

Good Word Schedule
“Making Friends for God”
July, August, September, 2020

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Because of the coronavirus, this series of GOOD WORD broadcasts feature only the Study Guide author, Alden Thompson, WWU Professor Emeritus of biblical studies, at least that is the way the series is beginning.

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Theme: Why Witness?

Leading Question: The call to public witness seems to be a plan crafted for extroverts. What is God’s plan for introverts?

In this new series of lessons, the focus is on joyful witness and winning friends for God.

Question: What examples of introvert witnesses does Scripture offer us?

Can we list some obvious introverts and some obvious extroverts? Does Scripture indicate that God may be as well pleased with the introverts as he is with the extroverts?

Introverts:

Andrew: Bringing people to Jesus
 John 1:40-42 Brings Peter
 John 6:8-9 Brings boy with the loaves and fish
 John 12:20-22 Brings the Greeks who would see Jesus
Widow and her two mites: Luke 21:1-4
Woman anointing Jesus: Luke 7:36-50
Mary, Martha’s sister: Luke 10:40-41

Extroverts

Healed demoniac: Mark 5:1-20
Samaritan Woman: John 4:7-42
Peter’s Holy Boldness: Acts 4:1-22
Paul before rulers: Acts 26:24-29

Question: If people will be saved anyway, why share? Why witness?

Cf. DA 638: Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have **known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles**. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have **cherished the spirit of kindness**; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. **Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish**. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God. (*Desire of Ages*, 638)

Answer: We share because it is such good news! The response of Israel’s neighbors to this helpful nature of God’s law is a pointer in that direction:

Deut. 4:5-8 (NRSV): “See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. 6 You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!’ 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?”

Comment: One section in this week’s lesson had this intriguing title: “Making Jesus Glad.” The reference was to the three stories of the lost in Luke 15: The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boy. In each case there is great joy. The shepherd rejoices because he has found the lost sheep; the woman rejoices because she has found the coin; and the father rejoices because his son has returned. Note the three different kinds of “lostness” represented here: The sheep knew it was lost, but needed help finding its way home; the coin didn’t even know it was lost; and the boy knew the way home, but simply needed to make a decision to go. The point in each case is the same: Joy in heaven.

Question: What about witnessing in the OT?

I have been racking my brain and reviewing OT stories in my mind and haven’t come up with the kind of exciting witnessing that one finds in the New Testament. I don’t think one can beat this two-fold response of the people to the Samaritan woman and then their response to Jesus:

John 4:39-42 (NRSV): “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

The enduring power of the story of Jesus echoes and re-echoes in these powerful words of Romans 8:

Romans 8:31-39 (NRSV): What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? 33 Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NRSV)

Theme: “Winsome Witnesses: The Power of Personal Testimony”

Leading Question: Is it possible to be consistently “winsome” in our witness, or is it inevitable that believers must sometimes face heavy weather?

In approaching this week’s topic, the official study guide lists three key “witnesses” as examples for us, two of whom we presented last week as “extroverts,” namely, the healed demoniac who went back to his countrymen to tell them what Jesus had done for him (Mark 5) and Paul in his testimony to Agrippa (Acts 26). The third witness or cluster of witnesses, focuses on the women who witnessed Christ’s resurrection (Mark 16).

In each of these cases, it is easy to use the word “winsome” to describe their testimony. Their stories were exciting, even riveting. But there are other forms of witnessing that have quite different effects, namely, those driven by personal fears and those driven by more hard-driving, even belligerent motives. For practical purposes, let’s focus on each of those types of witness.

A. The Winsome. Those who stand in a free-will theological tradition are committed to the principle of *winning* people for God, not *threatening* or *commanding* them. As an over-arching principle, I am committed to that approach. We can evaluate each of our three “winsome” witnesses in that respect, and they all come out with flying colors: the healed demoniac witnessing to his fellow citizens (Mark 5), the women who witnessed to the power of the resurrection, and Paul, who told his conversion story to Agrippa (Acts 26).

B. The Fearful. Here our emotions are more complex. I can think of at least three reactions that could explain why we may be reluctant witnesses:

1) Fear of forceful rejection. The door slammed in one’s face would typify this reaction. I don’t think anyone would consider it “fun” or “joyful” to be on the receiving end of such an experience. Yet having said that, New Testament writers make it quite clear, that following Jesus is not all fun and games. 2 Tim. 3:12 declares: “Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (NRSV) and Romans 8:17 promises us that we can be joint heirs with Christ – but with a catch: “if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (NRSV).

2) Fear of being mocked. The sneer, the mocking laughter, are no fun at all. In fact, they can easily undermine our faith. C. S. Lewis points to this kind of experience with these words: “The society of unbelievers makes Faith harder even when they are people whose opinions, on any other subject, are known to be worthless.” – C. S. Lewis, “Religion: Reality or Substitute?” *Christian Reflections* (Eerdmans, 1967), 42. Being surrounded by a crowd of mocking teenagers doesn’t help our faith at all, even though such a crowd has no credibility at all.

3) Fear of the shrug. The fear of being ignored has a withering effect on our good intentions.

Quite frankly, I haven’t decided yet which of these three fears is most deadly. But any one of them or any of their near cousins can leave us with a less-than-persuasive witness.

C. The Belligerent. The power of this type of witness is remarkably tenacious. It typically is driven by the conviction that God is on my side and that I speak for God. One could perhaps draw a contrast between the “anthropocentric” perspective and the “theocentric.” The former would include the Arminians (the followers of Jacobus Arminius) and the Wesleyans (the followers of John Wesley). The Calvinists and Augustinians would be the best-known adherents of a “theocentric” approach. A good Calvinist doesn’t need to “win” anyone – God simply speaks the truth. End of discussion.

From a practical point of view, belief in an eternally-burning hell heightens the power of the theocentric approach, for if one rejects the divinely-mandated truth, one is consigned to the fires of hell forever.

In the Old Testament, the theocracy argument for God’s violent behavior is part of this same framework. It assumes that Israel was directly under a theocracy, which is said to validate divine violence. To me, that has always seemed a strange position. For those who believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, one has a forcible argument for a gentle and winsome God.

