Revival—Our Great Need

“‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me’” (Rev. 3:20, NKJV).
Imagine living in a city where the air is clean and the open valley gives you an unimaginable view. Fame and prosperity reign, thanks to its three main exports: glossy black wool, black garments, and a medicinal Phrygian powder used for the eyes. Where are we? The ancient city of Laodicea, whose ruins now lie in Turkey.¹

However, Laodicea had a problem with its water supply, which came from a water tower filled by an aqueduct that contained warm mineral water.² This lukewarm water describes the condition of the last-day church in Revelation 3. Are you freezing or scorching? Over-comfortable, apathetic, self-reliant, complacent, and spiritually indifferent? Where did “passionate,” “on fire for God,” and “can’t-hold-it-in” go? Yes! We are in need of a revival!

The New Testament church prayed and was filled with the Holy Spirit with such power that it transformed the lives of thousands of people who also shared the message of their Savior. Where did this enthusiasm come from? It came from the reality of Jesus in their lives. Revival isn’t just about discovering new truth. It’s also about falling in love with Jesus and understanding that He can be a reality in our daily lives. When we become aware of that, our enthusiasm kicks in, and we share His love with joy!

“It is the privilege of the church at this very moment to experience the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. We must have it, and Heaven is waiting to bestow it.”³

¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, 2nd ed., s.v. “Laodicea.”
⁴ Ellen G. White, The Review and Herald, March 19, 1895.

Tatiana Green, Brisbane, Australia
God’s Timing Is Always Perfect (Matt. 25:1–13)

The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–13 emphasizes “the importance of preparation for the coming of Christ, and stresses the importance of being ready.”¹ The admonition to “‘keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour’” (Matt. 25:13, NIV) has been heard in many a sermon, and it is the lesson Christ wants us to take away from this parable.² Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has proclaimed and continues to wait for the great and glorious return of our Savior. The message inherent in Scripture is that God’s timing is always perfect. He always has had a people who are “ready” for the outpouring of His Spirit and who are willing to follow His instructions. As we reflect on the Bridegroom’s soon arrival, we must be on guard lest we find ourselves without the fire of Christ’s Spirit. Revival and reformation is at hand!

Power From on High (Col. 1:13–17)

Scripture assures us continually that although we are fighting a great cosmic spiritual battle, we have not been left to fend for ourselves. God’s power thwarts all of Satan’s fiery darts. When He speaks, things happen. “In Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17, NIV). There is no limit to what God can do. There is no limit to how He chooses to guide and equip those who are willing to participate in the great revival call to His people, because in “him, everything is held together, protected, and prevented from disintegrating into chaos (see Acts 17:28). Because Christ is the Sustainer of all life, nothing in creation is independent from him. In him alone and by his word, we find the unifying principle of all of life (Hebrews 1:2-3). The Colossians, and all believers, are his servants who must daily trust him for protection, care, . . . sustenance,”³ and revival.

Accepting God’s Call (Gal. 6:14, 15; Rev. 3:14–16)

We stand at the threshold of revolutionary changes. We can choose to accept, deny, rationalize, or doubt the arrival of these changes. We stand at the threshold of revolutionary changes. We can choose to accept, deny, rationalize, or doubt the arrival of these changes. The anti-Christian era in which we are living indicates that we will be challenged regarding our beliefs about God, church, and salvation. He has chosen
us—ordinary people—to work and speak for Him in extraordinary ways. Will you choose to be cold or lukewarm? “The typical Laodicean [lukewarm] Christian is content with things as they are and proud of the little progress he has made. It is almost impossible to convince him of his great need and of how far he is from the goal of perfection.”\(^4\)

Or will you choose to be like Paul, who told the Christians in Galatia, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14, NIV)? “Paul could boast about the Cross because of what the Cross had accomplished in his life.”\(^5\) Surely, what counted for Paul was that God had transformed him from a murderer of Christians to a Christian himself—definitely a new creation (Gal. 6:15)!

**Assurance in the Word of God (2 Cor. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7)**

If there ever was a time to return to God’s Word for revival and reformation, it is now. Believing in and holding on to His promises is key to experiencing His power during the last days of earth’s history. He has proved Himself to us before, so we know that He will prove Himself to us again. Scripture consistently demonstrates God’s unfailing love, purpose, and plan to all humankind. Are you willing to be a part of what He wants to do for us?

**REACT**

1. In the first section of today’s lesson, we read that God’s timing is always perfect. Think about an occasion when you personally experienced the truth of that statement. How can believing this truth help in the process of revival and reformation?

2. In what ways do you depend on God for “protection, care, and sustenance”?

3. Christ transformed Paul. In what ways has Christ transformed your life?

4. What is your idea of revival and reformation?

5. What would it take for you, your family, and your church to experience true revival and reformation?

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2. Ibid., p. 509.

Jean-Pierre Martinez, Sydney, Australia
“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfil the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”

“A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgements upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord’s second coming.”

**REACT**

1. What things are hindering you from praying for true revival in your life today?

2. How can you use confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer to help reformation and revival happen in your life and in your church?

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Nina Atcheson, Margate, Australia
The rebuke given to the Laodiceans is as strong as it comes. Notice that God uses language with which the Laodiceans could resonate. Two other towns near Laodicea had their own unique water sources. Hierapolis to the north claimed natural hot springs, which were often used for medicinal purposes. To the east, Colossae was known for its cold, pure water springs. Laodicea piped water from both sources, but by the time it arrived, both the water was lukewarm.

We must remember God’s ultimate will for us.

The metaphor Jesus uses is not necessarily relating spiritual fervor to temperature, as often understood. If it were, it would mean He was commending them for being spiritually cold, which is unlikely. Instead, the metaphor is condemning Laodicea for not providing spiritual healing (being hot) or spiritual refreshment (being cold) to those around them. It is a rebuke of their lack of works (action) and lack of witness.¹

It is important to remember that God’s rebukes and discipline is always in the context of a loving, parent-child relationship (Prov. 13:24; Rev. 3:19). In Hebrews 12:7–11, God’s discipline is directly paralleled to the discipline of a father to his child. The point is made that if we have respect toward our earthly fathers for disciplining us, how much more should we embrace and submit to our heavenly Father’s discipline (Heb. 12:9)?

I’ve heard it asked: what’s the difference between a butcher and a surgeon? The answer? A butcher cuts to kill, but a surgeon cuts to heal. This is the key to understanding God’s rebuke: there is always a purpose, and the purpose is always for our benefit, “that we may share in his holiness” (Heb. 12:10, NIV). Just as no one enjoys having surgery, no one enjoys being rebuked. And yet, in submitting to God’s chastening, Hebrews tells us that it will produce a “harvest of righteousness and peace” in our lives (Heb. 12:11, NIV).

When it comes to God’s loving rebuke of His Laodicean people, we must remember God’s ultimate will for us: to be like Him. It is never to condemn us or cut us off. It is always to bring us to repentance so that we can be even more intimately tied to our Savior than before. “Repentance puts you more closely in touch with Him and more fully releases His life through yours.”²

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¹ Limited Notes NET Bible, New English Translation, Revelation 3:15.
Recently I became the parent of an amazing little boy. This experience has helped me to view Calvary from a father’s perspective. God the Father wanted a relationship with us so much that He gave us His only Son so we could reconnect with Him. When we realize that God gave us His only Son to buy us back from Satan, we get an idea of the value He places upon us. If we forget how much God and Christ paid to redeem us, then all the other truths we hold dear as Seventh-day Adventists are worthless.

Everyone deserves to know about what Christ has done for them.

It is tempting at times to think that as we progress along the Christian path, we are getting better all by ourselves. We learn new truths and think that somehow believing them scores points with God. Yet the life of Paul teaches us that the closer we come to God, the more we realize that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves (1 Tim. 1:15, 16). Paul also was confident that God would save him (2 Tim. 4:8).

So how do we really experience revival?

Realize the great price God paid for our redemption (Luke 22:39–23:49). Spend time really thinking about what it would feel like to have someone give his or her life to save yours.

Read God’s love letter, the Bible, and talk with Him every day (Pss. 32:8; 55:17; 119:11). Let Him work in you to change your thoughts and heart.

Realize that each person we come in contact with is someone for whom Christ died (John 3:16). Everyone deserves to know about what Christ has done for them.

Realize that we can’t save anyone in our own strength, but only through the strength of Jesus (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Jesus can work through the Holy Spirit on our behalf only when we realize just how weak we are.

Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. Won’t you let Him in today and every day? He longs to revive you.

REACT

What deliberate steps can you take toward the Lord so that your relationship with Him will revive you?

Damien Ridley, Lachlan, Tasmania, Australia
“Its members are lukewarm.” That is the typical answer to the question “What is the problem with the Laodicean church?” However, when you read Revelation 3:17, you realize that being lukewarm is a symptom of a deep-rooted disease—self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is the very thing that prevents a church from experiencing revival. Let us wake up and call upon the Doctor, Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Gospels, Christ demonstrates His healing power to those who come to Him. He says, “‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. . . . I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners’” (Matt. 9:12, NIV). He came to heal all people, but not all people realize their need to be healed. To experience the reviving and transforming power of Christ, we must first acknowledge our disease. This is the challenge our church faces. Many members are so self-absorbed, that they do not recognize their condition. The solution is to focus once again on our first love (Rev. 2:4).

When we study the Bible and contemplate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, our sins glare at us in piercing contrast to His perfection. The more exalted view we have of Him, the less exalted view we have of ourselves. When we see His glory, we begin to see our need. This sense of need will drive us straight to Him and His cure—His blood, shed on the cross for every sinner. “By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24, NIV).

Jesus says, “‘I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in’” (Rev. 3:20, NIV). He is waiting to heal you. Allow Him to come in and cure your self-righteous heart. Come back to your first love, and He will transform you into His likeness. He will clothe you with His garments of righteousness. He promises that “‘to him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne’” (Rev. 3:21, NIV).

**REACT**

1. In what ways is not recognizing our sinful condition the real problem?
2. What correlations do you see between the Laodicean church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? Between the Laodicean church and Christianity in general?
3. How can we deal with self-righteousness in our church?
CONCLUDE

God chose us—ordinary people—to work and speak for Him in extraordinary ways. He never condemns us. But He continually works to bring us to repentance and deeper intimacy with our Savior. Revival is about falling in love with Jesus and understanding that He can be a reality in our daily lives. Reformation—a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits, and practices—comes when the Holy Spirit falls upon the people of God with supernatural power.

CONSIDER

• Making a painting with the colors red, yellow, and blue. Design it so that the colors mix together to change into secondary colors, and then to muddy browns. Show your painting to appreciative viewers, asking them what parts of the image catch their attention.

• Taking an electric fan disconnected from electrical power and spinning the blades by hand. How much of a breeze can you create manually? Then connect the fan to electricity. How much air moves now? Monday’s lesson talks about revival and reformation. How would you apply these two concepts to the electric fan experiment?

• Finding a writing project or a musical composition that you had set aside for some reason. What needs to happen to put it in a presentable form? Block out some time and go to work. What if this was your life or the life of someone close to you?

• Reading through your diaries from some time ago. Compare them with what you are writing about now. Look for evidence of God’s presence in your life that you might have forgotten about since you first wrote. Invite Jesus to help you see Him better.

• Watching Louie Giglio’s video on laminin at http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=GYGWPNX. How does this video revive your relationship with God?

CONNECT

In Mark 5:1–20, an evil-soaked man talks with Jesus personally for only a few minutes. He receives no training in how to witness. Jesus sends him away and leaves in a boat. Consider what that short conversation accomplished.


Gill Bahnsen, Auburn, Washington, U.S.A.
Creation: The Heartbeat of Revival

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matt. 7:11, NKJV).
The Bible is full of stories of great revivals, and we can learn from each of them about how important prayer is to revival. Revivals in the Old Testament happened because of the prayers of the prophets, kings, and ordinary people. In the book of Acts, we find that the early Christians spent time praying together and were therefore filled with the Holy Spirit and able to preach the gospel with great power to many people. Through prayer and study, the great revivals in each generation of Christians resulted in a number of preachers, evangelists, and lay people preaching salvation to large parts of the world.

How can we personally, and the church as a whole, experience revival?

Seventh-day Adventists also value revival and reformation. In fact, the “General Conference leadership has committed itself, in a very public way, to a personal experience of revival and reformation. . . .

“The response has been phenomenal, and I believe it’s due to the power of the Holy Spirit, in addition to the work and prayers of many dedicated people.”*

My husband and I have been praying for a revival in the small church we attend. All of the members, including our pastor, are immigrants, and it seems that most of the people in our community do not really care about God. I trust that God has brought us to this community to share His good news of salvation.

How can we personally, and the church as a whole, experience revival? One way is to set a special time each day for personal prayer and Bible study. We can claim the promise of God in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “‘If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land’” (NKJV).


Agnes A. Gallego, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, United Kingdom
“‘Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?’” (1 Kings 3:9, NKJV). This was the prayer of a new king who had observed the administrative style of his father. The new king was Solomon, and his father was King David. Solomon’s prayer pleased God, because he asked for wisdom rather than riches. That was the secret behind his treasure, power, and fame (verses 10–13). Indeed, it was his hidden treasure and God’s pleasure.

God’s generosity is witnessed through the wisdom He gave to Solomon.

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, “‘Ask! What shall I give you?’” (verse 5, NKJV). What a question! It teaches us that God, the Creator of the universe, is willing to give us our heart’s desire and that He has the ability to do so. Solomon replied, “‘Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?’” (verses 7–9, NKJV). A discerning heart (wisdom) was Solomon’s most important asset as king.

How many religious or political leaders today ask God for wisdom? Like Israel of old, the Seventh-day Adventist Church claims to be God’s chosen people with an important message to share with the world. Our leaders and church members also need wisdom. God’s generosity is witnessed through the wisdom He gave to Solomon (verses 10–14); wisdom that He will give to us if we but ask.

From Solomon, we learn that true revival and reformation start in the heart and with the desire to have the type of wisdom only God can give us.

**REACT**

1. What other things should we ask God for while we wait for Christ to return?
2. What about society today requires church leaders and other church members to have wisdom?

Reynaldo G. Salo, Pasay City, Philippines
Prayer and Revival in Acts (Acts 1:4, 8; 2:42; 4:31)

In the book of Acts, we read about how the Holy Spirit was given to the early Christians as a result of their prayers. This was the fulfillment of God’s promise that “‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 1:8, NIV). It must have been an awesome experience when, after “they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31, NIV). If this outpouring of the Holy Spirit was such a mighty one, then we can be assured that the second outpouring will at least be just as mighty. So then should we not also pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to come in our day?

Jesus’ Prayer Life (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 9:18)

Jesus’ prayer life illustrates that prayer is communion with our heavenly Father. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, we find that even the Son of God needed a quiet place to pray alone.

What did Jesus pray for? In Matthew 26:36–44, we read that He prayed to God not to let Him die if it were at all possible. However, He also prayed at the same time that His Father’s will be done. In Luke 22:32, we learn that Jesus told Simon Peter that He had prayed for Peter’s faith not to fail. And in John 17:20, we learn that Jesus prayed “‘not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony’” (NLT). What a loving Savior we have. He prayed for us even as He faced death.


Why do we need to pray together? Prayer is one of the church’s most vital resources. So why don’t we pray more often? In Matthew 18:19, we see what Jesus has promised concerning praying together: If “‘two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven’” (NJKV). How wonderful to know that God
is in our midst when we pray together. He is willing to work miracles for us when we come to Him in prayer.

