

## Lesson 1

### Part of God's Family

#### Sabbath Afternoon, December 31

You are learning in this world how to conduct yourselves in the family of Christ in heaven.

Lose no time in becoming acquainted with the principles that the children of God must follow. We are here to copy the character of Christ, to become familiar with His gentleness, His lowliness. This will place us where our record will be, "Ye are complete in him." (Colossians 2:10). By patience, kindness, forbearance, we are to show that we are not of the world, that day by day we are learning the lessons that will fit us to enter the higher school. —The Upward Look, p. 248.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1. And Christ says, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18)—to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, . . . for His body's sake, which is the church." Colossians 1:24. Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. This work had been neglected in Israel. Is it not neglected today by those who profess to be Christ's followers?—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 191.

Our privileges are far greater than were the privileges of God's ancient people. We have not only the great light committed to Israel, but we have the increased evidence of the great salvation brought to us through Christ. That which was type and symbol to the Jews is reality to us. They had the Old Testament history; we have that and the New Testament also. We have the assurance of a Saviour who has come, a Saviour who has been crucified, who has risen, and over the rent sepulcher of Joseph has proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life." In our knowledge of Christ and His love the kingdom of God is placed in the midst of us. Christ is revealed to us in sermons and chanted to us in songs. The spiritual banquet is set before us in rich abundance. The wedding garment, provided at infinite cost, is freely offered to every soul. . . . What could God do for us that He has not done in providing the great supper, the heavenly banquet? —Christ's Object Lessons, p. 317.

Your Heavenly Father has claims upon you; for without solicitation or merit on your part He gives you the bounties of His providence; and more than this, He has given you all heaven in one gift, that of His beloved Son. In return for this infinite gift, He claims of you willing obedience. As you are bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, He requires that you make a right use of the privileges you enjoy. Your intellectual and moral faculties are God's gifts, talents entrusted to you for wise improvement, and you are not at liberty to let them lie dormant for want of proper cultivation, or be crippled and dwarfed by inaction. It is for you to determine whether or not the weighty responsibilities that rest upon you shall be faithfully met, whether or not your efforts shall be well directed and your best. —Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 85.

## **Sunday, January 1: We Are Part of God's Family**

God calls for a change among His people. Union with Christ and with one another is our only safety in these last days. Let us not make it possible for Satan to point to our church members, saying, "Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another. We have nothing to fear from them while they spend more strength fighting one another than in warfare with my forces."

After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth's sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.—The Upward Look, p. 358.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26-28.

The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus. With God there is no respect of persons.—That I May Know Him, p. 99.

Human sympathy should be cherished in every heart. It is an attribute of God, and is never to be banished. "All ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). God has laid upon men the responsibility of giving sympathy to their fellow men, of helping the needy, the wounded, the bruised. Many are demoralized by their own course of action, but who of the human family can understand, as God understands, the cause of their misery?

There are in our world today many wounded, cheerless hearts who need relief. The Lord has agencies for brightening the lives of these disconsolate ones. We may each put our talents out to usury by lifting the clouds, and letting in the sunlight of hope and faith in Him who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).—This Day With God, p. 183.

He who gave Eve to Adam as a helpmeet, performed His first miracle at a marriage festival. In the festal hall where friends and kindred rejoiced together, Christ began His public ministry. Thus He sanctioned marriage, recognizing it as an institution that He Himself had established. He ordained that men and women should be united in holy wedlock, to rear families whose members, crowned with honor, should be recognized as members of the family above.

Christ honored the marriage relation by making it also a symbol of the union between Him and His redeemed ones. He Himself is the Bridegroom; the bride is the church, of which, as His chosen one, He says, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." Song of Solomon 4:7.—The Ministry of Healing, p. 356.

## **Monday, January 2: God Is the Owner of Everything**

God speaks to us in nature. It is His voice we hear as we gaze upon the beauty and richness of the natural world. We view His glory in the beautiful things His hand has made. We stand and behold His works without a veil between. God has given us these things that in beholding the works of His hands we may learn of Him.

God has given us these precious things as an expression of His love. The Lord is a lover of the beautiful, and to please and gratify us He has spread before us the beauties of nature, even as an earthly parent seeks to place beautiful things before the children that He loves. The Lord is always pleased to see us happy. Sinful as it is with all its imperfections, the Lord has lavished upon this earth the useful and the beautiful. The beautiful, tinted flowers tell of His tenderness and love. They have a language of their own, reminding us of the Giver.—The Upward Look, p. 327.

If men would open their understanding to discern the relation between nature and nature's God, faithful acknowledgments of the Creator's power would be heard. Without the life of God, nature would die. His creative works are dependent on Him. He bestows life-giving properties on all that nature produces. We are to regard the trees laden with fruit as the gift of God, just as much as though He placed the fruit in our hands.—Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1081.

From the very opening of David's reign one of his most cherished plans had been that of erecting a temple to the Lord. Though he had not been permitted to execute this design, he had manifested no less zeal and earnestness in its behalf. He had provided an abundance of the most costly material—gold, silver, onyx stones, and stones of divers colors; marble, and the most precious woods. . . .

David had felt deeply his own unworthiness in gathering the material for the house of God, and the expression of loyalty in the ready response of the nobles of his kingdom, as with willing hearts they dedicated their treasures to Jehovah and devoted themselves to His service, filled him with joy. But it was God alone who had imparted this disposition to His people. He, not man, must be glorified. It was He who had provided the people with the riches of earth, and His Spirit had made them willing to bring their precious things for the temple. It was all of the Lord; if His love had not moved upon the hearts of the people, the king's efforts would have been vain, and the temple would never have been erected.