Ellen White seems to argue that the predominance of the “Belligerent” actually works against faith. Here is one of her more striking statements to that effect:

“The errors of popular theology have driven many a soul to skepticism who might otherwise have been a believer in the Scriptures. It is impossible for him to accept doctrines which outrage his sense of justice, mercy, and benevolence; and since these are represented as the teaching of the Bible, he refuses to receive it as the word of God.” – GC 525

Question: Is it possible to choose to be a more “winsome” witness? And if so, how can that happen?

Question: On balance, what does your class see as the predominant perspective of Scripture? The predominant perspective of the church?

Comment: Two of the best known door-to-door witnessing communities, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Latter-day Saints (Mormons), successfully maintain a strong, authoritarian approach, one that has won many adherents. A 2012 on-line list of the 20 most translated books in the world puts the Bible as #1, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (JW) as #3, the “Watchtower” (JW) as #5, *Steps to Christ* as #9, *Awake!* (JW) #16, *Book of Mormon* (LDS) #17. http://www.chow.co.uk/slideshow_12249316_top-translated-books-history.html#pg=1. The highest JW book (#3) has been translated into 244 languages, and their “Watchtower” magazine has a circulation of 42 million copies a month. Clearly, a firmer, more highly structured approach has a wide appeal.

Theme: Seeing People Through Jesus’ Eyes

Leading question: Why doesn’t Jesus fix everything and everyone at once?

Comment: This lesson brings together a wide diversity of people whom Jesus helped. Some got on the right path almost immediately, and never looked back. Others had to wander for a while. Indeed, in one tantalizing story Jesus healed a blind man in two stages. Let’s focus on some lessons we can learn from Jesus in these stories.

Question: Why did Jesus heal the blind man in two step? Why not all at once.

Comment: The story in Mark 8:22-26 is the only recorded miracle from Jesus which required two steps to bring full restoration. The man was brought to Jesus by his friends. Did both the friends and the blind man need to learn patience? Perhaps. The Bible simply does not say. When Jesus first touched the blind man’s eyes, the man saw people in a haze – “like trees, walking.”

Included in the list of people whom touched in one way or another in this less are some who needed more than two touches. Peter is the most notable example. He responded immediately to Jesus’ call (Matt. 4:18-20). But Peter’s life from there was a wild ride. As Jesus approached end of his ministry some three years later, Peter could be absolutely confident of his own loyalty – then hours later deny his Lord three times. Why couldn’t Jesus fix him the first time? Spiritually, Peter was like the blind man who needed he second touch, and a third, and a fourth.

Question: When Jesus met the Samaritan woman (John 4:3-34), how did her Jesus’ attitude and her vibrant witness affect the disciples?

Comment: When the disciples came back and found Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman, they must have been shocked. Not only was he speaking with a woman, but with a Samaritan, a despised minority to whom hostility was deeply rooted. The story of the origins of that hostility is vividly recorded in 2 Kings 17. To be brief, these people had been transplanted to Judah by the kings of Assyria. They learned to worship Yahweh, but never gave up the worship of their own gods.

Years later when the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon, the Samaritans offered to help rebuild the temple (see Ezra 4). But Zerubbabel and the rest of the Jewish leaders would have nothing to do with them. So the Samaritans left and became troublemakers They never did integrate into mainstream Judaism.

So here was Jesus intentionally going through Samaria. And Jesus would not let the matter rest. He also told a story about the “good” Samaritan who helped the wounded Jew who had been robbed (Luke 10:30-37). A priest and a Levite had walked by and refused to help. But the Samaritan saw him “and was moved to pity.” Without hesitation he helped the Jew. Luke also records a story of 10 lepers whom Jesus healed but only one returned to thank Jesus. The

disciples were getting the kind of lesson about “foreigners” that America desperately needs to hear today.

Comment: Andrew to the rescue. In lesson #1 this quarter, Andrew was listed among the introverts who were quiet but effective witnesses for Jesus. Three times the Gospel of John records how Andrew was bringing someone to Jesus: his own brother Peter (John 1:40, 41), the little boy with the 5 loaves and 2 fish (John 6:5-11), and the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus (John 12:20-26). A follower of Jesus doesn’t need to be flashy. Like Andrew, Jesus’ followers can bring people to Jesus.

Providence to the rescue. Our lesson records two dramatic instances when Providence intervened to point Paul and also Philip in the right direction: Paul came to Troas to preach Christ but also to find his brother Titus. Paul was so troubled when he couldn’t find Titus that he came to the conclusion that God wanted him to go on to Macedonia, which he did (2 Cor. 2: 12-13).

As for Philip, an angel told him to head to south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. He went and had the encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). The conclusion of the story is remarkable: “He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (NRSV).

Sometimes in our modern world we are a bit squeamish about miracles. I continue to be intrigued by C. S. Lewis perspective on providence:

I will not believe in the Managerial God and his general laws. If there is Providence at all, everything is providential and every providence is a special providence. It is an old and pious saying that Christ died not only for Man but for each man, just as much as if each had been the only man there was. Can I not believe the same of this creative act – which, as spread out in time, we call destiny or history? It is for the sake of each human soul. Each is an end. Perhaps for each beast. Perhaps even each particle of matter – the night sky suggests that the inanimate also has for God some value we cannot imagine. His ways are not (not there, anyway) like ours. – C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 55

To believe in “providence” is thoroughly biblical, regardless what the spirit of the age might have to say about it.

Theme: Prayer Power: Interceding for Others

Leading question: Why is prayer so mysterious?

In a rather tantalizing quotation, C. S. Lewis comments about the mysteries of holy places:

I say the gods deal very unrightly with us. For they will neither (which would be best of all) go away and leave us to live our own short days to ourselves, nor will they show themselves openly and tell us what they would have us do. For that too would be endurable. But to hint and hover, to draw near us in dreams and oracles, or in a waking vision that vanishes as soon as seen, to be dead silent when we question them and then glide back and whisper (words we cannot understand) in our ears when we most wish to be free of them, and to show to one what they hide from another; what is all this but cat-and-mouse play, blindman’s buff, and mere jugglery? Why must holy places be dark places? – C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, p. 249, a quote from Orual

Prayer is part of that mystery for all of us. Scripture includes many references to prayer, but seems to fall short of our desires when it comes to giving us full understanding of prayer. The Gospels include a generous sprinkling of references to Jesus’ prayer life, but still leave us puzzled over the nuts and bolts of a healthy prayer life. What did Jesus actually do when he prayed all night? The Bible never says.