**God’s Will (Phil. 4:6; 2 Pet. 3:9)**

As a child growing up in a Christian home, I learned to pray at a very early age. But I didn’t know whether prayer worked or not. My mother told me that when I prayed, God would answer. However, she never told me that God can answer with a “Yes,” a “No,” or a “Wait.” He invites us to let our “requests be made known to” Him (Phil. 4:6, NKJV). However, never forget that He knows best what we need.

**Prayer Works! (Ps. 85:6)**

“During a visit to London, England, D. L. Moody received an invitation to speak at a morning and evening service in a large church. Although the church was packed at the morning service, the people did not appear to respond. Moody said, ‘They seemed as though carved out of stone or ice.’ He found himself wishing he had not promised to speak again that evening.

“The church was filled again for the evening service, but again without any apparent interest until about halfway through the sermon things began to change. At the close of the message Moody gave an invitation, and the response was spontaneous. People got up in groups and came forward. Moody turned to the host pastor and whispered, ‘What does this mean?’

“The reaction had been so overwhelming that Moody thought the people had misunderstood his invitation. He made a careful announcement about an after-meeting, and all those who had come forward stayed. It was the beginning of a genuine revival. Moody’s question, ‘What does this mean?’ had its answers when he discovered that an invalid member of the congregation had been praying for two years that God would send Moody to their church in London.”* What an amazing story of revival! God works in mysterious ways. With the psalmist, let us pray: “Won’t you revive us again, / so your people can rejoice in you?” (Ps. 85:6, NLT).

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Christ lived a prayerful life even when facing agony on the cross: “‘O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.’ . . .

“Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life.”

“What a wonder it is that we pray so little!”

“His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.

“Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little!”

“There is need of prayer—earnest, prevailing prayer. Our Savior has left precious promises for the truly penitent petitioner. Such shall not seek his face in vain. He has also by his own example taught us the necessity of prayer. Himself the Majesty of Heaven, he often spent all night in communion with his Father. If the world’s Redeemer was not too pure, too wise, or too holy to seek help from God, surely weak, erring mortals have every need of that divine assistance. With penitence and faith, every true Christian will often seek ‘the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.’”

**REACT**

1. How can prayer help us obtain a better relationship with God?
2. Why do we need to pray when God already knows what we need?
3. Read Matthew 17:20, 21. In what way can our prayers move mountains?

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*John Dom S. Andalecio, Morong, Bataan, Philippines*
Through the ages, we have seen the wonderful results of individual and collective prayer. Despite the billions of people in the world, our heavenly Father listens to and answers each of His children’s supplications. Just as we need to have a heartbeat to stay physically alive, so, too, do we need to have constant communication with God through prayer to stay spiritually alive. Revival and reformation can only be achieved and sustained when it is founded on unceasing and fervent prayer. Though there are no hard-and-

fast rules on how to have a successful prayer life, here are some pointers to enhance your conversations with God:

Set a special time to pray, and prioritize it. With the hustle and bustle of life, it is not easy to set aside specific times to pray. We are so easily distracted. Still, we should set our priorities, and praying to God before we start and end our day should be at the top of our list. Even when we wake up in the middle of the night, it is a good time to pray, for then it is quiet and peaceful.

Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent a Comforter to be with us. However, we receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit only if we earnestly seek and pray for it.

Consider fasting while praying about a serious issue. Fasting helps to clear the mind and focus our attention. It is better to fast during the Sabbath hours because during those hours we are not doing physical labor.

Have faith that God will answer your prayer. It is an exercise in futility if we pray yet do not believe that God will respond to our prayers. While some may think that the answers to their prayers are long overdue, God knows no delay because His timing is perfect. He always responds even if His answer might not be the one we asked for. Always remember that whatever God’s answer is, He always has our best interest in mind.

**REACT**

1. Is there such a thing as praying for convenience? Explain your answer.
2. Explain the importance of prayer as it pertains to revival and reformation.
Prayer is a powerful tool God uses to accomplish great things in our lives. It is our church’s initiative and desire for us to experience revival and reformation. One way to achieve this goal is through earnest, heartfelt prayer.

Prayer is so vital to our lives. We learn from the Bible that “‘whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive’” (Matt. 21:22, NKJV). And in 1 John 5:14, we read that “this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (NKJV). In what we call the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us how to talk with God and ask for His help in resisting sin (Matt. 6:8–13). Through prayer, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us make good choices when we are tempted. When we pray, it’s like putting on a full suit of armor.

Prayer, however, is not just our last resort to a way out. When we pray, we are saying that we have hope in our Savior and with our Father in heaven. When there seems to be no other way, pray. When things seem impossible, pray. When you can’t find the answers to your questions, pray. When you want to unload your burdens, pray. Even when you think you don’t know how to pray, you’ll find yourself uttering a sincere desire.

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, unuttered or expressed, the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast.”*

Yes. Prayer is a powerful key to success. It can be one of the most significant assets we have in this life because the power comes from God! The more we pray, the more His power is unleashed. And through His power we are revived and reformed.


Brenda Joan A. Damocles, Caloocan City, Philippines
CONCLUDE

Prayer and Bible study are necessary ingredients for revival. It’s important to pray for wisdom, both for ourselves and our church leaders. Like the church of Acts, we need to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. Jesus set an example for us by praying that God’s will would be done—and that His disciples’ faith would be strengthened. Praying together with other believers is vital, as well as prioritizing personal prayer time. God has promised to honor prayers that are lifted up to Him in faith.

CONSIDER

- Listening to one or more of the following musical prayers for revival: “Revive Us,” by Dan Adler; “Revival,” by Robin Mark; “Revive Us, O Lord,” by Carman, Steve Camp. Consider developing a sign language/interpretive movement sequence to go along with one of the songs.
- Charting the revivals described in Israel’s history. List the key characters and significant events involved in each.
- Listing steps you might take to revive a friendship (or romantic relationship). Compare/contrast those steps with what it takes to experience spiritual revival.
- Reading and committing to follow the steps outlined in Dennis Smith’s book, 40 Days: Prayer and Devotions to Revive Your Experience With God.
- Asking a group of friends to meet with you on a regular basis during the next month to pray for the specific things mentioned in this week’s lesson.

CONNECT


Sharon Wright, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
The Word—The Foundation of Revival

“Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word” (Ps. 119:154, NKJV).
Nothing compares to the Word of God. The revival it brings, the heart that sings of repentance, of faith, of trust. The courage it shares to those who live scared raises up the most frail to the Redeemer. God’s creativity, the Word shows its own. Not everyone knows, but it brings reproof and preparation to those willing. Jesus Himself could not be dissuaded. He used the Scriptures every day. His excitement was about them for they were about Him. Those who read it find rest within, purity and peace from all their sins is given to those whose faith lies in Him. The army officer had faith in His Word. Without coming to his house, his plea would be heard. And because of the Word, the officer’s servant was healed. It only took one word—“Come!”—for Peter to leave his pals, his chums. With faith he walked on water toward his Savior’s voice. The pool of Bethesda, where a crippled man lay—he couldn’t get to the pool without an aide. But Jesus told him what to do, and he picked up his mat and walked away. The words in the Book can’t just be read. They must be studied through and through. Put them into practice day after day, and cause a revival in me and in you.
Living Up to the Hype (John 4:13, 14)

“Thirst is everything. Obey your thirst.” If you believe this advertisement for Sprite, then you will be revived simply by drinking that beverage. The advertising industry markets the idea that you need their product to survive. Dr. Seuss described this phenomenon as a “Thneed,” something that you think you need.* Too many times we regard God as another blinking light trying to market to us the newest great idea. Spending time in God’s Word is often drowned out by all the other advertisements so that we miss His still, small voice.

What happens when you wake up and you don’t feel like being a Christian?

Instead of watching an advertisement on TV, I hear from a friend about how great a product is. This perks up my attention. I trust my friend. The Psalms are personal testimonies that God’s Word really lives up to the hype. An automated external defibrillator (AED) advertisement says that the defibrillator has the ability to save a life. However, it’s only powerful when you take it off the wall and apply it to a person in need. God’s Word applied to our life is powerful. If never applied, we can become quite cynical.

God’s Word a Constant (Pss. 19:1; 33:6, 9; Heb. 4:12)

An orchestra conductor has the power to affect the musicians in front of him. He has the ability to create a beautiful piece of music for the audience. We see God as the orchestra conductor of this world, and with His words, the creative process started. It gives us comfort to know that if He can control the tangible things we see, then He can control things we cannot see, such as forgiveness and the solutions to life’s problems. That is what makes the creation-versus-evolution debate so volatile. If God can’t control the physical things we see, can He really control what we can’t see?

Some praise music capitalizes on a “feelings” kind of faith. But what happens when those feelings fade away? What happens when you wake up and you don’t feel like being a Christian? Some people switch in and out of dating relationships for that same reason: “I just don’t feel like I love her, so I broke up with her.” God’s Word is a constant power that is not based on our feelings.
A New Definition of Faith (Matt. 8:5–10; 14:22–33; Luke 18:8)

“ ‘Will he find faith on the earth?’ ” (Luke 18:8, NIV). Ouch! Here Christ is speaking to people who claimed to be His followers, and He used a story to teach a deep spiritual lesson. A widow went to a judge seeking justice, and the ungodly judge denied her request. Yet she didn’t give up. As a result, her request was granted. When life doesn’t turn out like it was advertised, are we tempted to ask for a refund? It’s interesting that persistence is equated to faith in this parable.

Yet was it just persistence itself that Christ was looking for? Was it not also persistence in dealing with the right person? The lady believed that the judge could grant her request. When the centurion came to Christ and requested that his daughter be healed, he came to Christ trusting in His word alone. That was good enough for him. Here Christ made another sharp critique: “ ‘I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith’ ” (Matt. 8:10, NIV).

Peter walked on water because of where he put his faith—in Jesus. However, when the advertising of the wind and waves distracted him from Christ, he started to drown.

If we had to write a new definition of faith based on these passages, it could easily be: “Faith is persistently trusting in Christ’s Word—the Bible.”

Just Do It! (Ps. 34:8; James 1:21–25)

God wants us to trust His Word just like a mountain climber trusts his rope going down a cliff. When I first learned to rappel, I was afraid that the rope would not support my weight. Many Christians are afraid that their spiritual rope will fail. James 1:21–25 teaches us that we need to be doers of the word and not just hearers of it. You can believe that the rope will support your weight, but to put that belief to the test, you need to jump off a cliff with the rope. That takes faith.

Christ calls us to trust Him. Don’t rely on your parents’, teachers’, or preachers’ religion. Christ asks you, yourself, to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8, NIV).

REACT

1. How has advertising changed your views on relationships and God?
2. Describe an experience when you distrusted your feelings.
3. If you believe that God’s Word is important, what are you doing about it?

“Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; the highest of the world’s great men will be brought in contact with truth, and therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. Now we seem to be unnoticed, but this will not always be. Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world’s greatest men, it will be done.

“We need to have an individual, personal experience.”

“We must individually know for ourselves what is truth, and be prepared to give a reason of the hope that we have with meekness and fear, not in a proud, boasting, self-sufficiency, but with the spirit of Christ. We are nearing the time when we shall stand individually alone to answer for our belief. Religious errors are multiplying and entwining themselves with Satanic power about the people. There is scarcely a doctrine of the Bible that has not been denied.”

“God help us to be Bible students. Until you can see the reason for it yourself and a ‘thus saith the Lord’ in the Scriptures, don’t trust any living man to interpret the Bible for you. And when you can see this, you know it for yourself, and know it to be the truth of God. You will say, ‘I have read it, I have seen it, and my own heart takes hold upon it, and it is the truth God has spoken to me from His Word.’ Now this is what we are to be—individual Christians. We need to have an individual, personal experience. . . .

“God help us to have a knowledge of the truth, and if you have seen the truth of God, press right to the light and put up the bars behind you. Make not flesh your arm; but have a living experience for yourselves, and then your countenance will shine with the glory of God. You have walked with Him, and He has upheld you. You have wrestled with Him and pleaded with Him, and He has let His light shine upon you.”

REACT
1. How do you apply the principle of putting the truth of God’s Word above human options?
2. Describe a time when you used God’s Word to direct you in a decision.

1. Ellen G. White, Evangelism, p. 69.
2. White, Faith and Works, pp. 77, 78.
When I played the violin, I practiced every day for 30 minutes, and if I messed up on one measure of the song, I started the whole song over again until I got it right. After practicing for a week and feeling good about how it went, I performed for my instructor. At the end of many songs that I had practiced, my instructor said to me, “That was almost perfect.” He then gave me instructions on how to do better, and then told me to replay the songs. Once I played a song perfectly for him, we were ready to move on to a new one.

James 1:21–25 talks about how we can be saved through reading God’s Word. But first we must “lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (verse 21, NKJV). I love how James talks about receiving with meekness the implanted word. The word meek implies a gentle spirit. We come to God with a gentle spirit and accept what He wants to do for us. These verses challenge us to walk closer to God by setting aside our wickedness, and 1 Peter 1:22, 23 shows the results of doing so. Note especially verse 23. Here Peter compares and contrasts what life is like before being born again and what it is like after we are born again. He states that those who are born again through the Word of God have incorruptible seed. In other words, as they read God’s Word, they are changed and made able to stand firm in the truth of the Word.

The Bible is not just another book. It is a book with words that have the power to change hearts and lead souls closer to Christ. Personal revival cannot just happen through listening to Christian music, hearing great sermons, or going to Christian retreats. Although all of these inspire personal revival, we must also spend time with God by reading His Word. I could never play the violin well just by listening to someone who could. I had to practice every day. Once Christians spend time in the Word every day and dedicate themselves to living changed lives, then personal revival will happen.
Vince Lombardi’s career included Super Bowl wins, plus NFL Coach of the Year and Hall of Fame honors. Yet on the first day of every pre-season training camp, he held up a football and announced to his team, “Gentlemen, this is a football.”

Today’s text goes back to the basics: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16, NIV). Reproof? Ouch. Correction? Double ouch! Perhaps we need correction more often than we realize.

Perhaps we need correction more than we realize.

If you purchase a piece of equipment, an owner’s manual comes with it. Computer programs are installed according to explicit directions. iPhone users depend on Siri. Whatever you want to do, Siri will help—give you directions, schedule a meeting, even remind you to send your mother a birthday card.

In the 1930s, “pilot error” caused a fatal air crash—the lock on the plane’s elevator had not been released prior to takeoff. When the investigation was completed, a group of pilots developed four checklists—one each for takeoff, flight, before landing, and after landing. “These checklists for the pilot and co-pilot made sure that nothing was forgotten.” Are we so engrossed in following the world’s “instructions” that we neglect to pursue what’s most valuable? Simply stated, the Bible is the story of Jesus and how we can become more like Him. The more we read about Christ and do what it says (James 1:22), the more we will become like Him.

Charles Sheldon’s book, In His Steps, describes a church congregation that is challenged by its pastor “not to do anything without first asking the question, ‘What would Jesus do?’ And after asking that question, each one will follow Jesus as exactly as he knows how, no matter what the result may be.”

What would Jesus do? Today, go back to “the basics” and find out.

**REACT**

If you decide to accept the challenge “What would Jesus do?” in every situation, how will your life change?

