Use of Power, #1, "Not by Might Nor by Power"* recorded March 1985, Kettering, Ohio} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/1MMOHIO>

The Bible says, "Test all things, hold fast that which is good, and beware of false prophets and false christs." Now that's not a time for babes in the truth, is it? That's a time for grown-ups. Babes in the truth are safe to save. The generation that survives the time of trouble is no more savable than any generation of babes in the past. It's that we have to pass through this time of trouble. That's the way it's going to end. And more than that, there's going to be a quality of witness before and during that time of trouble such as human beings have never borne, and we need to be grown up to do it. So God waits for his children to grow up and to be "so settled into the truth that they cannot be moved," with their faculties trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil.

You know that marvelous chapter in the book *Evangelism*, "The Reason for the Delay", in 1868 she says there has been so long delay, because if Christ should come his people would be found unready. Unready for what? We have two things ahead of us. One of course is personal survival during the time of trouble without being deceived. And there will be a group who will accomplish what one-third of the brilliant angels failed to do. Brilliant as they were, they were deceived. This group of pygmies, this far from the tree of life, will survive the time of ultimate deception without letting God down. There will be this group, like Job.

But more than that, they will bear a witness. It's called the loud cry. And God's not going to give us power to give a final message that puts him in a wrong light. The Holy Spirit will not come until we're really telling the truth that people need to hear about our God. So it all goes

together. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation – Perfection, Requirement or Generous Offer? Recorded December 1983, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMPERFECT> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPERFECT> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

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 angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven. {FLB 142.3}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. The soul, corrupted and deformed, is to be purified, transformed, that it may be clothed in "the beauty of the Lord our God," "conformed to the image of His Son." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Psalm 90:17; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 2:9. Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God's image, may attain. {MB 60.3}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 626.1}

Ever before Him, Christ saw the result of His mission. His earthly life, so full of toil and self-sacrifice, was cheered by the thought that He would not have all this travail for nought. By giving His life for the life of men, He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory. {MH 504.2}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance

of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy,—joy in the Holy Spirit,—health-giving, life-giving joy. {MH 115.3}

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}

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. {AA 126.1}

God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. {MH 93.1}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to

hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” By this parable Christ seeks to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. The process is invisible by which the leaven changes the meal into which it has been introduced; but it continues to work until the meal is converted into bread. So the leaven of truth, working inwardly, produces a complete change in the human heart. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. But while every faculty is regenerated, man does not lose his identity. New faculties are not supplied, but a thorough change is made in the employment of those faculties. The heart is cleansed from all impurity, and man is fitted with traits of character that will enable him to do service for God. {ST, October 13, 1898 par. 1}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. {MYP 72.1}

While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God. {DA 173.1}

Christ said, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” No one could then have any preference because of his location or personal contact with Christ. The Saviour would be accessible to all alike, spiritually, and in this sense He would be nearer to us all than if He had not ascended on high. Now all may be equally favored by beholding Him and reflecting His character. The eye of faith sees Him ever present, in all His goodness, grace, forbearance, courtesy, and love. . . . And as we behold, we are changed into His likeness. {HP 337.2}

Even John, the beloved disciple, the one who most fully reflected the likeness of the Saviour, did not naturally possess that loveliness of character. He was not only self-assertive and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injuries. But as the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, he saw his own deficiency and was humbled by the knowledge. The strength and patience, the power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness,

that he beheld in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration and love. Day by day his heart was drawn out toward Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. His resentful, ambitious temper was yielded to the molding power of Christ. The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart. The power of the love of Christ wrought a transformation of character. This is the sure result of union with Jesus. When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character. {DA 390.5}

Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power. {MH 62.2}

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17. {SC 57.1}

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving. {COL 101.1}

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 matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

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}

Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul. {COL 206.1}

The grace of God takes men as they are, and works as an educator, using every principle on which an all-sided education depends. The steady influence of the grace of God trains the soul after Christ's methods, and every fierce passion, every defective trait of character is worked upon by the molding influence of the spirit of Christ, until new motive power becomes filled with the Holy Spirit of God, after the likeness of the divine similitude. {UL 89.4}

Recommended Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, chapter 6 "Saved to Serve", pg. 95-99

<https://egwwritings.org>