Our lesson focuses specifically on intercessory prayer. But that easily overlaps with petitionary prayer in general. And that is a Pandora’s box. For many years I taught a class entitled “Research and Writing in Religion.” One of the projects for the class was a cluster book review on works by these three authors, all focusing on petitionary prayer, and each differing sharply from the other two:

Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Avon Books, 1983.

Lewis, C. S. *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 2002, 19-23, 35-61.

_____. “The Efficacy of Prayer,” in *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, 3-11. San Diego: Harcourt, 2002.

Morneau, Roger. *The Incredible Power of Prayer*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997.

Morneau, who experienced a dramatic conversion, declares that if we are right with God, we will always get what we ask for.

At the other end of the spectrum, Kushner reflects the classic liberal impulse to rescue God's goodness at the price of his power, declaring that God does not intervene in human life. He is a good listening ear, but does not, in fact, cannot intervene with any kind of "miracle." Kushner's response is shaped by the tragic loss of his young son to progeria, early aging disease.

In a middle way, Lewis affirms divine intervention, but argues that the closer we come to God, the less likely it is that God will grant our petitions. This quote from his essay, "The Efficacy of Prayer," is particularly striking:

"I have seen many striking answers to prayer and more than one that I thought miraculous. But they usually come at the beginning: before conversion, or soon after it. As the Christian life proceeds, they tend to be rarer. The refusals, too, are not only more frequent; they become more unmistakable, more emphatic."

Does God then forsake just those who serve Him best? Well, He who served Him best of all said, near His tortured death, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' When God becomes man, that Man, of all others, is least comforted by God, at His greatest need. There is a mystery here which, even if I had the power, I might not have the courage to explore. Meanwhile, little people like you and me, if our prayers are sometimes granted, beyond all hope and probability, had better not draw hasty conclusions to our own advantage. If we were stronger, we might be less tenderly treated. If we were braver, we might be sent, with far less help, to defend far more desperate posts in the great battle. – "Efficacy of Prayer," in *World's Last Night and Other Essays*, 10, 11.

In another essay, "Petitionary Prayer: A problem Without an Answer," *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 142-51, Lewis grapples with the two starkly contrasting patterns of petitionary prayer found in the New Testament. One contains an explicit modifier and is modeled on Christ's prayer in Gethsemane: "Thy will be done." The other pattern is assumed in many New Testament passages, but is stated most explicitly in James 1:6-8: "But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord." (NRSV).

Lewis concludes his essay with this plaintive cry: "How am I to pray this very night?"

Question: How do we move from a potentially paralyzing mystery to helpful action?

Comment: The memory verse for this week, James 5:16, is powerful and straightforward. James was certainly not prepared to be frozen into inactivity by whatever questions he may have had:

"Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." (NRSV)

Included in this week's lesson are two powerful appeals from Paul, one to the church in Ephesus and one to the church in Philippi:

Ephesians 1: 15-19 (NRSV): I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father

of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Philippians 1:3-11 (NRSV): I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

One particularly moving Old Testament example comes from Samuel who responded to the people's plea after their vociferous cry for a king:

1 Sam. 12:19-24 (NRSV): "All the people said to Samuel, 'Pray to the Lord your God for your servants, so that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of demanding a king for ourselves.' 20 And Samuel said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; 21 and do not turn aside after useless things that cannot profit or save, for they are useless. 22 For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. 23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you.'"

Question: How does the cosmic conflict sharpen the issues involving intercessory prayer?

Comment: In both Testaments, Scripture gives us glimpses into the global conflict in which humanity finds itself. Dan.10:10-14 in the OT and Rev. 12:7-9 are the key passages:

Dan. 10:10-14 (NRSV): "But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. 11 He said to me, 'Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you.' So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. 12 He said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of

the kingdom of Persia, 14 and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days.”

Rev. 12:7-9 (NRSV): “And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

The cosmic conflict snaps into view in the next section in the lesson, headed: “Jesus: The Mighty Intercessor.” In this section, a pointed comment to Peter highlights the concept of the cosmic battle:

Luke 22:31-34 (NRSV): “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

In more general terms, three other passages highlight the role of prayer in Jesus’ life. The first was at Jesus’ baptism. Luke notes that after all the people and Jesus himself had been baptized, Jesus “was praying” (Luke 3:21). Then from the heavens a voice commended Jesus.

It was often difficult for Jesus to find a quiet place where he could pray. Luke 5:16 tells us of one such instance: “But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. 16 But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray” (NRSV). A similar instance is recorded in Mark 1:35: “In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed” (NRSV).

A tantalizing comment in Luke 9:18, implies that Jesus’ crucial questioning of the disciples about his messianic identity was triggered by Jesus’ prayer life: “Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’” (NRSV).

In short, the New Testament is not short on urging and admonition when it comes to praying for other people. We should go and do likewise – even if we don’t understand.

GOOD WORD 2020.3
Lesson #5 - August 1

“Making Friends for God”
Mark 8:22-36; John 4:3-34; Acts 8:26-38
– prepared by Alden Thompson, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: “Spirit-empowered Witnessing”

Leading question: Who is the Holy Spirit?

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Christians struggled mightily to understand and define the three members of the Godhead. Its main outlines were established by the Council of

Nicaea (325) and Council of Constantinople (381). But to this day, the understanding of the Trinity, especially the role of the Holy Spirit, continues to be the subject of lively debate.

The complexity of the doctrine is such that this quip by the English minister, Robert South (1634-1716), seems to have some merit: “Just as denying this fundamental Christian belief could cost you your soul, so trying too hard to understand it could cost you your wits.”

It is not surprising, then, that early Adventist pioneers were not enthusiastic in their support of the traditional doctrine. Both James White (1821-1881) and Uriah Smith (1832-1903), were well-known for their outspoken antipathy to the Trinity. In the *Review and Herald* for Aug 5, 1852, for example, James White wrote of “that old trinitarian absurdity.” And Uriah Smith, to his dying day, could not affirm the traditional doctrine of the Trinity.

In Adventism in the late 19th century, scepticism about the doctrine of the Trinity remained widespread. LeRoy Froom, in *Movement of Destiny* (Review and Herald, 1971), noted that after 1888, R. A. Underwood had given several studies on the Holy Spirit as a “Person of the Godhead” at one campmeeting where “the ministers by vote asked him not to speak further on the subject” (p. 266).