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As I studied the various texts for this lesson, it became obvious to me that revival is about renewing our spiritual vigor. If our spiritual vigor needs to be revived, it must have been dead, dying, or at least lacking some measure of health!

How does it get like this?

The textbook answer is that the Bible has been getting a little dusty just sitting on the shelf. That’s not a bad answer, but does just reading the required verses each week revive us? John 5:39, 40 says: “‘You carefully study the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. They do in fact tell about me, but you refuse to come to me to have that life’” (NCV). What strikes me about these verses is that Jesus identifies the Pharisees as people who read His Word as much if not more than anyone else. This warns us that there is a fine line between just reading the Bible as opposed to actually living the Word of God in our own daily lives and having it become part of the fabric of our characters. James 1:21–25 is rather direct about this issue. Verse 22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (NIV).

Another aspect of spiritual revival is reflecting God’s love. “‘Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come’” (Matt. 24:12–14, NIV). How do we treat family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and so on? I have seen gradual but continual church growth when people find ways to help those around them in addition to spending time reading their Bibles.

Revival is a daily process. Achieved with the persistent reading of God’s Word, it will awaken our consciences and change our hearts. Thus the church is revived and reformed one person at a time. The colder the world grows, the more we need Christ’s love in our hearts. Our homes and churches will then become places to which people are drawn. Revival provides the perfect opportunity to share Christ.

**REACT**

How can we read the Bible every day and not get caught up in wrong things like the Pharisees did?

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Jeremy Wiedemann, Bozeman, Montana, U.S.A.
**CONCLUDE**

The smell of home-baked chocolate-chip cookies tickles your nose, and the delicious aroma awakens your senses. You search for the mouth-watering treats. The first bite leaves you wanting more until you’re completely satisfied. Reading God’s Word is much the same way. It’s not enough just to search the pages. Consuming His Word with our hearts brings about a life-changing experience. Satisfaction. When we eat a chocolate-chip cookie, we often share it with someone else. It’s so good we want to spread the love. But how do we reach this life-altering change in our lives? It’s a daily process of reading what He says and then doing what He says. It’s not because of the rules, or because it’s the right thing to do. When we truly fall in love with Jesus, it’s just something we do because we love Him.

**CONSIDER**

- Setting some time aside to really search God’s Word. What is He trying to say to you? What is He wanting you to do? Pray for strength to follow His plan for you.
- Hosting a bonfire at the beach or lake as a way to reach out to others.
- Photographing butterflies or looking at pictures of them as a reminder that Christ gives us wings to fly.
- Memorizing or writing a poem about perseverance and commitment to God.
- Composing a song about applying God’s Word to our lives.
- Painting a picture that exhibits the power of God’s Word. Use vibrant colors.

**CONNECT**


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*Ashley Trecartin, Whitesboro, New York, U.S.A.*
Witness and Service—The Fruit of Revival

‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth’” (Acts 1:8, NKJV).
In college I developed a strong hatred for mathematics, especially algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. At first I was willing to adapt and familiarize myself with each of these subjects. However, I developed cold feet because of the attitude of my lecturer, who kept putting me off with discouraging remarks.

This made me feel that I was no good in these subjects, and I began to blame myself for my ineptitude. Fortunately, however, at one point along the way, I had a different lecturer for one of these classes. He was friendly, and his encouraging remarks rekindled my interest in the once dreaded subject. Soon I developed an entirely different view of math, and inside me I could feel a great potential for it. I found myself wanting to solve any math-related problem, thanks to this teacher who encouraged me.

This anecdote reflects the meaning of revival. Revival is a fresh way of looking at something, especially with renewed strength. We experience true revival when we accept Christ as our Savior and when we share Him with others. Yes, revival leads to witnessing and service.

The same way I developed a new attitude about math while in college is the same way we can experience revival in our spiritual lives. Do you need revival? This week we will learn about how witnessing and service can renew our lives with Christ. We will discover and explore better ways of witnessing and service so that by the end of the week, we’ll have become closer to our Savior.

This is in line with the commission Christ gave to the disciples to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. “ ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ ” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV). Our lesson this week will lay the foundation for discipleship based on witnessing and service.
The path of discipleship is full of stumbling blocks that Satan hopes will distract us. However, for Christians who experience spiritual renewal, sharing their testimony with others is one way to defeat him. Words of praise from our own lips are a sure means to render Satan defenseless. “Divine strength is ours; and let us talk courage and strength and faith. Read the third chapter of Ephesians. Practice the instruction given. Bear a living testimony for God under all circumstances.”

The entire third chapter of Ephesians is full of praise, but especially verses 20 and 21. Such praise “springs readily from the converted heart. . . . At this point the apostle is overwhelmed with a sense of God’s indescribable power and His unlimited love to men.”

The proclamation of the gospel makes our joy in Christ complete.

Like Paul, when we experience true revival, we are eager to express our joy regarding the transformation occurring in our lives. His example encourages us to testify to others about the One who makes this change possible. When we share with others through words and deeds what Christ has done for us, they, too, will be more likely to choose Him as their Savior. This desire may not be an immediate reaction. But as we continue to witness regularly, as they see us grow in Christ, they also will be encouraged to do so. Conversely, Christians who complain and generally seem to be unhappy can turn people away from the Savior. They will be quick to ask, “What good is Christianity if it cannot help us to rise above that which troubles us?”

The other apostles also gave their personal testimonies concerning Christ and the gospel. What followed was the planting of new churches. John wrote the following in his instructions to the early church: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1, NIV). In essence, the proclamation of the gospel makes our joy in Christ complete.

**REACT**

Think about how you live and what you say about God. Do you think your words and actions make Christ attractive? Or do they keep people from seeing Christ in you?

The Final Judgment (Matt. 25:31–46)

God expects us to look beyond our personal interests in order to share the good news with others who do not know Him because witnessing should be accomplished through acts of service as often as possible. Christ teaches us in Matthew 25:31–46 exactly how witnessing and service go together.

Yet many people are often reluctant to help people in need. For example, they think that if people wouldn’t spend money on alcohol and tobacco, they would have more money for items they really need. However, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus teaches us to help others unconditionally. (Of course, in the process of helping to meet people’s needs, it is good if we can help them break their bad habits.) Whatever we do to satisfy the spiritual and physical needs of our fellow humans will be viewed as having done it to Christ Himself. Furthermore, helping others or not helping them determines our place in the judgment.

“The best evidence that a person has become a son of God is that he does the works of God.”

Receiving the Helper (Acts 2)

Christ does not leave us alone as we walk the path of witnessing and service. He is involved with us every step of the way. Therefore, as we witness and engage in acts of service, let us remember that His Holy Spirit sustains us.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in a most powerful way. Thus they were able to remain united and were powerfully enabled to witness for Christ. As a result, it is reported that on one day alone, they baptized approximately 3,000 people (Acts 2:41).

We cannot effectively witness and engage in Christian service without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our Helper and Guide. However, we must remember that the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is not a permanent possession, acquired once and for all at the time of the new birth. On the contrary, it must be a permanent process, daily renewed (1 Cor. 9:27) in further and deeper surrender to the Spirit’s promptings.”

Branching Out in Faith (John 6:1–11)

Can you imagine the faith it must have taken for the disciples to follow...
Christ's instructions so that 5,000 men, plus women and children, could partake of five loaves and two fish? The disciples were instructed to carry out their activities in faith, bearing in mind that they were acting on behalf of Christ, the Pioneer of faith. “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1, NIV).

“Faith is not abstract belief that evidence exists, but a settled assurance, based on confidence that God will fulfill His promises.” Faith makes us strong by helping us to grow in Christ. Faith gives us strength to witness and to serve in His name.

**Continuing in His Footsteps (Acts 8)**

Continuity in spreading the gospel after Christ's ascension was of immense importance both to the disciples and to Christ Himself. Because of the wave of persecution that followed after Jesus returned to heaven, many Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Even the apostles were not spared. However, it is crucial to note that amid the turmoil, the apostles remained united in spirit, and they continued witnessing in faith. Philip, Peter, and John traversed various parts of Samaria, proclaiming Christ while healing the sick and driving out demons.

We also experience challenges as we witness for Christ and serve others. Therefore, it is important for us to remain united in Him and to ask for the presence of His Holy Spirit. We cannot function without His presence, for the “story of Pentecost underlines the fact that the church is not a human creation, but owes its existence to the power of God.

“The church, then, is a kind of community which human beings cannot produce. What happens among members of the church, the spirit of fellowship which they enjoy, is something only the unique presence of God can explain.”

**REACT**

1. Based on today’s lesson, do you think you live a Spirit-filled life? Why or why not?
2. What are some of the little things in which we need to have faith as we witness in our everyday life? How can faith in these areas of life help us to have faith in bigger matters?
3. Among church members today, there are many socio-economic, geographical, and cultural differences. So what really unites us in Christ?

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*Tony Philip Oreso, Nairobi, Kenya*
The parting commission and promise that Christ gave to His disciples just before His ascension was for all Christians throughout all of time. Ellen White wrote the following about this occasion:

“This was the only interview that Jesus had with many of the believers after His resurrection. He came and spoke to them saying, ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.’”

“It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.”

“Before leaving His disciples, Christ plainly stated the nature of His kingdom. He called to their minds what He had previously told them concerning it. He declared that it was not His purpose to establish in this world a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom.”

“Christ commissioned His disciples to do the work He had left in their hands, beginning at Jerusalem. Jerusalem had been the scene of His amazing condescension for the human race. There He had suffered, been rejected and condemned. The land of Judea was His birthplace. There, clad in the garb of humanity, He had walked with men, and few had discerned how near heaven came to the earth when Jesus was among them. At Jerusalem the work of the disciples must begin.”

“[The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”

**REACT**

How can we overcome the challenges of witnessing and service in hostile environments?

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2. Ibid., p. 820.
3. Ibid., p. 822.

*Dorothy Awuor, Homa Bay, Kenya*
In a class called Strategic Management Tactics, I learned that personal branding is essential because it helps to define you and your values, which, in turn, eventually helps to develop your influence and integrity as a leader.

When we accept Christ as our Savior and Friend, we need to rebrand ourselves. In his farewell speech to the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul urged them to care for the church members there. Christ Himself was known for healing the sick and caring for the poor. Indeed, in order for our faith to grow, witnessing and service must go hand in hand. Our own personality, our strengths and weaknesses, and our own tolerance for the risks involved will determine how well we will do when life becomes difficult. This is why individuals need to put in place, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, measures that help to rebrand themselves as Christians. The following points are helpful if prayerfully applied.

**We should have the courage to stick to our Christian values.**

*Personal assessment and authenticity.* Do a self-assessment to know who you are and what talents you have that will help you to be a good witness and servant for Christ’s cause. Identify your strengths and create a plan to address your weaknesses.

*Know what you believe and, with the Holy Spirit’s help, live accordingly.* The Bible teaches us what to believe and whom to depend upon to help us do the right things. Regardless of trials and temptations that befall us while we are witnessing, we should have the courage to stick to our Christian values.

*Be consistent, dependable, and sincere.* Dr. Martin Luther King said, “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, ‘Here lived a great sweeper who did his job well.’ ” We want to be the best we can be, and give Christ our best as we witness for Him.

**REACT**

1. What else can you add to the list above to help you grow in your faith?
2. Should we be compensated for our witnessing and service projects?

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*Thinkexist.com, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/if_a_man_is_called_to_be_a_street_sweeper-he/339724.html (accessed May 2, 2012).*
As I stepped into the city-bound train to report to my office, something caught me by surprise. A young woman was leading the entire coach in a series of choruses that praised the Lord. Next, a young man read Bible texts; then another one gave an encouraging short sermon. Later I learned that these three people do this every weekday morning. I personally found the experience to be quite rejuvenating. I could tell from the faces of the other people that they also enjoyed it. Instead of talking about the world’s wars, politics, business, or work, this group devoted time to share spiritual good news. Later I learned that people actually choose to ride in this particular car of the train because they find the three people’s witness so beneficial.

“This Christian life is never meant to be a life within the circle of the self.”

This experience reminds me that we are all Christ’s ambassadors and should therefore participate in advancing His cause. We can witness anytime, anywhere, in a number of different ways. God will always provide us with opportunities and resources to make this possible. In our places of work, institutions of learning, communities, and within our own families, practical mission and service should be part of our daily lives.

A precursor to practical mission service is worship, study, and fellowship.1 “Christian life is never meant to be a life within the circle of the self, but always to be poured out in service and witness to others. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 charges the Christian to be mature enough to take the gospel of forgiveness to the world around in order that all may know the redemptive grace of God. The sign of the life of the Spirit and Christian growth is a life of ever-expanding witness.”2

This coming week, be a witness wherever you are, whatever you do. With the little acts of kindness and service, you can help to change the world.

**REACT**

1. What are some ways you can personally witness?
2. How does the Holy Spirit help us in our witnessing efforts?

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2. Ibid.

*Andy Mwanzia, Machakos, Kenya*
CONCLUDE

It starts out with revival, with knowing that you need a change in your life and having the initiative to do something about it. You accept Christ as your Savior and become baptized. Congratulations! You are now a witness for Jesus and Christianity! Your deeds, actions, and words witness to your faith. The first place you need to practice your witnessing abilities is at home. You’re not alone, however. The Holy Spirit gives you courage to step out in faith as you seek to serve others, for that is what true witnessing is all about.

CONSIDER

• Writing a biography from the perspective of one of the “sheep” in Matthew 25.
• Finding pictures of people serving others. Create a poster with these pictures and hang it in your church.
• Listening to the song “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns, included in the album, The Altar and the Door, or read the lyrics at http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/castingcrowns/ifwearethebody.html.
• Baking bread, cookies, rolls, and so on, and giving them to the “hungry” in your church, whether a single parent, elderly member, or others who may be more “hungry” for kindness and company than actual food.
• Making sack lunches with a group of your friends and delivering them to homeless shelters in your area.
• Observing at a local farm or zoo, or researching on the Internet the different characteristics of sheep and goats and why Christ would use them as examples in the Matthew 25 parable.
• Helping an elderly neighbor make repairs on his or her house.
• Giving away used clothes you haven’t worn in a while to a local charity that accepts such donations.
• Getting a group of your friends together to clean up litter from road-sides or parks.

CONNECT


Ellen G. White, Christian Service, chapter 1, “God’s Call to Service.” (You can find this book online in several different languages at https://egwwritings.org/.)
Obedience—The Fruit of Revival

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”

(2 Cor. 10:4, 5, NKJV).
“Jesus said to them, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him’ ” (John 8:28, 29, NKJV).

The longing that I once had has finally ended.

In my early teens, I always felt confused about my purpose. Why was I here? Because I never really felt sure about anything, I simply went with the flow of life. I was not unhappy. Far from it! Instead I exuded love and kindness. I was extremely friendly and helpful whenever I could be. Yet I always felt like something was missing. So I began reading the Bible. I also started listening to Christian music. The Bible was awesome. I discovered so many precious gems that filled my heart with joy. Every time I read it, I would pray, “God, I want to do Your will.”

Listening to Christian music and studying Scripture planted a seed of revival in my life. The messages in the songs and in the Bible were so powerful and captivating. They were all about grace, hope, and Jesus’ love and power. For the first time in my life, I had a purpose.