All that man receives of God's bounty still belongs to God. Whatever God has bestowed in the valuable and beautiful things of earth is placed in the hands of men to test them—to sound the depths of their love for Him and their appreciation of His favors. Whether it be the treasures of wealth or of intellect, they are to be laid, a willing offering, at the feet of Jesus; the giver saying, meanwhile, with David, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

—Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 750–753.

### **Tuesday, January 3: Resources Available for God's Family**

Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price.—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 116.

Oh, we do not comprehend the value of the atonement! If we did, we would talk more about it. The gift of God in His beloved Son was the expression of an incomprehensible love. It was the utmost that God could do to preserve the honor of His law, and still save the transgressor. Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind. If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of His shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin.—Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1132.

Jesus did not seek to attract the people to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. To that great throng, weary and hungry after the long, exciting day, the simple fare was an assurance both of His power and of His tender care for them in the common needs of life. The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is better than earthly good—the abiding comfort of His own presence.—The Ministry of Healing, p. 47.

My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19.

All blessings are bestowed upon those who have a vital connection with Jesus Christ. Jesus calls them to Himself not simply to refresh us with His grace and presence for a few hours, and then to send us forth from His light to walk apart from Him in sadness and gloom. No, no. He tells us that we must abide with Him and He with us. Trust in Him continually, and doubt not His love. He knows all our weakness and that which we need. He will give us grace sufficient for our day. . . .

Every worker who follows the example of Christ will be prepared to receive and use the power that God has promised to His church for the ripening of earth's harvest. Morning by morning, as the heralds of the gospel kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power. As they go forth to the day's duties, they have the assurance that the unseen agency of the Holy Spirit enables them to be "laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9).—God's Amazing Grace, p. 117.

### **Wednesday, January 4: Responsibilities of God's Family Members**

We are to love God, not only with all the heart, mind, and soul, but with all the strength. This covers the full, intelligent use of the physical powers.

Christ was a true worker in temporal as well as in spiritual things, and into all His work He brought a determination to do His Father's will. The things of heaven and earth are more closely connected and are more directly under the supervision of Christ than many realize. . . .

God desires that His workers in every line shall look to Him as the Giver of all they possess. All right inventions and improvements have their source in Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. The skillful touch of the physician's hand, his power over nerve and muscle, his knowledge of the delicate organism of the body, is the wisdom of divine power, to be used in behalf of the suffering. The skill with which the carpenter uses the hammer, the strength with which the blacksmith makes the anvil ring, comes from God. He has entrusted men with talents, and He expects them to look to Him for counsel. Whatever we do, in whatever department of the work we are placed, He desires to control our minds that we may do perfect work.—Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 348, 349.

John declares: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." Romans 3:31; 6:2; 1 John 5:3. In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then "the righteousness of the law" will "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4. And the language of the soul will be: "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97.—The Great Controversy, p. 468.

He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy. . . .

[O]bedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship.—Steps to Christ, pp. 59, 60.

## Thursday, January 5: Treasure in Heaven

The true Christian's joys and consolation must and will be in heaven. The longing souls of those who have tasted of the powers of the world to come and have feasted on heavenly joys, will not be satisfied with things of earth. Such will find enough to do in their leisure moments. Their souls will be drawn out after God. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be, holding sweet communion with the God they love and worship. Their amusement will be in contemplating their treasure—the Holy City, the earth made new, their eternal home. And while they dwell upon those things which are lofty, pure, and holy, heaven will be brought near, and they will feel the power of the Holy Spirit, and this will tend to wean them more and more from the world and cause their consolation and chief joy to be in the things of heaven, their sweet home. The power of attraction to God and heaven will then be so great that nothing can draw their minds from the great object of securing the soul's salvation and honoring and glorifying God.—Early Writings, p. 112.

If the eye is single, if it is directed heavenward, the light of heaven will fill the soul, and earthly things will appear insignificant and uninviting. The purpose of the heart will be changed, and the admonition of Jesus will be heeded. You will lay up your treasure in heaven. Your thoughts will be fixed upon the great reward of eternity. All your plans will be made in reference to the future, immortal life. You will be drawn toward your treasure. You will not study your worldly interest, but in all your pursuits the silent inquiry will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Bible religion will be woven into your daily life.—That I May Know Him, p. 222.

Mark these words of the Great Teacher, who spake as never man spake. He sets before you the course to pursue if you would serve your best interests in this life, and lay up for yourselves an eternal treasure. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." There is danger of losing all in the pursuit of worldly gain, for in the feverish eagerness for earthly treasure, higher interests are forgotten. . . .

This work of transferring your possessions to the world above is worthy of all your best energies. It is of the highest importance, and involves your eternal interests. That which you bestow in the cause of God is not lost. All that is given for the salvation of souls and the glory of God is invested in the most successful enterprise in this life and in the life to come. Your talents of gold and silver, if given to the exchangers, are gaining continually in value, which will be registered to your account in the kingdom of heaven. You are to be the recipients of the eternal wealth that has increased in the hands of the exchangers. In giving to the work of God, you are laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven. All that you lay up above is secure from disaster and loss and is increasing to an eternal, and enduring, substance.—That I May Know Him, p. 223.

**Friday, January 6: For Further Reading**

*The Faith I Live By*, "His Wonderful Love Expressed," p. 43;

*This Day With God*, "Heart Holiness," p. 146.