But when we turn to Scripture, all those debates over definitions are nowhere to be found. John 14-16 speaks openly of the interplay between Father, Son, and Spirit. Two of the more forceful passages are these: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:26, NRSV). “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf” (John 15:26, NRSV).

The other rich source for the work of the Spirit is the book of Acts. The official study guide for Monday notes, “The book of Acts rightly has been called, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

So for practical purposes we will simply understand the Spirit as the active and personal presence of God in the life of God’s people.

Question: What striking examples in the book of Acts illustrate the work of the Spirit in the life of the church?

Stoning of Stephen: “But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55, NRSV).

Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch: “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39, NRSV).

Gentiles receive the Spirit: “While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (Acts 10:44, 45, NRSV).

Unity at the Jerusalem Conference: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled

and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell” (Acts 15:28, 29, NRSV).

Closed door to Asia, open door to Macedonia: “They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; 8 so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ 10 When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them” (Acts 16:6-10, NRSV).

Question: What impressive conversion stories does the book of Acts record?

Lydia: “A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. 15 When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.’ And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16:14-15, NRSV).

Philippian jailer: “When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted in a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ 29 The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They answered, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ 32 They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. 34 He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God” (Acts 16:27-34, NRSV).

Dionysius and Damaris of Athens: “When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’ 33 At that point Paul left them. 34 But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (Acts 17:32-34, NRSV).

Crispus and other Corinthians: “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. 6 When they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ 7 Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his

house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized” (Acts 18:5-8, NRSV).

Question: How important was it that Philip not only told the story of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, but linked Jesus’ story with the Old Testament prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53?

Acts 8:26-39 (NRSV): “Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ 31 He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.’

34 The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.”

Comment: Everything discussed in this lesson indicates why the Spirit played such a large role in the experience of the early believers. They most likely did not understand how God was accomplishing his work, but they sensed the mysterious power of God at work and were grateful.

Theme: “Unlimited Possibilities”

Leading question: What is God’s plan for employing a wide variety of skills and talents in the work of his kingdom?

Not all of us have the same talents and capabilities. And even when our talents are similar to someone else’s, it is not likely to be developed to the same extent. In that connection, Paul gives wise counsel in connection with his observations about the fruit of the spirit. Here the key words are italicized:

Galatians 5:22-26 (NRSV): “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, *23 gentleness, and self-control.* There is no law against such things. *24* And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. *25* If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. *26* *Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.*”

Question: How do we develop diverse talents without envying each other?

Comment: Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian believers can give us very helpful insights. In the first chapter, he documents the divisions in the church, noting how they were choosing up sides behind their favorite preachers: Peter, Paul, or Apollos. This troubled Paul deeply. In fact, Paul’s improving memory inserts a touch of humor into this otherwise very serious letter:

1 Cor. 1:10-17 (NRSV): “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. *11* For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. *12* What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ *13* Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? *14* I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, *15* so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. *16* (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) *17* For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.”

What Paul really wanted to say: “I’m glad I didn’t baptize a single one of you!” But then his memory began to improve. His point is clear – his supporting evidence was just not as tidy as he wanted it to be.

But Paul unfolds the essence of his argument in chapter 3 when he compares his gifts with those of Apollos. Here the key words are italicized:

1 Cor. 3:5-9 (NRSV): “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.* 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. 9 For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

In other words, Paul was the front-line evangelist; Apollos was more pastoral. Thus Paul planted, Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the increase. Their gifts were different, but they could work together. He goes on to add another metaphor to the agricultural one: a building. Then in 1 Corinthians 12, develops the body metaphor. In short, whether agriculture, or building, or body, all the metaphors point to a unity in diversity. When applied to the church it sounds like this:

1 Cor. 12:4-16 (NRSV): “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

Using the body as his primary metaphor, he bluntly states: “The body does not consist of one member, but of many” (vs. 14). And at the end of the chapter he again lists the *variety* of gifts which God has placed in the church:

1 Cor. 12: 27-31 (NRSV): “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.”

The last line, of course, leads directly into 1 Corinthians 13, Paul’s celebration of the greatest gift of all, love.

Question: Can we grow our gifts?

The official study guide cites the parable of the “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) as a good model for “growing” our gifts. Even though the original parable dealt with money, not with spiritual gifts, the application to personal and spiritual gifts is only a small step away. The 5 talent person and the 2 talent person were both equally commended by the master. The only worker who was condemned was the one who did nothing, literally burying his talent in the earth.

In short, if we use our gifts, they will grow and we will grow with them.

Theme: Sharing *the* Word

Leading question: Why is the Word of God as found in Scripture more powerful than our own words?

Over 100 years ago, a popular American preacher, P. T. Forsyth, wrote some intriguing words about the Bible.

“I do not believe in verbal inspiration. I am with the critics in principle. But the true minister ought to find the words and phrases of the Bible so full of spiritual food and felicity that he has some difficulty in not believing in verbal inspiration.” – P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907), 38; Eerdmans reprint, 26.

The author of our official study guide put a particular emphasis on Scripture in the title for this week’s lesson, italicizing the word “*the*” before Word, suggesting that Scripture is in fact more powerful than our own ordinary words. We’ll want to explore why that is the case. The friends of the Samaritan woman who went rushing out to meet Jesus after hearing the testimony of the woman are worth pondering:

John 4:39-42 (NRSV): “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’”

The example is imperfect because the one whose witness really touched their heart was that of Jesus, the WORD made flesh. But what makes the difference between the words of a person and the words of Scripture? Can the testimony of an ordinary person be more powerful than simply the words of Scripture, spoken, perhaps, without emphasis or color?

We once had a Congregational pastor living in our valley by the name of Roger Robbennolt. He was a gifted dramatist and also had a remarkable conversion story to tell. He told how he had once given a dramatic presentation of Hosea 11 at a time when he was *not* a believer. A woman came up to him afterwards and said, “You must really believe in God to be able to tell the story of Hosea 11 like that.”

“Not really,” Robbennolt replied. “I actually don’t believe in God.”

The woman paused for a moment, then said, “But you helped me believe in God by the way you spoke those words.”

Could we perhaps say that our own experience with the written Word may enable the Word to be more effective than it could otherwise be?