After weeks of scrupulous study, I believed deep within my heart that I had found Jesus. I was no longer confused and lost. And I began to ask God how I could obey Him, how I could better follow His commands. Through this experience, I learned one lesson in particular—it is only through Jesus that I can experience revival. It is only through His Word that my life can change. Through this connection with Christ, I began to do His will and live a life of devotion to Him. Instead of asking God “Why?” I started asking, “How, Jesus, can I do Your will and draw other people to You?”

Now my confusion is gone. The longing that I once had has finally ended. So what are you waiting for? Read God’s Word, and experience revival today!

Heather Hyde, Guanaja, Bay Islands, Honduras
Who Are We? (2 Chron. 7:1, 3, 14)
In response to the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, God rained fire down from heaven to consume the offering made to Him. Those in attendance knelt and worshiped God, giving Him thanks. Later, after the people had returned to their homes, God appeared to Solomon during the night and said, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14, NIV). This verse tells us so much about ourselves and what life is meant to be: (1) We are God’s people. (2) We are called by His name. (3) If we humble ourselves, if we seek Him and obey Him, He will hear us and forgive our sins.

What Does God Expect of Us? (2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 51:17)
God says we are to be humble and to have a broken and contrite heart. During Bible times, humility was connected with low socioeconomic status. During New Testament times, the Greco-Roman world regarded humility as a sign of weakness or even a character flaw. This is not so, however, when God applies the term to His people. It is a virtue to walk humbly with Him. David gives us an excellent description of what it means to be humble: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; / a broken and contrite heart, / O God, you will not despise” (Ps. 51:17, NIV). Such a heart is ready and willing to obey God.

In addition to being humble, God expects us to pray. Prayer is said to be communication with God that binds us to Him in an intimate, reciprocal relationship based on Christ’s merits. Therefore, we can boldly go to God through Christ, even to His throne, so “that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16, NIV). Without such prayer, it is impossible to obey Him.

Seeking God’s face is another activity that fosters obedience. The word seek points to a desire and a striving or driving force behind the act of seeking. Such seeking is our responsibility. It is our choice. Nothing will stop the person who earnestly seeks God’s presence. “ ‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart’ ” (Jer. 29:13, NIV).
A fourth thing expected of us in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is to turn from our wicked ways. Isaiah 55:7 says, “‘Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon’” (NIV). When we do this, we turn toward a life of obedience.

**What Does God Promise In Return? (2 Chron. 7:14)**

When we humble ourselves before God, seek His face, and turn from our sinful ways, God will hear us. Isaiah 59:1, 2 states that “surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, / nor his ear too dull to hear. / But your iniquities have separated / you from your God; / your sins have hidden his face from you, / so that he will not hear” (NIV). When we honestly seek to obey God, He will answer our prayers.

God will also forgive us our sins when we humble ourselves before Him. Daniel’s prayer is a perfect example of how we can do this. “‘O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act. For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name’” (Dan. 9:19, NIV).

In the New Testament, we read that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV). This formula has not changed. God knows the heart. A truly penitent heart will be forgiven and cleansed!

Yet another thing God promises us when we obey Him is that He will not forsake us. “It will no longer be said to you, ‘Forsaken,’ / Nor to your land will it any longer be said, ‘Desolate’; / But you will be called, ‘My delight is in her,’ / And your land, ‘Married’; / For the Lord delights in you, / And to Him your land will be married. / For as a young man marries a virgin, / So your sons will marry you; / And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, / So your God will rejoice over you” (Isa. 62:4, 5, NASB).

**REACT**

1. How would you describe your relationship with God?
2. In what ways can you start a revival in your own heart and church?
3. Take some time to consider your own relationship to God in terms of obedience. Ask Him to show you where you can do better, and ask Him for the help to do so.

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2. Ibid., p. 1077.

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*Michael Butler, Othello, Washington, U.S.A.*
“God justly claims the love and obedience of all His creatures.”¹

“If we will but listen, God’s created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust. From the stars that in their trackless course through space, follow from age to age their appointed path, down to the minutest atom, the things of nature obey the Creator’s will. And God cares for everything and sustains everything that he has created.”²

We can be sure that His leading will always be in our best interest.

“God has made known His will, and it is folly for man to question that which has gone out of His lips. After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be no doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust. All that is required of him is a frank, earnest concurrence in the expressed will of God. Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience.”³

Submission to our Creator’s will is a clear sign that we have come to the realization that only He knows what is in our best interest, even when we are unable to comprehend His reasoning. We can be sure that His leading will always be in our best interest.

“So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Saviour, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds.”⁴

A miraculous work takes place when we submit our lives to God. But the impact of a life yielded to Christ is not limited to the individual. Such an impact can be seen throughout a person’s entire sphere of influence.

**REACT**

1. How does Jesus’ obedience inspire you to be obedient to God’s Word?

2. In what areas of your life have you questioned God’s leading?

3. What specific decisions can you make today that would put God back in control of your life?

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4. Ibid., p. 284.

Edward J. Bryan, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

“ ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8, NIV). Before becoming witnesses to the entire world, the disciples were instructed to wait for a revival of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Only by experiencing the infilling of the Spirit would they be able to reach the world with the gospel. Genuine revival depends on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. After the completion of Christ’s earthly ministry, He promised the coming of the Holy Spirit. Immediately after this we read about Christ’s ascension to heaven (verses 9–11).

**Our victory is sure if we remain faithful to our Savior.**

When the Holy Spirit came, a powerful revival took place. Peter delivered a sermon that stirred the hearts of many. In one day, about three thousand people were baptized (Acts 2:41). True revival leads to heartfelt conversion. As the early church grew, persecution increased. In Acts, chapters 7–9, we witness the great controversy occurring in terrible ways. Satan attacks God’s people, and Stephen dies a martyr. Meanwhile, Saul persecutes the church in Jerusalem. Christ, however, is ultimately victorious. Saul becomes Paul and one of Christ’s greatest spokespersons. The gospel grew rapidly through his preaching, despite the persecution he faced.

Such is the case in the life of any faithful believer. When true conversion takes place, Satan will think of many clever ways to tempt us. We are in the midst of the great controversy between him and Christ. Our victory is sure if we remain faithful to our Savior.

**REACT**

1. What are some of the daily trials that tempt you to doubt Christ’s love for you?

2. How does spending daily time in prayer, Bible study, and meditation assist you personally in the revival and reformation process?
The only way to experience revival and reformation through Spirit-led obedience is to trust God implicitly and recognize that we don’t have all the answers. Following are examples of people who did just that:

1. **Joseph and Mary.** Imagine your wife coming to you just before the wedding to tell you that she’s pregnant. You both think, *Wait a minute! This isn’t possible! We don’t have a sexual relationship!* Joseph thinks the child isn’t his and that Mary has betrayed him. Later, an angel appears to him to instruct him not to worry about taking Mary as his wife because the Child has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Now Joseph must have felt really confused. Imagine if Joseph had permitted his doubts to get the best of him. However, he remained faithful to God by obeying His commands.

When the angel first appeared to Mary to share with her God’s plan, she couldn’t help but wonder how it was possible. Yet, even despite her questions, she accepted God’s plan. “‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said’” (Luke 1:38, NIV).

What about you? Are you being obedient to God’s will? Dare to be like Joseph and Mary, even when God asks you to do the seemingly impossible. As a result of your obedience, He will grow His fruit of revival in your heart.

2. **Jesus.** The life of Jesus was one of hardship and pain. People questioned His divinity, Satan tried to derail His mission, and the Pharisees hated Him. Despite all of this opposition, He remained faithful to God. He was always looking to please His heavenly Father. No wonder that in Matthew 3:17 we read these words spoken by God: “‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’” (NIV). God was pleased that Jesus’ only purpose in life was to do His Father’s will, and, as a result of Jesus’ obedience, God opened the heavens and allowed His Holy Spirit to descend upon Jesus. What a blessing and a privilege. You, too, can experience the same revival Christ received. You, too, can regain your first love.
Many social movements have made a difference in the world. Some have had negative effects, while others began with great intentions, but eventually became imbalanced. True revival and reformation, however, is not a social movement, and its benefits surpass any other attempts at change. Such is the work of the Holy Spirit, who moves us to obey out of love for God. It is not just that we obey. It is why we obey. People who follow Christ out of a love that flows from the sanctification of the Holy Spirit will live in harmony with God’s Word. Their focus will be on Christ because He is the ultimate example of love. His love for humanity led Him to obedience and to suffer death on the cross. Love leads to obedience. This is why the Bible teaches that love for God is seen in our obedience to Him.

**Spirit-led obedience occurs when we focus on Christ and His sacrifice.**

Many Christians, however, have become imbalanced. They do not love God as they should, and they depend on their own power to obey Him. They concentrate on the law rather than on the Law-Giver. Yet the only way we can experience true revival and reformation is not by focusing on what we do, but on Christ and His sacrifice.

As the Holy Spirit enters into our lives as He did Christ’s, and as we continually allow the Spirit to work within us, we will be revived and transformed. But we must decide that we want the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Spirit-led obedience occurs when we focus on Christ and His sacrifice. It is having faith in His transforming power to revive and reform us. The first thing we need to do is to invite God into our hearts so that He can revive and transform us. Are you ready to invite Him to do so? He is waiting to hear from you!

**REACT**

1. What does revival and reformation look like in your life? Are you allowing God to do all the work, or just some of it? Is there anything in your walk with Him that you do out of habit or fear of being lost? Pray that God will give you the right motive to obey Him.

2. Do you have enough faith in the power of Christ and His sacrifice to trust Him with the transformation process? If not, pray to Him for the faith. He will help you to believe.
CONCLUDE

So much about our lives becomes clear when we seek Jesus’ face. Our own attempts at obedience will fail. However, God forgives us and receives us with delight. Our relationship with Christ makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to empower us to live and act as God designed. The results extend into our lives and on to the lives of others.

CONSIDER

• Summarizing what Oswald Chambers has to say on obedience, our will, God’s role, and our relationship with Him in *My Utmost for His Highest*, particularly the readings for June 6, October 10 and 20, November 2, and February 11 at utmost.org.

• Using your own breath to inflate a balloon. Tie it off so it stays inflated. Fill a second balloon with hot air. (This Web site shows simple building instructions and a safe flying technique: http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/k-2/TRC/Aeronautics/Hot_Air_Balloon.html.) Which balloon can stay aloft for the longest time and at the highest altitude, and why? In your answer, look further than just “hot air.” Compare this to having an obedient relationship with Christ.

• Going for a walk with several friends. Choose one person to follow and to keep in step with. Everyone’s left foot touches the ground at the same time as the leader’s left, then right, then left, and so on. How far or how long can the group stay in step? What is necessary for all the “followers” to be successful at this activity? Compare this to one’s daily walk with Christ.

• Thinking about your closest relationships. How do humility and/or pride affect the quality of these relationships? How are humility and/or pride related to the success of mutual obedience or submission in a close relationship? Compare or contrast your answers when it comes to obeying Christ.

CONNECT

Confession and Repentance—The Conditions for Revival

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13, NKJV).
Once there was a man who was president of a powerful country. He had been governing this country for many years. His fellow citizens respected and valued him. God loved this president and gave him the power to take over corrupt countries within his part of the world. Because of the president’s love for God, He was able to bless him with many soldiers, an exquisite palace full of servants, and a wonderful family.

One day, the president observed a beautiful woman taking a shower in the house next to him. He quickly ordered one of his servants to find out who she was. Later, the servant was able to tell him that her name was Emily and that she was the wife of Harris, a devoted soldier of the president. Lust quickly filled his heart, so he ordered the servant to have Emily brought to him at once. That night, the godly man slept with Emily.

It wasn’t long before lust turned into abuse and abuse into murder. The president told his top military aide to place Harris in the front line of battle even though only experienced troops were placed there. The day after the battle, the aide reported to the president that Harris had been killed in the fighting.

Does this story sound familiar? It’s a modern version of David and Bathsheba. In this story, a king appointed by God to rule His people does what most of us consider to be unforgivable. Yet in 2 Samuel 12, we learn that David repented of his sins and that God forgave him. God knows about every sin we commit. But He is willing to forgive us when we humbly confess and repent. He knows that storing up guilt and pain does nothing but destroy life. That is why He is calling you to present your case to Him. This week, let the Holy Spirit guide you as you study the essence and beauty of repentance—the healing power of confession.

Nikki Valentine, Barrie, Ontario, Canada
Oswald Chambers wrote that “conviction of sin is one of the rarest things that ever strikes a man.”1 Does our generation lack the humbling effect that conviction, confession, and repentance have on our collective character?

It’s the only cure for our human condition.

To “convict” means “to prove or declare guilty of an offense” or “to impress with a sense of guilt.”2 The Greek word elegcho is translated as “convict.”3 The word is interpreted throughout the New Testament in a variety of ways: “tell him his fault” (Matt. 18:15), “reprove” (John 3:20; 16:8; Eph. 5:11), “rebuke” (1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:13), and “convict” (John 8:46; James 2:9). No matter the exact term, we always find the Holy Spirit doing His work of convicting us of our sin in a gentle, yet insistent manner.

One example of the Holy Spirit’s work of conviction is found in John 8:1–9. Jesus asked the woman’s accusers to search their hearts for their own sins. The moments between stones clenched in self-righteous hands and retreating, humbled footsteps are where conviction’s story is told. This work has the power to stop us in our tracks and turn us back to the Lord, seeking realignment with His will.

Unfortunately, modern society asserts that there is no need for this work of conviction. Robert Schuller stated, “I don’t think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality . . . than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.”4 If being aware of our sinful condition is destructive, it is in the way that learning you have a treatable disease is destructive. Hebrews 4:12 is talking about the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Such conviction is necessary pain designed to lead us into confession and repentance. It’s the only cure for our human condition.

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Genuine Repentance (Ps. 51:1–10; Matt. 27:1–5)

Many people know what spring-cleaning is like. It’s a time when never-used items are thrown away or given to a charity, and the house, both inside and out, is thoroughly cleaned. Repentance and confession is a time for soul-cleaning. Both are needed before revival and reformation can take place in one’s life or in the church. First, there must be remorse and godly sorrow for the harm we have done to others and to oneself, followed by a complete turnaround for the better (Ezek. 14:6; 2 Cor. 7:10). There must also be confession—the acknowledgment of one’s sins. Confession is the broom, rake, or vacuum that removes the dirt and rubbish from our hearts (1 John 1:9).

Genuine repentance will lead to genuine confession (Ps. 51:1–10). Likewise, a false repentance will lead to a false confession (Josh. 7:18–21; Matt. 27:1–5). Judas and Achan confessed only because they were found out, not because they were truly sorry (see The Desire of Ages, pp. 721, 722 and Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 498).

The Difference Between True Repentance and Confession (Lev. 5:5; Prov. 28:13; Luke 19:8; John 16:8–11; Acts 19:18, 19; 2 Cor. 7:9–11; Rev. 3:14–20)

Is feeling bad about one’s sins the same as repentance? Is admitting one’s sins the same as confession? What role does the Holy Spirit play in repentance and confession? Read John 16:8–11. The Bible mentions the church in Laodicea as being lukewarm (Rev. 3:14–20). Its worship was dead, cold, and formal. What made it that way? What makes us that way? “The climax of the Laodiceans’ boast is that their situation could not be improved. Such self-satisfaction is fatal, for the Spirit of God never enters where a need for His presence is not felt, yet without that presence newness of life is impossible.”