God’s Word as magic? While the Word of God can be very powerful, it is possible to see in more like magic than a message that moves our hearts by speaking to our reason. I once had an

experience with a student who was troubled by the way I was dealing with Scripture. The discussion was about modern translations, and I was wanting my students to be aware of why certain parts of our Bibles go missing in modern translations. In particular, I was focusing on the three most significant New Testament passages in this respect: the final lines of the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6, the story of the adulterous woman in John 8; and the trinity proof text of 1 John 5:7-8. This is what she said in a written response:

I guess I really don't understand. If we teach our children the doxology part, wouldn't we want it in our Bible, too? The story of the adulteress – if it is not in the old manuscripts then how do we know that it is true? I guess that maybe I am one of those people that you talk about that have a hard time with the fact that you are raising up questions about the word of God.

It is really starting to upset me the way you are making the Bible seem like it all might not be true. See, when I was a kid a lot of people turned out to be not true. They let me down and now I don't trust them. Well, you are making the Bible feel like I can't trust it. How do I know what really happened and what did not happen? I have always been able to feel security in the Bible. When I was scared or frightened as a kid I would sleep with it. I always felt safe then. But your class is bringing up questions that I don't like and can't deal with. Please help gain back the trust I am losing. Thanks.

I gave her some special care and attention and believe we were able to turn the corner in terms of her life of faith. But her experience has highlighted for me the fine line between the legitimate power of the Word, and the magical aura that can sometimes intrude into our piety.

Metaphors for God's Word. The official study guide for this week's lesson provides a rich list of metaphors, rooted in different passages of Scripture, that describe the effect of the Word when it finds root in our lives:

Lamp and a Light (Ps. 119:105)

Fire and a Hammer (Jer. 23:29)

Seed – in good soil (Luke 8:4-15)

Bread of Life (John 6:35) – this metaphor triggered a great deal of discussion (see John 6:35-59)

Metaphors aside, the real value of studying the Word is outlined in 2 Tim. 3:16-17: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (NRSV). One does not have to be a wordsmith to know that Scripture is a source of power.

Theme: Ministering Like Jesus

Leading question: Was Jesus always gentle in his ministry?

Human beings are visionary creatures. Isaiah’s vegetarian kingdom is a powerful, tantalizing, and attractive vision, even if we can scarcely imagine it:

Isaiah 11:6-9 (NRSV):

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.
9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Similarly, the idealistic side of our nature can tempt some of us to see Jesus’ entire ministry as one of pure gentleness. He took the little children into his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16), a huge contrast with the God of Sinai who warned Moses that whoever touched the mountain, whether human or animal, must be put to death, “stoned or shot with arrows” (Exod. 19:12, 13).

On the other hand, some of us, seeking to recover a more rigorous view of the divine presence, may point to Jesus’ cleansing of the temple to illustrate their point. But as one author has pointed out, when Jesus cleansed the temple, he attacked the furniture, not the people (cf. Matt. 21:12-13). And what was so astonishing about Jesus’ anger in that setting was that the evil people fled in terror, but the children came running to him (cf. Matt. 21:14-16). I would give anything to be able to display that kind of anger.

Question: What examples in the New Testament point to a more rigorous side of Jesus’ nature?

Example: Woes against the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23)

Example: Command to the young ruler to sell all and give to the poor (Luke 18:22)

Counter-example: Zacchaeus who was allowed to keep much of his wealth
(Luke 19:8, 9)

In short, Jesus was very pragmatic. He could be firm or gentle, as needed. The apostles were also very pragmatic, realizing that some needed more muscle, some less. As Paul put it:

“What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?” (1 Cor. 4:21, NRSV).

Question: According to New Testament, how approachable was Jesus, understanding Jesus to be God in the flesh?

The testimony of Jesus’ followers:

1 John 1:1-4 (NRSV): “We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – 3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”

Question: What clues might be found in the Old Testament of God’s ultimate goal as revealed in Jesus?

“Law” as an example. To ears attuned to English, the word “law” has a rigorous sound. You’ve never heard anyone say, “It’s the law!” with a smile on their face. But the Hebrew word *torah* is a much friendlier term, pointing to wholesomeness and health. Psalm 119 points to this positive perspective! The longest psalm in the Bible celebrates law, *torah*, wholeness. And when Moses touted this positive side of “law” to the people, he noted that even Israel’s pagan neighbors would be attracted by Israel’s “laws”:

Deut. 4:5-8, NRSV: “See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. 6 You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!’ 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?”

Jesus’ ministry, in sum. If we are to minister “like Jesus,” we will be attentive to whatever the people need. Matthew tells us at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, how the people reacted to Jesus’ teaching: “Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt. 7:28-29, NRSV). His teaching, his healing ministry, his example, is for us to follow.

GOOD WORD 2020.3
Lesson #9 - August 29

“Making Friends for God”
Eph. 4:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:24-26

– prepared by Alden Thompson, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: Developing a Winning Attitude

Leading Question: How can we overcome deeply-rooted negative attitudes?

Galatians 3:28 lays out the agenda for those of us who follow Jesus: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (NRSV).

Our most stubborn prejudices seem to be rooted in the impulses which Paul mentions in this passage. Especially crucial in our day are those attitudes that come under the heading of racism or sexism. Identifying negative attitudes is one thing; changing them is quite another. This week we want to focus on the process of actually overcoming those attitudes. And here the relations between Jews and Samaritans provide a good case study for us.

The story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 comes up frequently in our discussions this quarter. How did Jesus model relations with a woman and a foreigner? Providence brought them together at a famous Jewish site, Jacob’s well. The disciples were shocked to see Jesus speaking with her. After Jesus sent her back to bring her “husband,” having revealed the woman’s history to her, she raced back to the town and spread the word, “He told me everything I have ever done” (John 4:39, NRSV). The people came pouring out of town to see him.

But after listening to Jesus themselves, they added: “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world” (John 4:42, NRSV).

Question: How long did it take for racist impulse to subside in the minds of the disciples?

Comment: Scripture doesn’t tell us how long it took for the racist impulse to subside in the hearts of the disciples. The Gospels are peppered with instances where they had to confront the issue. Among the more notable ones are the stories of the good Samaritan who helped the Jewish victim attacked by robbers on the Jericho road (Luke 10:25-37) and the Canaanite woman with the demon-possessed daughter who came to Jesus in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon (Mark 7:24-30).

The fruits of this exposure began to come clear in the narratives told in Acts. Philip went to Samaria and was greeted enthusiastically by the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-8). When the leaders in Jerusalem heard about this welcome they sent Peter and John to follow up on the opportunity. In short, some of the hardness against Samaritans and other foreigners had begun to melt. That’s what happens when you spend time with Jesus!

Speaking the truth in love. The call to grow together in love reverberates through Paul’s message to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NRSV): “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”

The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome. For those who serve the Lord, the temptation always lurks near at hand to reprimand those who are not being as faithful as church leaders might wish.

But Paul's counsel to Timothy is also a good word for the modern pastor who works to meet the spiritual needs of an increasingly diverse church family:

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ((NRSV): "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, 25 correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, 26 and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

Ellen White would say a hearty amen to Paul's counsel:

"Those who present the eternal principles of truth need the holy oil emptied from the two olive branches into the heart. This will flow forth in words that will reform, but not exasperate. The truth is to be spoken in love. Then the Lord Jesus by His Spirit will supply the force and the power. That is His work. (*Testimonies* 6:122-23)

A note from Adventist history: The last quotation from Ellen White's *Testimonies* for the church is included in a larger comment to one of the more strident Adventists of the 19th century, A. T. Jones. He was especially good at "bashing" the Catholics. These are Ellen White's pointed comments to him. The quote above will be included again it concludes a section:

The influence of your teaching would be tenfold greater if you were careful of your words. Words that should be a savor of life unto life may by the spirit which accompanies them be made a savor of death unto death. And remember that if by your spirit or your words you close the door to even one soul, that soul will confront you in the judgment.

Do not, when referring to the *Testimonies*, feel it your duty to drive them home. In reading the *Testimonies* be sure not to mix in your filling of words, for this makes [122/123] it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words. Be sure that you do not make the word of the Lord offensive. We long to see reforms, and because we do not see that which we desire, an evil spirit is too often allowed to cast drops of gall into our cup, and thus others are embittered. By our ill-advised words their spirit is chafed, and they are stirred to rebellion.

Every sermon you preach, every article you write, may be all true; but one drop of gall in it will be poison to the hearer or the reader. Because of that drop of poison, one will discard all your good and acceptable words. Another will feed on the poison; for he loves such harsh words; he follows your example, and talks just as you talk. Thus the evil is multiplied.

Those who present the eternal principles of truth need the holy oil emptied from the two olive branches into the heart. This will flow forth in words that will reform, but not exasperate. The truth is to be spoken in love. Then the Lord Jesus by His Spirit will supply the force and the power. That is His work. (*Testimonies* 6:122-23)

I suspect that Ellen White would give a warm amen to the theme for this week's lesson, "Developing a Winning Attitude."

Theme: An Exciting Way to Get Involved

Leading Question: Why do some people really like small groups and some people really don't?

This week's lesson trumpets the advantages of small groups. Before looking at some biblical material relating to that them, I will share a cluster of personal and general observations which might encourage discussion in Sabbath School this week.

1. Observation #1: Half my students really like small groups, half really don't.

Small groups in a classroom setting don't function in quite the same way that small groups would in a church setting, though there is enough cross-over to make it worth pondering the comparison. Over the years I have tried a host of tricks to try and improve the percentage that like them. Nothing has made a difference. It may be simply the difference between the extroverts and introverts.

2. Observation #2: Communication experts say that once a group exceeds seven people, some members of the group cease to contribute. Since I am not an expert in the field, I am simply reporting what others have said.

3. Observation #3: Under the heading of “social support,” sociologists of knowledge say that much of what we consider “reasonable” is simply the consensus of those around us. Here I would offer three quotations in support, including one from Scripture. The biblical passage is from Hebrews 10:23-25:

Hebrews 10:23-25 (NRSV): “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

The author of Hebrews was not a sociologist, but he did know that meeting together was crucial for believers. A quote from C. S. Lewis makes the same point. And the only sociologist in this cluster, Peter Berger, confirms the position from a sociologist's perspective.

C. S. Lewis: “The society of unbelievers makes faith harder, even when they are people whose opinions on any other subject are known to be worthless.” – “Religion: Reality or Substitute?” in *Christian Reflections*, 43.

Peter Berger: “Put crudely, if one is to believe what neo-orthodoxy wants one to believe, in the contemporary situation, then one must be rather careful to huddle together closely and continuously with one's fellow believers.” – *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 164

The author of our study guide cites two biblical passages that point to the success of small groups, the first is from the time of the Exodus when Moses' father-in-law, Jethro noted the inefficiency of Moses' way of doing things:

Exodus 18:21-25 (NRSV): “You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.’

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.”

The second example comes from the New Testament and Jesus' selection of the 12:

Mark 3:13-15 (NRSV): “He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons.”

A call to small group development? Our study guide cites Jesus' comments about the harvest as a possible call for small group development. What do you think?

Matt. 9:37, 38 (NRSV): “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

Theme: “Sharing the Story of Jesus”

Leading Question: Will a before-and-after difference always be clear when a person is converted?

We could cite several dramatic conversion stories from the New Testament. But there are other examples, too. Can we say when each of these was converted? Was a difference marked and consistent in their lives? Perhaps these terms could help us understand the differences.

Sudden

Flamboyant

Invisible

Consistent before/after conversion

Zechariah, father of John the Baptist – no clear point, consistent

Elizabeth – no clear point, consistent

John the Baptist – no clear point, consistent

Peter – erratic, converted several times

Andrew – no clear point, consistent

Nathaniel – no clear point, consistent

James and John – from sons of thunder, to apostles of love

Mary, sister of Martha

Martha

Mary Magdalene

Lazarus

Nicodemus

Joseph of Arimathea

Saul/Paul

Question: Our study guide lists two quotations from Ephesians, labeling one as coming before conversion, the other as after. Does such a division apply to the experience of each believer?

Before:

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NRSV): “You were dead through the trespasses and sins ² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

After:

Ephesians 2:4-10 (NRSV): ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Question: If a person cannot pinpoint the moment of conversion, does that call into question that person’s walk with the Lord?

Jesus and the Sons of Thunder. Apparently it was Jesus who gave the nickname to James and John (Mark 3:17). And one incident recorded in the Gospels seems to reflect that label. As recorded in Luke 9:51-55, Jesus and his disciples visited a Samaritan village which did not accept them. This is the incident as recorded by Luke:

Luke 9:51-56 (NRSV): “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³ but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then they went on to another village.