We become lukewarm when we turn from God, when He does not live in our hearts. What will it take to bring about a revival and reformation in our churches, homes, schools, and our individual lives? Before the Holy Spirit can live in our hearts to transform our lives, we must repent and confess.
“True repentance implies a radical change in attitude toward sin and God. It is God’s gracious goodness that leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4), working in them ‘both to will and to do of his good pleasure’ (Phil. 2:13). Repentance is preceded by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, who impresses upon the sinner’s heart God’s infinite righteousness and the sinner’s own lost state.”

When we confess, “there must be a specific acknowledgment of the sin or sins involved (Lev 5:5), accompanied by repentance (Mt 3:2, 6, 8; Acts 2:28; cf. Ps 38:18), restitution, if necessary and possible (Lev 6:4; Lk 19:8 . . .), and reformation (1 Ki 8:35; Prov 28:13; Is 55:7; Acts 19:18, 19).”

**How Can One Know When a Person Is Truly Repentant? (Matt. 7:15–21; Heb. 11:16; James 2:17)**

Genuine repentance and confession always bring about change. Those who claim to be children of God but who have no change of heart that is evident in how they treat others and behave in other areas of life are not saved. Often they are greedy for gain and power (see *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, p. 357).

“Faith in God must accompany the doing, or the doing is only a form. It is true that ‘faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone’ (James 2:17), but is equally true that works unaccompanied by a sincere and living faith are also ‘dead’ (Heb. 11:16). Those who do not know the will of God are not held accountable for it (Luke 12:47, 48), but those who have heard God’s voice speaking to their heart and yet persist in ways of their own choosing ‘have no cloak for their sin’ (John 15:22) and are in danger of presumption.”

At the same time, however, we must remember that we are not the judge. Only God ultimately has the right and the ability to determine who is sincere and who is not regarding their repentance and confession. Our duty is to make sure that we alone are right with God.

**REACT**

1. What is preventing the Holy Spirit from bringing revival and reformation in your life?
2. What about your actions and attitudes show the need for soul cleansing?
3. How might you be trying to cover up your sins?
4. Why is it important to remember that only God “has the right and the ability to determine who is sincere and who is not regarding their repentance and confession”?
5. Do you feel the need for the presence of the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?

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3. Ibid., s.v. “Confession.”

Angela Gilfillan, St. Catherine’s, Jamaica
“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.”

“The prayer of David after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened, inspired his prayer. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness—to be restored to harmony and communion with God. This was the language of his soul. . . .

“It was not for pardon only that he prayed.”

“‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: / According unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions: / For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . . / Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: / wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . / Create in me a clean heart, O God; / And renew a right spirit within me. . . .’

“A repentance such as this, is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ, who ascended up on high and has given gifts unto men.”

“Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. The psalmist says, ‘The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit’ Psalm 34:18.”

**REACT**

1. Do you have a hidden sin that nobody but God knows? How can God help you with it?

2. Consider the Bible characters Samson, Pharaoh, Judas, and Peter. Discuss the sins they committed against God and whether their repentance was sincere or fake.

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2. Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
3. Ibid., p. 38.

Stephanie Valentine, Barrie, Ontario, Canada
My mother often shared stories with my sister and me about her childhood. One of her stories left a deep impression on me. There were children in her town who had to carry buckets of water, bundles of wood, and grocery bags on their heads as a part of their daily chores. I often wondered how they could walk around with such heavy loads. What a burden!

Imagine walking around every day with loads of sin in your life, not knowing what to do or whom to ask for help. How burdensome would that be! Fortunately, however, we do not have to bear our burdens alone. Outlined below are three steps that will help us gain spiritual revival:

1. Accept the Holy Spirit into your life. Repentance is not gained through our own merits. Rather it is a gift from God. In Acts 2:38, we read that if we repent of our sins and are baptized, we will receive the Holy Spirit.

2. Depend on the Holy Spirit. In order to be truly repentant, we must depend on the Holy Spirit's leading. Second Corinthians 7:9–11 describes repentance as being sorry for our sins in a godly manner. When we repent, we become free from our burdens and are zealous to do God's work.

3. Be sincere. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). It doesn’t matter when we sin, where we sin, or how we sin. God says we are to come! And when we do so with sincerity of heart, He will wash away our sins and remember them no more (1 John 1:9).

By confessing, we are healed (Ps. 32:1–7). In Acts 24:16, Paul wrote that he always strove to have a clear conscience before God and other people. How about you? Can you boast of a clean heart? In Psalm 32:1, 2, David wrote: “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, / whose sins are covered. / Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him / and in whose spirit is no deceit” (NIV). How remarkable it is to be able to go to the Lord to receive forgiveness and healing through true repentance and confession.

**REACT**
1. How can we demonstrate to the world that we have truly repented?
2. In what way is repentance a daily process?
David is the author of one of the best-loved psalms, Psalm 51. In this song of confession and repentance, he poured out his sorrow for the sins he committed against Bathsheba and her husband. In return, God removed the pain that so conflicted him.

How wonderful it is to experience His healing power.

Samson was well known for his strength and for the foolish things he did with it. Yet in Judges 16:28–30, we read how God gave him one last moment of unbelievable strength. Despite the folly of his former years, it seems that he used this strength “to redeem, in the last moments of his life, his lost opportunities. The taunts attributing the victory of the Philistines to the heathen deity Dagon may have aroused his soul to vindicate the name of the God of Israel upon whom he himself had brought such dishonor.”

Then there is Peter, a fisherman whom Christ chose to be one of His disciples. Think about when Jesus told him that three times he would deny his Savior. Think about how sure Peter was that he would not! Finally, think about how Peter wept when he really did deny Christ (Matt. 26:69–75). There’s a quote that says, “Tears are words the heart can’t express.” Peter’s tears were the confession for which he could find no words.

Guilt is the stain of sin. Christ’s forgiveness is the stain remover. David, Samson, Peter, and many other people in the Bible teach us that God is just and merciful to us when we confess our sins and repent of them. He is there when we call upon Him for forgiveness. He is waiting to wipe away our sins and our sorrows. He is ready to extend to us His grace. And once we are able to confess and repent of our sins with our soul and not only our minds, we will experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Then we will know that God is near and happy that we have made Him our Confidant. How wonderful it is to experience His healing power.

REACT

1. Why is it so easy for God to forgive us but so hard for us to forgive others?
2. How can we forgive others as easily as God forgives us?


Eugenie Valentine, Barrie, Ontario, Canada
CONCLUDE

God eliminated the barriers that restricted our relationship with Him as easily as the sun burns off the morning fog. Through repentance and confession, we have acknowledged and accepted that which God has accomplished on our behalf. We no longer need to rely on our presumed innocence or behavioral performance. We recognize that our righteousness is as filthy rags, and we have confessed our guilt in recognition that nothing short of divine grace can remedy that problem. Once we have abandoned our pride and self-righteousness through confession and repentance, we have passed the last barrier that has delayed our return to God.

CONSIDER

- Illustrating God’s forgiveness using a quart jar of water, food coloring, and bleach. Add red food coloring (our sins) to the water and neutralize the color using chlorine bleach to represent God’s cleansing power.
- Writing a poetic prayer through which you express your confession and repentance.
- Identifying ten biblical stories that illustrate confession and repentance that have made an impact on your life. Rank these stories from the most influential to the least influential.
- Singing your favorite songs that celebrate God’s unlimited mercy in the context of confession and repentance.
- Drawing a picture of a famous biblical confession such as David’s confession of personal sin or Daniel’s confession of his peoples’ sin.
- Looking for illustrations in nature that show the freedom or release people feel when they have unburdened themselves of guilt and shame through repentance and confession.
- Talking with a friend or church leader about how repentance and confession have enabled his or her personal spiritual journey.

CONNECT

1 Kings 8:22–61; Isaiah 59; Philippians 3:4–14.
Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, chapters 2–5.
Edward Heppenstall, Salvation Unlimited (Review and Herald®, 1974), chapter 5.

Dan Solis, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.
Unity—The Bond of Revival

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3, NKJV).
“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Are we as a church united as one body? Is it even necessary that we stand in one accord? God’s church in both the Old and the New Testaments faced the same questions we must ask ourselves today.

Disunity in the church weakens our testimony to the world. When visitors come to our churches, do they find us quarreling? There is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). If each member of God’s church is moving closer to God, they will be effortlessly moving closer to each other as well.

As God’s children, we are called to be “the light of the world”—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14, NLT). The unity of our church testifies that God is our Guide and that we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

An old children’s story from India tells about a flock of doves flying across the countryside. After flying a great distance, some of the doves began to complain of hunger. Noticing a rice field, the leader of the flock said they could all land in the rice field to fill their bellies for the long journey that was still ahead. When they had almost eaten their fill, a large net fell on top of them. In the distance, the birds could see a hunter approaching with a shotgun in his hand. Panic stricken, they attempted to fly, but the net prevented their escape. The lead dove—calmly observing their disorder and disunity—spoke in a loud, firm voice to get their attention. “We must all work together to escape. This will be the only way we can succeed. All of us must beat our wings simultaneously, and we must all fly in the same direction. Follow my lead.” Then all together, each bird flock began to flap its wings. Despite the net still covering them, they rose high into the sky, flying in one accord all the way to their destination.*

All of God’s children, who reach their heavenly home, will be found in one accord in Christ. This week we will learn how to break down the barriers that sometimes separate us so that we can enter into the unity that Christ seeks for His church.

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Wilhemina Koomson, Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.
Unity—Why? (John 10:30; Phil. 2:1–11)

The concept of unity did not originate on earth with humanity. It started in heaven. Jesus said, “‘I and My Father are one’” (John 10:30, NKJV). Unity is not something we can ignore or “do” when we go to church. The call for unity comes from God, and the type of unity He is looking for is exemplified in the relationship between Himself and Jesus. Paul urged the Philippians to make his joy complete by “being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil. 2:2, NIV). Then he tells them that their “attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (verse 5, NIV).

Our Savior expects us to be united with Him and with our fellow church members. How can we call ourselves Christians and not imitate Christ? If there is a lack of unity and love within our churches, we cannot claim to love God. John asked the early church members how they could say they loved God yet hate a brother. The answer? If we hate anyone, we do not love God.

Unity—An Answered Prayer (John 17)

The only prayer we have of Jesus praying for His disciples involves unity. This shows the importance of the topic. Jesus asked of God “‘that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me’” (John 17:21, NKJV).

“There would be diversities of gifts (1 Cor. 12), but there was to be unity of spirit, objectives, and beliefs. There were to be no strivings for supremacy such as had recently plagued the Twelve (Luke 22:24–30). The unity springing from the blended lives of Christians would impress the word of the divine origin of the Christian church.”*

Those who are united with Christ and the Father will be united with other people who are united with Them. Every aspect of our daily lives, not just our religious activities or our individual ministries, must be in accordance with Them. Only then can unity be achieved and God be able to answer the prayer that His own Son offered on our behalf.

[Unity] is something tangible, something real, something that transforms one’s life and one’s environment.

Our Savior expects us to be united with Him and with our fellow church members. How can we call ourselves Christians and not imitate Christ? If there is a lack of unity and love within our churches, we cannot claim to love God. John asked the early church members how they could say they loved God yet hate a brother. The answer? If we hate anyone, we do not love God.
Unity—The Early Church (Acts 1:14; 2:1–4; 4:32, 33)

The book of Acts reveals the results of Jesus’ prayer for His disciples. After He returned to heaven, the disciples diligently and constantly sought God through prayer. Throughout the book of Acts, the results of such prayer are fully displayed along with the blessings showered by God upon the church. Even when problems arose, the early church was able to find solutions and to continue with the work of spreading the gospel. Prayer kept them on track. In Acts 6:1–7, we read that the Grecian Jews “complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (verse 1, NIV). So instead of tending to the issue themselves, the disciples appointed deacons to do so. This allowed the disciples to focus on their primary mission. The solution “pleased the whole multitude” (verse 5, NKJV). After choosing the deacons, “the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (verse 7, NKJV). Thus we see how unity solves problems and helps the church to focus on spreading the gospel. Unity allows the gospel to spread like wildfire.

Unity—A Transforming Power (Matt. 18:1–5; Acts 4:32, 33; 12:5–12; 1 Cor. 12:12–26)

Unity is not just a concept. It is something tangible, something real, something that transforms one’s life and one’s environment. The disciples did not understand the importance of unity and how critical it was to successfully spread the gospel. In Matthew 18, they asked Jesus who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven—a question whose answer could surely cause disunity. In their selfish hearts, each disciple desired to be greater than the disciple next to him. They had no sense of unity, and they did not see the need for it. Jesus’ response surprised them. He called a child to Him, and said, “ ‘Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’ ” (Matt. 18:4, NIV).

How different the disciples would be a few years later! Acts 4:32, 33 shows how they were of one heart and one mind, how they were focused on their mission. This transformation spread to the other believers. Thus, the church was united. When Peter was thrown in jail, the believers united in prayer. Such prayer brings power and changes lives. And such unity strengthens the church, of which Christ is the Head.

REACT

1. How willing are you to submit completely to God and be one with Him? What prevents you from doing so?

Juan Antialon, Rahway, New Jersey, U.S.A.
In today’s world, the word unity is scarcely used. The general way of the world is for people to do things on their own, in their own time, and in their own way. God, however, calls His people to be united. Ellen White wrote the following about this call:

“In [Christ’s] first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world’s teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ’s object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with Himself. The burden of His labor for them is expressed in His prayer to His Father, ‘That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us;’ ‘that the world may know that Thou has sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.’ John 17:21, 23.”

The apostles “would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissen-sion. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.”

**REACT**

1. The first disciples came from all walks of life. They varied in age, occupation, and culture. Yet they were united in purpose. How can we work in unity with those who differ from us?

2. What influence does Jesus expect Christian unity to have on the unbelieving world (John 17:21, 23)? Why is Christian unity such a compelling factor in reaching unbelievers? How can you personally utilize the united Christian community to share the gospel?

3. What does the Trinity teach us about unity?

4. Where is your church strong in exhibiting unity? In what areas could unity be strengthened?

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Marsha Dupiton, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.
*Ekklesia* is often translated as “church” and literally means “a group of citizens ‘called out’ to assemble for political purposes.”¹ The actual word *unity* is not commonly used in either the Old Testament (Hebrew: *yachad*) or the New Testament (Greek: *henotes*); but the concept of being one is used many times.² We see from Deuteronomy 6:4 that God (the Trinity) has “no contradiction within him.”³ Notice that the very definition of unity implies that different parts make a whole (such as the Trinity), instead of a whole initially existing. How can people with differences make a whole that does not contradict its parts or eventually fracture into many parts?

This was an issue in Ephesus. Ephesus was well positioned for trade and was known for its artists, philosophers, and other intellectuals, as well as the Temple of Artemis, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.⁴ The Ephesians’ pride in their temple and in the money they made from selling small idols of Artemis actually caused some people to riot against Paul when he spoke against idol worship. The Ephesians’ ties to income and cultural/religious differences between Greeks (Gentiles) and Jews made it difficult for the Ephesian church to be united. Furthermore, many Christians in Ephesus had an incomplete understanding of the gospel (Acts 19). Not having the right foundation prevented true unity with Christ’s *ekklesia*.

For revival to occur and unity to exist, we must disconnect from certain things in our lives. Finally, we must keep the love between one another strong (1 Cor. 13:13), and we must remain true to God, our first love (Rev. 2:4). He is the Source that brings us together as a church.

**REACT**

What are you connected to that might prevent you from connecting to Christ’s *ekklesia*?

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4. Ibid., p. 189.
A long time ago, a little child in an African tribe wandered off into the tall jungle grass and got lost. The tribe searched all day but could not find the little boy. The next day, tribal members all held hands and walked through the grass together. This helped them to find the child, but he had not survived. In her anguish and tears, the mother cried, “If only we had held hands sooner.”

“If only we had held hands sooner.”

It is sad to see that although God encourages us in His Word to be united and to make peace with one another, we still create divisions among ourselves, often by gossiping about our brothers and sisters behind their backs. Jesus said that unless the church is united in purpose and mission just like the disciples were at the time of Pentecost (Acts 1:1–4), it will fail to fulfill its mission of preparing the world for His second coming (Mark 3:25). As at Pentecost, unity is an important requirement for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God’s church in these last days of earth’s history.

All is not lost. There are things we can do to create unity among church members. Here are some suggestions you can try:

- **Be united in service.** James 1:27 states that “pure religion” includes being of service to others. Look around your neighborhood and city. What needs do you find? Choose one or two and work together as a church to help fulfill those needs.

- **Be united in prayer.** The early church was a praying church (Acts 2:42; 12:5, 12). Encourage the members of your church to form prayer groups and to pray for one another.

- **Be united in fellowship.** Members of the Pentecost church regularly gathered at the temple and in their homes to study and eat together (Acts 2:46). Organize picnics, nature walks, potlucks, or other events that encourage church members to talk, mingle, and enjoy each other’s company.

**REACT**

1. Why do you think it is so hard to achieve unity in church?
2. What are some issues that cause disunity in your church?
3. Create a list of activities or attitudes that you think would help your church to be more unified. How can these activities and attitudes be promoted?
In February 2012, the Pew Research Center published a study entitled “The Rise of Intermarriage.” This study casts light on the status of race relations in the United States. One of the study’s findings includes the statistic that “about 15% of all new marriages in the United States in 2010 were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another, more than double the share in 1980 (6.7%).”

Much about twenty-first-century society is distinct from former centuries. A new concept of racial identity is emerging. Children of interracial parents are defining racial identities differently, mixing personal preferences and subjectivity in self-identification, instead of relying merely on genetic makeup. Thus, a new type of unity is being achieved.

We need to find ways to interact and collaborate with each other.

The Adventist Church is blessed to be a worldwide community of faith where diversity is engrained in its demographics. We celebrate the encompassing nature of our denomination’s geographical reach in gatherings such as General Conference sessions. Yet often, much of our worship experience is still defined by the variety of ethnic local churches. Of course, language barriers sometimes exist, and ethnic churches serve as an effective bridge to evangelize their represented communities. But this language barrier does not discount the need for our entire family of faith to be united. We cannot achieve the unity Christ prayed for if we exist solely as separate entities. We need to find ways to interact and collaborate with each other.

Yet the unification of various ethnicities in God’s church needs to be more than external. We may worship together occasionally for a Sabbath or two, but the question is, do we really desire to be together with others who are not similar to us. Perhaps their customs and cultural preferences differ from ours and make us uncomfortable. How willing are we to overlook these differences and love each other regardless?

For true unity to be achieved, each of us needs to experience a true heart conversion. Such a conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. Only then can the culture of heaven truly be reflected on earth.

CONCLUDE

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit united the church to fulfill Christ’s mission to the world. Church members put their differences aside in order to spread the gospel. Striving for supremacy ceased in the light of Christ’s commission to reach the lost. If His early followers had been vying for power, the work would have been blocked from the start. Instead, convicted by the Holy Spirit to die to self, they were united in purpose and mission. Where there is no unity, there can be no revival. Where jealousy, envy, and jostling for supremacy reign, the Holy Spirit’s power is withheld. How crucial, then, that we break down the barriers that separate us so we can enter into the unity that Christ seeks for His church.

CONSIDER

• Reading Psalm 133. As you do so, notice how the psalmist describes unity. What metaphors and similes would you use to describe the type of unity God wishes His people to have?
• Creating a prayer for unity based on each successive letter of the word unity.
• Drawing a picture that illustrates what unity in the church looks like or means to you. Consider how you would explain your drawing to a friend.
• Thinking about your favorite musical instrument and what it would sound like or how difficult it would be to play if a certain part of it were missing. Compare this to unity and disunity in the church.
• Talking with two leaders in your home church to get their thoughts on the importance of unity within your congregation. How do their responses inspire you to help your church be unified?
• Seeing yourself as one of the people for whom Jesus is praying in John 17:20–24 and thinking about how you can help your church reach the type of unity for which Jesus is praying.
• Looking at a flower or a picture of one. Consider all of its parts and how each part contributes to the entire flower. Compare that to how each part and/or person of the church contributes to the church as a whole.

CONNECT

Malachi 2:10; Matthew 5:9; Hebrews 12:14.

Greta Daalman, Frederick, Maryland, U.S.A.
Discernment—The Safeguard of Revival

“Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness. The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever”

(Ps. 119:159, 160, NKJV).
Indonesia is constitutionally not a Muslim country. Yet 85 percent of Indonesia’s population is Muslim.* However, every Sunday, many people can watch television shows conducted by a variety of Christian evangelists. During these shows, viewers are invited to call in to share their problems and to pray with someone. Sometimes an evangelist will mention that he or she “feels” that someone is sick who is watching the show in their home. Then the evangelist prays and says that this person is healed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must be careful about these healing schemes.

The main selling point of these evangelists is their supposed ability to perform such miracles. But Jesus reminds us that “not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21, NIV).

We must be careful about these healing schemes. Many people during the time of the end will be able to perform miracles, including the miracle of healing (Matt. 7:22). Many people will claim that their power comes from the Holy Spirit. However, we must be careful. We must “test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21, 22, NIV). We need to be careful because only the people who do the will of the Father will be in heaven (Matt. 7:21). We do not want to hear Jesus say of us, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matt. 7:23, NIV).

This week we will learn how to guard ourselves against “revival schemes” the devil puts in our way. As you study, pray for wisdom to discern the truth in these matters.

Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). While they waited for this gift, they joined together in prayer (Acts 1:14). Then on the Day of Pentecost, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31, NIV). As a result, approximately three thousand people were baptized. Afterward, the disciples continued to devote themselves to fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread—both the Lord’s Supper and everyday meals (Acts 2:42). The Word of God continued to spread and the number of disciples multiplied greatly (Acts 6:7). Their experience reveals the characteristics of true revival: prayer and the study of God’s Word, following Christ’s teachings, and maintaining a passionate commitment to spreading the gospel, all made possible because they accepted God’s gift of His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit’s guidance, prayer and Bible study help us to understand our need of God, who grants us righteousness, grace, wisdom, and strength. Our spiritual batteries are thus recharged, and we receive power to show Jesus’ loving character to others. As we diligently seek the truth through Bible study, the Holy Spirit helps us to understand God’s will and encourages us to share the good news with others. Genuine revival corresponds with increased interest in Bible study and involves a passion to share the gospel through words and acts of service.

Jesus reminds us that “‘many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold’” (Matt. 24: 11, 12, NIV). Lying preachers will deceive many people. The spread of evil will overwhelm many others.

Satan uses counterfeit miraculous signs, wonders, and physical manifestations to deceive people (2 Thess. 2:9–12). God, of course, can perform miracles, and He does (Acts 2:22). However, the main objective of revival is not to benefit from miracles, but to develop within our own lives the loving character of Jesus (Gal. 5:22, 23) and the desire to tell others about Him. The more we love Jesus, the more we desire to share His love; and the more we share His love, the more we will love Him.
**When Revival Saved a Nation (2 Chronicles 34; 2 Tim. 3:14–16)**

The Israelites experienced several revivals, one of them occurring during the time of King Josiah. When he was 16, he began to seek God, and despite being related to wicked kings, he determined to revive true worship within the kingdom. When he was 20, he began to rid Israel of idol worship. To this end, he repaired “the temple of the Lord his God” (2 Chron. 34:8, NIV). While doing so, Hilkiah the priest discovered the Book of the Law of the Lord that God had given to Israel through Moses. After Josiah read this book to the people, he pledged himself to serve God. Everyone else also pledged themselves to serving God.

**There can be no spiritual revival without [the Bible].**

Centuries later, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about how the Holy Scriptures were “written to show men how they may be saved from their sins. There are many so-called sacred ‘writings’ in the world, but only the Bible safely points the way to man’s redemption. . . . Only the Bible reveals how men may break the bonds of sinful habits and find pardon from God. Consequently man’s first duty should be to understand the Bible for himself.”

**Avoid False Spiritual Revivals (Matt. 7:21–23)**

Many people have been deceived by self-proclaimed church leaders who use their so-called gifts of tongues, prophecy, healing, and other miracles to create revivals. False spiritual revivals always have existed. Jesus spoke about them in Matthew 7:21–23: “ ‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” ’ ” (NIV). The fact that Jesus says He never knew them “is evidence that their teachings and miracles had not been spoken in harmony with the will of God, or by His power.”

“It is evident from the Scriptures that the performance of miracles is not of itself conclusive evidence that divine power has been in operation. The greatest miracle of time and eternity is a life transformed according to the divine likeness.”
Things Needed for Spiritual Revival (1 Corinthians 12; Gal. 5:16, 22–25)

Through the grace of God, the Holy Spirit equips believers with certain gifts for building and strengthening the church—the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, we read about some of these gifts (also see Romans 12; Ephesians 4; and 1 Pet. 4:10, 11). “The spiritual gifts given to each person by the Holy Spirit are special abilities that are to be used to minister to the needs of the body of believers. . . . There are many gifts, people have different gifts, some people have more than one gift, and one gift is not superior to another. All spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit, and their purpose is to build up Christ’s body, the church.”

Other things needed for spiritual revival are the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 5:3–5; Gal. 5:16, 22–25; 1 Tim. 6:11; and 2 Tim. 3:10). “While the Christian life is about doing (bearing fruit), this doing will be hollow and meaningless unless it is driven by being. And this means being transformed by the indwelling Spirit of God, whose first work is to convict us of sin, who then gives us ongoing victory over sin, and finally, who fills us with the most wonderful gift of all, the fruit of the Spirit—which, in a word, is the mind of Christ.”

The Foundation of Spiritual Revival (Ps. 119:25, 28, 105; 2 Tim. 3:14–16)

No foundation is stronger when it comes to spiritual revival than the Bible—God’s Word. There can be no spiritual revival without it. And Jesus gives us the perfect example of living a life that is grounded in it. His life centered around it, and He met every temptation with it (Matt. 4:1–10).

We see in both the Old and the New Testaments that God’s Word taught His people many wonderful truths. Today, these same truths regarding repentance and God’s plans for restoring people to Him can be read and heard nearly everywhere in the world. It is good to listen to other people explain the words of the Bible or preach from it. But those two activities should never replace reading and studying the Bible ourselves.

The Bible gives us principles regarding family life and how to do honest work. The Bible also sets the standard for how to relate to our Creator and Savior. When we sincerely study the Bible in order to grow closer to God, we will experience true spiritual revival.

REACT

1. What prevents you from growing spiritually?
2. What place does the Bible currently have in your life? Do you read it out of habit, or do you let God’s Word become a part of your life?

2. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 359.
3. Ibid.
“The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles.”¹

“Evil angels are upon our track every moment. . . . [They] assume new ground and work marvels and miracles in our sight. . . .

“A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit.”

“Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited? Will not many souls be ensnared and taken? By departing from the plain precepts and commandments of God, and giving heed to fables, the mind of many are preparing to receive these lying wonders. We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God’s word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan’s power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ.”²

“While the people are so destitute of God’s Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the Word; but when the Spirit’s power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect. Guided by the teachings of God’s Word, with the manifestation of His Spirit, in the exercise of sound discretion, those who attend our meetings will gain a precious experience, and returning home, will be prepared to exert a healthful influence.”³

“A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”⁴

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2. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 302.
3. White, Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 121.
4. Ibid., p. 128.

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Gomgom Simatupang, Jakarta, Indonesia
It is not always easy to revive and reform our spiritual lives. When I desired to study the Bible daily, I found it difficult to do so, because my goal was merely to study every day. Therefore, I revised my initial objective to include the following. I call it my “revival plan”:

The finish line is Christ’s return. Always seek His guidance.

_Do a self-check._ Ask God to show you aspects of your life that need improvement. Perhaps it might be your bad habit of arriving late for church or that you are not doing anything to help people in need. Make a list and ask God to help you choose where to start and what He would like to help you work on. Let Psalm 139:23 be your prayer.

_Be practical._ At one point in my life, I was determined to go through the “Follow the Bible” plan. However, that lasted only a few days. Ask God to show you something to study that will be relevant to your needs. Studying something you need or that interests you will help you to maintain your daily devotions. Even then, however, you will most likely experience lapses. Then try to remember what Paul wrote: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).

_Create a supporting environment._ I keep a Bible beside my laptop in my office. That reminds me to read it before I start working. I also read the Bible on my tablet PC while riding the bus home in the evening. There are also Bible version apps for any type of electronic device you might have.

_Be a good example._ We tend to see what’s negative about others rather than what’s negative about ourselves. So be concerned only with your own improvement and be careful not to criticize others. However, it’s always good to share in friendly, nonthreatening ways what’s working for you in terms of revival and reformation.

Finally, remember that the process of revival and reformation is ongoing. The finish line is Christ’s return. Always seek His guidance.

**REACT**

1. Why is it important to identify areas in your spiritual life that need to be improved?
2. What should we say or do when people at church criticize us even when they are not setting a good example themselves?
One night I watched a program on a Christian channel. A famous pastor from a charismatic church was speaking. During the program he kept pointing out how marvelous his anointing oil was. He claimed that this oil was able to save people from diseases and other general problems. Some people in the audience shared testimonies about the how oil had helped them. Many questions arose in my mind as I continued to listen. I wanted to hear what he had to say about Jesus, but he never did talk about Him.

As the program continued, I became more confused by some of this pastor’s statements.

As the program continued, I became more confused by some of this pastor’s statements. He said that Christians cannot have problems and that they would always be showered with blessings and success. Yet 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (NKJV). Therefore, our suffering is evidence that we are united with Jesus.

Many people are fascinated with this pastor and his oil and are eager to join his church. They are tired and worn out, so they think that what he offers is the quickest and easiest solution to their problems. One Christmas, he began the service by announcing that he would be giving everyone in the audience a free bottle of his anointing oil. Jesus came to this world as a babe so that He could be our Savior. He started His service by citing the words of God while He was tempted by Lucifer in the desert (Matt. 4:1–11). Let us not be fooled by the world’s oil. Rather let us seek and find healing in the healing “oil” of God’s word as spoken and lived by our Savior, God’s Son.