The official study guide cites 1 John as evidence for the change: the word “love” in its various forms appears 50 times. That’s what Jesus can do for each of us. It’s a story worth sharing.

GOOD WORD 2020.3

Lesson #12 - September 19

“Making Friends for God”

Revelation 14

– prepared by Alden Thompson, School of Theology, WWU

Theme: “A Message Worth Sharing”

Leading Question: “What is God’s message for today?”

As I prepared the study guide for this lesson, I found myself moving further and further back into biblical history, looking for the great hope for restoration among God’s people. For starters, Isaiah’s great dream of God’s vegetarian kingdom is a cry for a better world:

Isaiah 11:6-9 (NRSV): “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.”

But then I broadened my search to the Psalms and focused on the great Judgment psalms of 96 and 98:

Psalms 96:10-13 (NRSV): Say among the nations, “The Lord is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity.”
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
12 let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
13 before the Lord; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

Psalms 98:4-9 (NRSV): Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.
7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
8 Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy
9 at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Note that these calls for judgment are good news, calls for God to establish his righteous kingdom throughout the earth. When the psalmists cry out, they know that things aren't right, but they know that God can put them right.

Then we turn to the book of Daniel, and his vision of chapter 2 where a great stone smashes the great image and fills the whole earth. And in chapter 7, the saints receive the kingdom. The final chapter announces the arrival of Michael the prince, who will come and deliver his people (Daniel 12:1).

Then Jesus comes and tells his disciples: "Let not your hearts be troubled," he says. "I will come again and take you to myself" (John 14:1, 3, NRSV).

And in the last book of the Bible, the Revelator announces the "good news" of the hour of God's judgment: "The hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). And Scripture calls it "good news"! Finally, at the very end of book, the promise is given, "Surely I am coming soon" (Rev. 22:20, NRSV).

Centuries pass and finally the Reformation (1517 and after), announced that the just shall live by faith. The focus was not so much on the renewal of the earth, but on the restoration of the human heart.

Adventism was formally organized in 1863, but grew out of the Great Awakening, a renewal movement in New England that peaked in 1740-1742, and the Second Great Awakening (ca.1787-1825).

Adventism found its focus in Revelation 14 and the good news announcement of God's coming judgment (Rev. 14:7). And that is the focus of this week's lesson.

Question: What does it mean to say that Jesus is coming "soon" when God's people have been waiting for his "soon" coming for thousands of years? Does the New Testament give us any guidance?

Comment: Matthew 24 and 25 is our best resource of Jesus' teaching about the "when" of his coming. In short, he tells that we can't know when he is coming. Therefore, we must always be ready. See following article: "Living in the End Time, By Alden Thompson, *Signs of the Times*, June 1984, pp. 8-10.

Living in the End Time

By Alden Thompson

(*Signs of the Times*, June 1984, pp. 8-10)

Somewhere in our town lives a man with 150 guns tucked away at home. Is he a collector or a crook? Neither, actually. He simply believes the world is about to fall apart. And when it does, he intends to protect himself from the rabble.

Because our local gunman is not alone in his fear of hard times, survival stores are hot items right now in several parts of the country. Our local newspaper quoted the owner of one such store in southern Oregon as claiming that 90% of his business came from the sale of firearms and self-defense items.

Now if a man sees his home as his castle, fortified against the imminent collapse of civilization, he probably won't wander very far afield. In fact, a friend told me recently of one man in our valley who is so gripped by the fear of the end that he refuses to travel any further from home than the distance he can cover with his car on a half tank of gas. The other half tank in reserve is his protection from being stranded when the crisis strikes.

This survival mania poses interesting questions for Christians. Would you, for example, expect the gunman, the survival store owner, and the man with the half tank of gas to worship together on the week-end? And if they sat beside you in your pew in your church, what you want them to hear?

Somewhere along the line the man with the guns probably should hear Jesus' word about turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). The man with the half tank of gas probably should hear about going the second mile (Matt. 5:41). All three would no doubt profit from a sermon based on the text, "Perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18). But what about the underlying assumption that the world is on the verge of collapse? Does a Christian have something to say about that?

He should – for Scripture says a fair bit about the demise of civilization. But the New Testament hardly envisions a simple slide toward anarchy. Instead, Scripture tells of a clean sweep followed by a fresh new world--"a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1). In such a scenario 150 guns or a half tank of gas won't offer much comfort.

Because I grew up steeped in the fervent hope of the return of Christ and the end of the world, the reaction of some Christians to the biblical teaching puzzles me. In Scotland, for example, I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with a fine Christian gentleman, a Protestant and deeply committed to his faith. But when we talked about the end of the world, he simply confessed to being quite mystified.

On another occasion, a devout Roman Catholic woman attending classes on the campus of our Adventist college, exclaimed, "I have never lived with this sense of expectancy, destiny or urgency."

Now living without a sense of expectancy has one great advantage--one never faces the spectre of disappointment. And Adventists do know something about disappointment. Born out of the Millerite movement of the nineteenth century, Adventists are the spiritual heirs of those who unflinchingly expected their Lord to come and the world to end on October 22, 1844. But they were disappointed – keenly disappointed. In the words of the Adventist pioneer Hiram Edson, "Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before.... We wept, and wept, till the day dawn."

In the agonizing days which followed, Adventists had to learn to live expectantly – but with disappointment. Fortunately, Jesus prepared his disciples for just such a situation and his counsel is recorded for us in Matthew 24 and 25.

The essence of the first of these chapters, Matthew 24, is a tantalizing paradox: signs will tell us the end is near, yet the end will catch us by surprise. Then from the three stories in Matthew 25, we discover an end-time agenda consisting of three simple principles: sleeping nights, working days, and helping those in need. Sounds suspiciously like life as usual, doesn't it? Let's take a closer look.

When the disciples asked about the signs of his coming and the end of the world, Jesus described the difficult times to come, but cautioned, "Don't be alarmed; all this has to happen, but the end is not yet" (Matt. 24:6). In fact, wars, famines, and earthquakes would be "but the

beginning" of troubles (Matt. 24:8). Nevertheless, these signs would show the disciples that his coming was "near, at the very gates" (Matt. 24:33).