**REACT**

1. Why do so many people follow false teachings?
2. What can we learn about Christ’s salvation through the miracles He performed?
3. How can we tell if what looks like a miracle is really from God?
**CONCLUDE**

While the Christian life is about doing, doing is ineffective unless it is motivated by the indwelling Spirit of God. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them all. The Bible is God-breathed and able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. And it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. But since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Be concerned only with your own improvement and be careful not to criticize others. Always seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

**CONSIDER**

- Putting on a pair of polarizing sunglasses. Go outside and look at the windows of a car. How much of the car’s interior is visible with and without the sunglasses? As light fades at the end of the day, put on a pair of yellow safety glasses and repeat the exercise. Notice the differences in what you can see. How does this help us to understand discernment?
- Studying the diagram of “The Optical Path From the Lens Through the Mirror to the Viewfinder” (http://imaging.nikon.com/history/basics/01/01.htm). With digital cameras, electricity is vital. For each of the following powered systems for digital single-lens reflex cameras, think of as many additional specific components as you can: sensors, mechanics, information displays, in-camera computers, supplemental light sources. Now think about all of this in light of 1 Corinthians 12.
- Reading the owner’s manual for your car/motorcycle/bicycle and the driver’s license manual for where you live. What role does the owner’s manual and license manual play in the process? Compare this to reading the Bible and actually following its instructions.
- Buying some cut flowers and dividing them equally into three groups. Put one group in water. Put the other two bunches in vases without water. After two hours compare the vitality of the blossoms in the different vases. Add water to a second vase. See how quickly these flowers revive. Add water to the third vase after the second group begins looking better. What happens to the third set of flowers? Compare the water to how discernment and the Holy Spirit work in the life of a Christian.

**CONNECT**

Reformation—The Outgrowth of Revival

“Both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11, NKJV).
“I promise I’ll change! Just give me a chance!” How many times have these short sentences prolonged the life of a dying relationship? I confess I’ve uttered these words when my girlfriend couldn’t bear the way things were going anymore. I’d gasp them in desperation, hoping they would grasp her heart. And it worked several times. But after a sigh of relief, I continued “doing me” until our relationship finally ended.

Dating is the precursor to marriage. Jesus’ second coming is described as a wedding. “ ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ ” (Matt. 25:6, NIV). But do you know how Jesus described our dating relationship with Him in this day and age? “ ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!’ ” (Rev. 3:15, NIV).

He couldn’t have been more accurate. Today, many Christians are somewhere in the middle. We have the world’s playlist on our iPods and the world’s profanity on our tongues. But on the seventh day we sing praises and preach sermons. Our lifestyle isn’t much different from the next person. We don’t like to stand out at all. We want to act like we’re not in a relationship while we think we’re dating Jesus.

How much have you changed since you met Christ? My friend said something to me once that left me stunned: “I look back and I’m not the same person I was yesterday or two days ago, because every day I grow in Christ.”

That certainly hasn’t been me in the past year. In fact, my relationship with Christ has been pretty stagnant lately. Maybe it’s time you and I take the next step: reformation. We believe in Jesus, but now we have to surrender the areas in our lives that we’ve kept from Him, areas where we want to remain single (see Rev. 3:20).

Today’s verse says, “Now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father” (Heb. 2:11, NLT). What’s getting in the way between you and God? Think about that as you study this week’s lesson. Remember that the words comprising this lesson have no power in and of themselves to change you. Only God’s Word can do that. So read the Bible verses! And pray that this week the Word will revive your dates with Jesus.
The lights go off, and a suspenseful blanket of silence covers the audience. The stage lights flash on and your heart races. The singer’s elegant form then slowly rises as his most popular song begins to play. Finally, he explodes into action; his voice reaches your heart. There seems to be a new energy moving through the arena, a new life. You can’t hear yourself think as the audience is revived by his music. He is so vibrant. There is life even in his shadow.

Days later, sitting in a much smaller, less lively audience, you are battling sleep. Someone has been droning on for the past thirty minutes, and if it were not for some people wearing red and the lack of a casket, you would think you were attending a funeral. You look around. Those not sleeping are entertained by the game Angry Birds. Those with their Bibles open haven’t turned a page since the opening verse. You wonder why so many people are so disinterested. And then you wonder if Christianity went to the grave with Christ but failed to resurrect with Him.

**Revival (1 Cor. 15:17, 31; Rev. 3:15–20)**

Many people claim that Paul’s “dying daily” refers to total revival. But it is not enough to follow the “thou shalt nots,” maintain a healthful diet, and refrain from reckless partying. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Cor. 15:17, NIV). If we partake only in His death, then church becomes a funeral. This might explain why so many leave the church. Christ’s death brings us to the tomb and death to self. But does His resurrection wake us up to a new life in Him? This is what being lukewarm is about. Many of us are merely cold corpses living in a tomb, separated from the world.

**Resurrection (Prov. 20:27; Rom. 6:5; Col. 1:25, 26)**

Resurrection is a person’s becoming complete again. It is Christ dwelling in us, searching our innermost being, and purifying us with the flame of the Holy Spirit. After the Fall, humanity lost its natural inclination to the Spirit. That is why the Lord wants to light the wick of our spirit through His resur-
rection. When you accept Him completely, He does not continue to knock at your door. Instead, He enters, sits next to you at the dinner table, and passes the salt shaker to you. Once you are resurrected, life can never be the same because then you are with Jesus Christ, and He is transforming you on a daily basis.

**Reformation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:22–24)**

When you are crucified with Christ and arise from the grave of sin, reformation comes next. It consists of daily dying and resurrecting. God works on us continually and will not stop until He is done. His mind is now our mind, and eternal things attract us. Our affections and thoughts are focused on heavenly ideas and concepts. No longer are the people of the world strangers. Rather they are brothers and sisters waiting to know who we know. We have a burden to point all to Christ. And all that we say and do becomes our ministry. Each day is an adventure because we don’t know where the Spirit will lead us, or who the Spirit will bring our way. People will notice that when we are present, we make that part of the world a better place. Reformation as the outgrowth of revival finally becomes real.

Yes, life is a stage, always in concert, and the audience is the universe—angels as well as humanity. The world thinks you’re the performing artist, but you’re just the background for Him—the Messiah.

**REACT**

1. Research films, paintings, songs, and so on, about Christ’s ministry and resurrection. Where does the emphasis lie? Why do you think that is the case?

2. How do you plan on experiencing the resurrected life?

3. Read John 11:1–44. Imagine that you are Lazarus. How would you have lived after your resurrection? How does your answer help you to understand how to live a life of reformation now?
“At first the experience of the church at Ephesus was marked with childlike simplicity and fervor. The believers sought earnestly to obey every word of God, and their lives revealed an earnest, sincere love for Christ. They rejoiced to do the will of God because the Savior was in their hearts as an abiding presence. Filled with love for their Redeemer, their highest aim was to win souls to Him. They did not think of hoarding the precious treasure of the grace of Christ. They felt the importance of their calling; and, weighted with the message, ‘On earth peace, good will toward men,’ they burned with desire to carry the glad tidings of salvation to earth’s remotest bounds. And the world took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. Sinful men, repentant, pardoned, cleansed, and sanctified, were brought into partnership with God through His Son.”

2. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 422.

**God calls us to reform . . . for the sake of our Christian family.**

When you first fell in love with Jesus, all you wanted to do was share His goodness. You were a baby, cooing, “Jesus loves you!” to every person with whom you came in contact. However, baby Christians often grow up to find themselves torn between legalism and freedom, and the freeing power of Christ’s love seems to no longer be as effective as it once was.

“But after a time the zeal of the believers, their love for God and for one another, began to wane. Coldness crept into the church. Differences sprang up, and the eyes of many were turned from beholding Jesus as the Author and Finisher of their faith. The masses that might have been convicted and converted by a faithful practice of the truth, were left unwarned.”

When we lose sight of what being a Christian really means, our walk is affected, and so is the walk of our fellow Christians. God calls us to reform, not just for our sakes, but for the sake of our Christian family. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2, NKJV).

**REACT**

1. What causes the zeal of believers to wane? How can we help to keep new believers on fire for Christ?
2. Think of practical ways to bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
King Josiah ascended to the throne at the age of eight (2 Chron. 34:1). There must have been intense pressure on him as he was growing up to maintain the status quo. Yet when he was 16, he decided to challenge the norm by following God’s will (verse 3). Since Judah was still under the control of Assyria, “Josiah, in turning back to Yahweh . . . was turning away from an imposed dependence on Assyria and its gods.” Also, Josiah rose to power during a time of political turmoil because his father had been assassinated (2 Chron. 33:24, 25). Yet despite fear of Assyrain armies and assassination, he decided to follow God.

Josiah’s personal spiritual revival resulted in outward actions when he began to cleanse Judah of false religious practices. Instead of just keeping it to himself, he took action and destroyed the idols throughout his territory. Thus we learn that revival drives us to change our habits, to remove the idols from our hearts, and to draw closer to the Lord.

Six years after Josiah began destroying the idols, he began to repair the temple of God (2 Chron. 34:8). During this time, a priest named Hilkiah discovered the “Book of the Law of the Lord” (verse 14, NKJV). After reading it, Josiah called for a gathering of all the prominent men in the land of Judah so they also could hear the commands of the Lord. This resulted in a national reformation unseen for hundreds of years in the land of Judah.

Throughout Josiah’s life, Judah followed the commandments of God (2 Chron. 34:33). “Though only 39 when he died, Josiah was remembered as Judah’s greatest king.” His heart pulsed with the beat of reformation, providing us with an example we should follow today. Let us walk in his footsteps and make a change in this world.

**REACT**

1. What does Josiah’s experience teach us about the role those in authority have when it comes to the spirituality of God’s people?
2. What can we learn about the role of the Bible in reformation from Josiah’s experience?

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D. Luke Gonzalez, Riverside, California, U.S.A.
“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV).

[God] will come when the time is right.

God wants to help us through the reformation process. He does not leave us to fend for ourselves. But there are some things we must do so that He can help us. Below are ways we can let go and let God.

Seek God’s guidance (2 Chron. 20:3–12). The people of Ammon and Moab were coming together to battle Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. How often are we faced with what seems like insurmountable situations? Jehoshaphat was facing one such circumstance, and he, too, was naturally apprehensive. However, Scripture states that he “set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah” (verse 3, NKJV). We must first recognize that there is nothing in our lives that God cannot relate to. Then we must deliberately seek His guidance to get us through that situation.

Wait to hear God’s voice (2 Chron. 20:13). We live in an instantaneous society. We don’t want to wait for anything, including God. After Jehoshaphat and the Israelites sought the Lord’s guidance, Scripture states that they “stood before the Lord.” Once we have sought His guidance, we are to wait for Him to answer. He will come when the time is right.

Let God fight your battles (2 Chron. 20:15–17). Jehoshaphat and the Israelites waited patiently for God to respond. But God did so much more than they expected. He let Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah know that He was going to fight their battle. How much easier would life be if we just allowed God to fight our daily battles against sin? Let us claim the promise of Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us” (NIV)?

**REACT**

1. What does it mean to wait before the Lord? Is it literally standing in front of the altar until we “hear” something, or are we to be active while we wait? Explain your answer.

2. How do we know when we have heard from the Lord? How does God speak to us?
Recovery from an eating disorder involves a battle against self. I know because I have fought such a battle and still do. I try not to see food as an enemy or a coping mechanism. I try not to envy what “beautiful” girls have. I try not to hate what I see when I look in a mirror. I am trying to regain control of my mind from the spell I let Satan put on me.

Reformation is also a battle against self. It means changing what has gone wrong or what has been corrupted and bringing it to a better state. It involves thoughts, habits, and lifestyles that have been corrupted and must be transformed for the better. I experience reformation in my recovery from an eating disorder—my body image and eating habits have been corrupted and must be reformed into something good. However, this is an emotionally torturous battle, requiring the change of a negative self-image that has festered for years and that is difficult to release. I have often felt alone in fighting this battle, and I have wondered if I will ever see victory.

King Jehoshaphat may have felt the same way as his enemies marched against Judah. He admitted to God that the Israelites were powerless against them. So he “set himself to seek the Lord” and declared, “our eyes are upon [God]” (2 Chron. 20:3, 12, NKJV). Despite his fear, Jehoshaphat put his confidence in God. As king, he was expected to be in control of the situation and to demonstrate unwavering bravery, but he humbly confessed uncertainty and weakness. After Jehoshaphat admitted his vulnerability and requested God’s deliverance, God told Jehoshaphat and the Israelites not to be afraid, “for the battle is not yours, but God’s” (verse 15).

In the battle that involves the reformation of thought and habit, you may feel as Jehoshaphat did—afraid, powerless, uncertain. You may feel that no one understands how you suffer and strive to change. You may feel alone in the fight against self. I know I did. But instead of allowing these feelings to overwhelm us, we can seek the Lord and trust Him. The battle is for God to fight, not us. Only when we allow Him to lead can we obtain victory over self and experience reformation.

**REACT**

The book of Revelation offers a number of promises regarding reformation. See Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21. What do these texts mean to you?
CONCLUDE
Like any other intimate relationship, the Christian life requires change—often referred to as “reformation.” Such change is only real and worthwhile if you actually allow it to make a difference in your life. Experiencing the power of Christ’s resurrection leads to transformation and daily growth. King Josiah led Judah in changing the behaviors that were symptoms of their drift from God. King Jehoshaphat sought God and waited for Him to bring the promised victory. These and other biblical examples provide us with tools for reformation in our own lives.

CONSIDER
• Looking up the word reformation in several different sources. Choose your favorite nonhistorical definition and copy it onto an index card or sticky note. Then place it somewhere so that you’ll see it often.
• Listing ways in which your relationship with Jesus is (or should be) like dating. Then list ways in which it is (or should be) like marriage.
• Creating an acrostic by finding words or phrases in this week’s lesson that start with each consecutive letter of the word reformation.
• Making a playlist or song collection that deals with change and transformation in the Christian life. Prayerfully listen to one or more of the songs each day throughout the next week.
• Comparing and contrasting personal change/reformation with corporate or church-wide change/reformation. What is needed to bring about each one?
• Asking five married friends to tell you two of the changes they had to make in the context of their relationship with their spouses. Consider how those changes might relate to spiritual reformation.
• Reading the parable about Israel found in Ezekiel 16. Write a modern parable that expresses God’s desire for wholehearted commitment.

CONNECT
Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God.
Don C. Schneider, One Heart Rejoicing: The Difference Jesus Makes (Review and Herald®, 2001).
Reformation—The Willingness to Grow and Change

“He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:6, 7, NKJV).
How many worships have you attended so far in your life? How many sermons have you heard? How many of these worships and sermons have moved you to tears? I always will remember a particular spiritual retreat I attended two years ago. The sermons were the most touching I had ever heard. Some of my friends also attended this event, and the Holy Spirit moved them as well. When we left the retreat and couldn’t meet as often as we would have liked to, we decided to make conference calls each Thursday evening to pray together. During these calls we often prayed as a chain—the first person prayed for the second person, the second for the third, and so on. This experience not only drew us closer together, but each of us also grew closer to God.

However, our prayer chain lasted only a few months. You most likely have had similar experiences. Often when we’re exposed to revival, something within us awakens. For a time we’re on fire, but then the fire starts to cool down. Why does this happen? I believe it’s because we forget that with revival we must have reformation. Take Jesus’ disciples, for example. They spent a great deal of time with Him, but sometimes they acted as though they had never even met Him (Matt. 20:20–28). Their characters changed only after they experienced reformation, only after they had completely surrendered themselves to Him. When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and gives us power through the Holy Spirit. When the disciples sought Christ with all their hearts, He sent them the Holy Spirit to change their hearts and to give them strength to preach the gospel. They accepted what was offered and shared it with the world. They used the gifts God gave them so that other people could come to know Christ’s salvation and love.

Even today, God works in us to do His good pleasure. Keep that in mind during this week as you study about the willingness to grow and change. Keep it in mind when studying about reformation—the spiritual change we all need.

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence.