But then the surprise – in spite of warning signs, the end would come as a thief in the night, "at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:43-44).

Now if the Lord's return is going to catch us by surprise, is it safe simply to continue to live life as usual? Jesus' answer to that question is found in his final illustration of Matthew 24. There he tells of two servants, one "faithful and wise," because he consistently fulfilled his responsibilities; the other "wicked," because he said, "My master is delayed," using that as an excuse to beat his fellow servants and to adopt a reckless, drunken lifestyle (Matt. 24:49).

The "wicked" servant apparently was counting on some kind of warning, something buying him time so he could shape up before his master returned. Surprise. The master returns "when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know" (Matt. 24:50). The moral of the story is clear enough – the one safe course is a faithful "life as usual."

And does the text say anything about stashing away weapons? Not a peep. The wise servant knows that times will be difficult. Yet Jesus had counseled, "Don't be alarmed" (Matt. 24:6). Thus the formula for end-time living is surprisingly simple: no fear, no special preparations, just a faithful life as usual.

"Wait a minute," you say. "When times get tough my body begins pumping adrenaline. What's the Christian's antidote for that?" Good question and one to which we must return. But first a quick look at the other half of Jesus' end-time counsel, Matthew 25.

Immediately following his discussion of signs and surprises (Matthew 24), Jesus tells three stories to conclude his "last days" discourse. Telling of high hopes, disappointment, and delay, these stories also raise the question of accountability--how have we lived in a time of expectancy and disappointment?

The first story tells of an oriental wedding party – ten virgins to be more precise – eagerly awaiting the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13). But the hours slip by. No bridegroom appears. Disappointment.

The virgins not only slumber, they sleep – all ten of them. Now if we were telling the story, we would probably let the five foolish virgins sleep and keep the wise ones awake. But Jesus even put the wise ones to sleep. He wanted to show that a prepared person doesn't need to panic when the Lord returns.

When the bridegroom actually came, the wise virgins had oil for their lamps and were ready to go. Only the foolish virgins panicked; the delay had burned up all their oil.

The second story, usually known as the parable of the talents, describes a businessman who entrusts his estate to his servants while he departs on a long journey (Matt. 25:14-30). In contrast with the parable of the virgins, no dramatic sense of expectancy dominates the story. The focus is rather on accountability. Giving no clue as to how long he will be gone, the owner simply expects his servants to manage his estate during his absence.

He finally returns to settle accounts, but only "after a long time" (Matt. 25:19). Two of the three servants had doubled their assigned capital, one converting five talents into ten, the other, two into four.

The master calls both of these servants "good and faithful" (Matt. 25:21, 23). For them, his arrival had occasioned no panic, no frenzied burst of activity. From the day of his departure they had been prepared for his return.

But one servant did panic and right from day one. In his fear he did nothing with his one talent except bury it in the ground. Upon returning, his master called him "wicked and slothful,"

chiding him for not making at least minimum effort by investing his one talent with the bankers. The master wasn't asking for brilliant achievement or extraordinary effort; he would have been quite happy with "ordinary" faithfulness. But the man did nothing at all – except panic.

The final story in Matthew 25 is a judgment scene, the separation of the sheep from the goats. Jesus, represented by the king sitting in judgment, catches the "sheep" by surprise in quite a different sense. He welcomes them to his kingdom, commending them for all the acts of kindness which they have done to him personally: feeding him, slaking his thirst, welcoming him when he was a stranger, clothing him, and visiting him both when he was sick and when he was in prison (Matt. 25:35-36).

The saints are non-plussed, saying, in effect (politely), "We don't know what you are talking about." Then the surprise: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40). By their faithful "life as usual," caring for the needs of those close by, the saints had ministered to the king himself.

How could Jesus have outlined a clearer plan for living in the endtime? A follower of Christ must be prepared for delay. Prudent planning is therefore essential: we should always maintain an adequate supply of "oil" (for our "spiritual" lamps, not for our cars!). But then we should be able to sleep nights, to work days, and to continue ministering to those in need.

And in times of crisis, what is the antidote for our adrenaline? It is both simple and mysterious. Everyone burdened with the cares of this wild world is invited to come to Jesus for rest (Matt. 11:28). Knowledge of his love casts out fear (I John 4:18).

But wait. Let's not be too hasty in choking off the adrenal glands. The troubles in the world are signs of the end. Such signs are God's warning signals to those who are drowsy and unprepared. A shot of adrenaline could save their lives.

Theme: “A Step in Faith”

Leading Question: How does one explain a life-long commitment to God?

Our lesson this week focuses of the example of Jesus in giving all for humanity, then on several New Testament characters who accepted his invitation to a life-long commitment.

Question: How does Jesus’ example reflect his invitation to his followers for a life-long commitment?

Philippians 2 contains the famous passage describing Jesus’ emptying himself for us:

Philippians 2:1-11 (NRSV): If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If, as this passage so clearly teaches, Jesus is our example in matters of self-sacrifice, then we have an explanation for the examples of commitment which the NT gives us:

Matthew 4:18-22: The call of Peter, Andrew, James and John, to abandon their nets and become fishers of men: “As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him” (NRSV).

Matthew 9:9: The call of Matthew to leave his tax booth: “As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him” (NRSV).

Comment: In the case of these five disciples, Jesus simply gave the invitation and the response was instantaneous. Should that be a model for us? Always? One could think of the example of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both of whom were much slower to make a full commitment.

Acts 9:1-19: The call of Saul of Tarsus. “Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ 5 He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’ 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ 11 The Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’ 13 But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.’ 15 But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16 I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’ 17 So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength” (NRSV).

John 21: 15-19: The restoration of Peter. “When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ 16 A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ 17 He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me’” (NRSV).

The universal mandate for all God’s children. We have looked at individual cases of disciples who abandoned everything to follow Christ. In 1 John 3 we find a command that applies to all who follow Jesus:

1 John 3:16-18 (NRSV): “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? 18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

Question: What is the remedy for those who hesitate when the call comes to follow Christ?

Comment: The ideal response is an immediate one. But God is gracious and patient. He can wait. The experience of C. S. Lewis can be a source of comfort to those who find it difficult to make an immediate commitment:

“You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that [183] Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words *compelle intrare*, compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation. – C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, Fontana edition, pp. 182-183. (ch. XIV, par. 22- 23).