Ivona Vratařić, Cerna, Croatia
The Samaritans were a “schismatic group from the Jews. The group resided north of Judea and south of Galilee in hostile tension with its Jewish neighbors. Jesus’ attitude toward this despised group radically contrasted with contemporary sentiment.”¹ “A Samaritan temple was . . . built on Mt. Gerizim (probably during the 5th century BC), and it became the center of the Samaritan worship. The hostility between Samaritans and Jews continued on into the NT Period Jn 4).”² As with modern ethnic, religious, or political tensions, each side was certain that their resentment was justifiable. Their anger prevented them from seeking God’s perspective and His will regarding their interactions with one another. Their level of contempt for each other was evident when some Jews angrily confronted Jesus, calling Him a demon-possessed Samaritan (John 8:48). Yet Jesus did not allow the controversy to distract Him. At one point, He even sought to direct the thoughts of the Jews and Samaritans upward by telling them a parable in which a Samaritan exhibited the true nature of God’s law (Luke 10:25–37).

To grasp the cultural context of this event is to realize just how potentially combustible the telling of that story actually was. It would be akin to an influential man publicly telling a moral tale today to a Jewish religious teacher in Israel, in which the hero of the story was a Palestinian.

God is still able to get straight to the heart of a matter. We need only to be willing to change our direction. The disciples’ reaction to insult revealed their need of reformation and growth. They had to be willing to turn away from anything that was incompatible with God’s kingdom and that was thereby causing disension and division. How willing are we to let the Holy Spirit show us when we need to change direction?

**REACT**

1. How willing are you to let God turn you away from anything that is preventing you from growth?
2. What dangers to having an effective Christian witness are inherent in bigotry?

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² Ibid., p. 654.
First Steps (1 John 2:1–9)

In every young bird’s life there comes a time when it will fly out of the nest. For days it watches its parents fly to and fro. Finally, it can no longer ignore its urge to fly. So it spreads its wings. Will it fly or fall to the ground? Some birds don’t make it, while others do. There comes a time when we all fall rather than soar. But God raises us up like a loving father who teaches His children to keep trying. The more time we spend with Him, the more we will be willing to grow and change. Then the more we will be like Him, having learned the things only He can teach.

God loves us just as we are, but His love is too great to leave us the way we are.

Reaching Out (Luke 9:1–6)

Before going to Jerusalem, Jesus sent the twelve disciples out on their own to proclaim the kingdom of God in the villages and towns. Thus they were flying from the nest, to strengthen their wings and to grow in Christ. “This had a good effect. . . . [It] forced the disciples to rely on God’s power and not on their own provision—they carried no outward symbols of authority, only the inward power that Christ gave them.”


After the disciples returned from their missionary trip, the time grew near for Jesus to go to Jerusalem so that He could “be taken up to heaven” (Luke 9:51, NIV). To get to Jerusalem, He would be traveling through Samaria. So He sent messengers ahead of Him to prepare a place for Him there in order that He could rest along the way. But no one in Samaria would welcome Him. This is because to “pass through Samaria toward Judea, as the Jews of Galilee often did, with the objective of worshiping God in Jerusalem, implied the inferiority of the Samaritan religion, and was thus taken as an insult by the Samaritans.” This angered James and John, so they asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. Jesus, however, said No, and rebuked these two disciples. He respected the Samaritans’ right to refuse Him a place to rest.

The right to choose is a gift from God that He holds in the highest regard. Jesus never forces Himself on others. Instead, He is kind and patient. It is this kindness and patience that fosters reformation and growth in Christ.

There is no surer proof that we are led by the wrong spirit than when
we want to hurt or destroy those who oppose us, or when we insist that someone accept Jesus as her or his Savior. James and John neglected to understand that Jesus came to save all people. On the other hand, Jesus understood why the Samaritans rejected Him and had compassion for them.

The Harvest (Acts 8:4–8; 14–17)

After Christ had returned to heaven and the stoning of Stephen had scattered the first disciples, Philip went to Samaria. There he healed the sick and cast out demons, while the citizens rejoiced. The people listened to his message and accepted it.

When Peter and John heard about this, they went to Samaria to lay their hands on the new converts. We can only imagine what went through John’s mind at that moment. The same man who once wanted to destroy a part of Samaria for not allowing Jesus to spend the night there now comes to Samaria to preach the gospel. He had heard Jesus tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. He had seen Jesus heal a Samaritan who had leprosy. Thus they learned that the Samaritans were no different from themselves. The love the Savior showed to those who had once hated Him brought the barriers down and reconciled enemies.

Growth (Phil. 2:12–16)

Like a gardener who plants a small seed and tends the growth of that seed, God shapes us into beautiful Christians. Change is necessary for us to grow. If the seed doesn’t sprout, if it doesn’t grow, it will rot. God loves us just as we are, but His love is too great to leave us the way we are. There are times in life when we don’t know where to go or what to do. During such times, we need to remember how God has led us in the past, then trust Him to lead us into the future. The worst thing we can do is just sit around and wait. Often it will seem as though God has left us, but we shouldn’t despair. Caring parents know that as much as they love their children, they have to let them live their own lives. They need to grow for themselves. God will always be there for us, but He will not live our lives for us. Only true love can let go and have faith that the person you love will come back to you.

REACT

1. How can you see God’s loving hand at work in your life? How has He lifted you up when you fell?

2. Picture yourself the way you were five years ago. Can you see now the path God wanted you to take? How have you grown since then?

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Ivica Frančeski, Maruševec, Croatia
“The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer’s love and of His saving grace.”

“If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit.”

“Those who at Pentecost were endued with power from on high, were not thereby freed from further temptation and trial. As they witnessed for truth and righteousness they were repeatedly assailed by the enemy of all truth, who sought to rob them of their Christian experience. They were compelled to strive with all their God-given powers to reach the measure of the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. Daily they prayed for fresh supplies of grace, that they might reach higher and still higher toward perfection. Under the Holy Spirit’s working even the weakest, by exercising faith in God, learned to improve their entrusted powers and to become sanctified, refined, and ennobled. As in humility they submitted to the molding influence of the Holy Spirit, they received of the fullness of the Godhead and were fashioned in the likeness of the divine.

“If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude.”

REACT
1. How can you have a deeper Christian experience?
2. What is most needed for a person to change his or her character?
Every day we find ourselves making several choices. Some of these choices are more important than others, and every now and then we find ourselves having to make a really important choice. What will I major in? Which job will I take? Whom will I marry? Dr. Shad Helmstetter's book *Choices* delves into this:

> “There may be a thousand little choices in a day. All of them count.”
> “The end result of your life here on earth will always be the sum total of the choices you made while you were here.” “If you’d like to know what your choices have been, look at yourself and the life you have lived. What you see is the choices you’ve made.”

Our choices define who we are and whom we will become. They define not just our life on earth but also the possibility of our eternal life. At Shechem, God instructed Joshua to tell His people to make a choice—serve either the true God or the false gods their forefathers had worshiped in Egypt. They chose God, but later they chose to worship false gods. Eventually, that decision led them to reject Jesus.

If you want to become a new creation and grow in Jesus, you will decide to follow Him. Here are some steps you can take to help you do so:

1. **Contemplate your life.** Think carefully about the life you are living. It isn’t perfect, is it? Find the empty hole only God can fill. Recognize your hunger for Him (Luke 15:17, 18).
2. **Pray.** If you are reluctant to change, ask God to help you do so. Allow Him to work in you, and He will help you to be willing (Phil. 2:13).
3. **Take time for God.** Every day for three or four weeks, take time to pray and study the Bible. Thus the habit of doing these two activities will be formed. Spending time with God will make you willing and ready to change.

**REACT**

1. How have your past choices formed your character?
2. In what areas of life does your character need to change? Pray to God that He will help you to make those changes.

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Jana Krautberger, Velenje, Slovenia
Revival is an awakening from spiritual slumber, a revitalization by the Holy Spirit, and a realization of our destitute condition. It also involves regret for our sin and a desire to renew our spiritual life. Reformation implies movement and change. Neither revival nor reformation is self-generated. Both involve a willingness to cooperate with God and to surrender our will to Him.

The prodigal son was ungrateful, willful, and headed in the wrong direction. He was intoxicated with his own desires. He couldn’t wait to get away from all responsibilities and expectations. “In most cases, the son would have received this at his father’s death, although fathers sometimes chose to divide up their inheritance early and retire from managing their estates. What is unusual is that the younger son initiated the division of the estate. This showed arrogant disregard for his father’s authority as head of the family.”*

It wasn’t until he had wasted all of his inheritance and was all alone that the prodigal son came to his senses. Then he understood his father’s generosity. He finally realized not only what he had done and what kind of person he had become, but also how helpless he was to save himself. He admitted that he had sinned against his father and didn’t deserve to be called his son. That for him was the beginning of change and of revival. He was willing to turn to his father for help, and the father was more than willing to restore his son. When he saw his son coming down the road, he ran to him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son cried out to his father, symbolic of earnest prayer. Then the father covered the son’s shameful rags with his own robe, restored his position in the family by putting shoes on his bare feet, renewed trust by giving him the signet ring, and supplied his needs and filled his hunger by giving him a feast.

Revival and reformation show a complete picture of true repentance. Repentance is more than just about regret. It is also a returning. When we realize our great need and are willing to humbly return to our Father, He will run to us with open arms. He is more than willing to call us His beloved children.

**REACT**

What role do we have in our own revival and/or reformation?

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Kristofer Hendrickson, Berat, Albania
CONCLUDE
Most people have heard the saying, “They’re like two peas in a pod.” In the same way, revival and reformation belong together. Being on fire for Christ comes from watching others be excited about living for Christ. We just can’t help but get caught up in the excitement. However, commitment doesn’t last when that’s all there is to it. Some people say, “Well, I’m not good enough. I’m such a sinner.” God, however, picks us up when we fall. When we call for help, the Holy Spirit is there to change our character, to lead us to repent. When we grow in Christ, others grow as well, assisted by our kindness, understanding, and patience, which after all stems from God and the Holy Spirit. How do we do this? By making God the center of all that we do.

CONSIDER
• Making a video about someone who has surrendered his or her life to Christ.
• Observing the birds. Write down three things that you’ve noticed about them that remind you of God’s patience, love, and kindness.
• Writing in your journal what revival and reformation mean to you. Include how God has changed you.
• Listening to a song on your iPod that connects you to God.
• Interacting with someone who is struggling with his or her faith. Reach out to that person and practice being respectful and loving.

CONNECT
Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Peter 2:3–9.
Reformation—Thinking New Thoughts

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”

(Col. 3:1, 2, NKJV).
I watched my daughter changing her mind as she grew from babyhood through childhood to being a teenager. Though I did not study psychology in college, something tells me that our ability to think and reason is an integral part of our lives. When my daughter wasn’t yet a year old, she would stare at things blankly and just smile broadly without any apparent cause. When she clocked her first year, she could laugh and giggle in addition to smile. Then came her first tumbling steps, the action words, and her first day of school.

One thing which still amazes me is that during this growth process, there are some things my daughter stopped doing. There are toys she’s no longer interested in and books she no longer reads simply because she considers herself past that stage. Even her behavior has drastically changed. In her heart, something tells her that she’s no longer expected to think and reason and do things in a particular way at a particular point in her life. She has developed a lively and inquiring mind totally different from the mind she had ten years ago.

All this has taught me a great deal about our spiritual growth and the changes that come with it. When we become Christians, we experience a change of mind that naturally results in a change of attitudes and actions. As heaven-bound citizens, we no longer desire to follow old thoughts and do the things we used to do. Instead, we think and do in ways that are consistent with God’s values.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, our thoughts, words, and actions will testify of Him. Before we accept Christ, we talk and act like a child, but as we grow up in Him, we put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11). Such growth and its relationship to reformation is the subject of our study this week.

Jane George, Upper Hill, Nairobi, Kenya
What God Wants to See Happen as We Are Transformed (2 Cor. 3:17, 18)

God has given us the power of choice. Therefore, it is important to understand that our life is influenced by the choices we make. God desires that we make good choices so we can develop a Christlike character. As our heavenly Father, He is able to provide us with everything we need for life in this world. Before we accept Christ as our Savior, we cannot see things as God sees them. However, when we accept His Son Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, helping us to live according to God's principles. Then we are able to make choices that are in line with God's expectations. “As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more” (2 Cor. 3:18, NLT).

Thus we learn that transformation is an ongoing process that helps us to become Christlike. It has to do with how we think on a daily basis.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to swim against the world’s tide.

In Harmony With Christ (Phil. 4:8)

When the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, we become new creations, thinking new thoughts. These thoughts affect our behavior so that the people around us can see that we have new hearts. Thus Paul advises us that “whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8, NJKV). Here Paul enumerates the positive things that emanate from a reformed and transformed mind. Scripture reminds us to think on these things that highlight our personality as reformed Christians. In His friendship with us, God wants us to exercise truth, honesty, justice, purity, and love. All these are in harmony with Christ's thoughts.

The Power to Think New Thoughts (John 14:15–17; Acts 2)

Christ assured His disciples that He would never leave them alone, that when He returned to heaven, He would send them a Helper. Thus the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost. Ever since then, the Holy
Spirit has helped all Christians through all ages. And He will continue to do so.

The world has much to offer that is inconsistent with the principles of God. However, Christ has given us the assurance that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, He will always be with us to guide us. As a result, we are able to focus on heavenly things and on God’s plan for us. “Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1–3, NIV).

In Defense of Our Faith (2 Cor. 10:3–5)

The fact that we live in a world engulfed in sin does not mean we must participate in its sinful ways. As we grow in Christ, we will learn to think and act quite differently from the way most people live. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to swim against the world’s tide. “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.” “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3, 5, NIV).

God wants us to obey Him and to be Christlike in all that we say and do. This is possible only if we are willing let the Holy Spirit live in us.

REACT

1. How will transformed individuals transform their local churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general, and the world at large? See Isaiah 58, Micah 6:8, and Matthew 25:31–46.

2. Does thinking new thoughts mean we have to abandon everything we used to do before we changed, including our old friends? Explain your answer.

3. How does the Holy Spirit help us think new thoughts?

Seline Khavetsa, Nairobi, Kenya
The story of Zacchaeus teaches us that we have an up-close and personal Savior who is willing to get involved in our affairs, who wants us to leave our old ways of life and become like Him. Ellen White wrote that “Zacchaeus had been overwhelmed, amazed, and silenced at the love and condescension of Christ in stooping to him, so unworthy. Now love and loyalty to his new-found Master unseal his lips. He will make public his confession and his repentance.”

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation.”

Reformation requires that we leave our sinful nature behind in much the same way as a snake sheds its skin so that it can grow. We must shed our sinful self so that we can grow in Christ. We shouldn’t worry about losing some of our friends when we decide to follow the Savior.

“Among the publicans there was a confederacy, so that they could oppress the people, and sustain one another in their fraudulent practices. In their extortion they were but carrying out what had become an almost universal custom. Even the priests and rabbis who despised them were guilty of enriching themselves by dishonest practices under cover of their sacred calling. But no sooner did Zacchaeus yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit than he cast aside every practice contrary to integrity.”

Like Zacchaeus, we cannot claim a change of thought if we do not allow our lives to be governed by those new thoughts. “No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.”

“Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life.”

REACT
1. Can we change our thinking if we don’t denounce our past lifestyle?
2. In what ways are we similar to Zacchaeus?

2. Ibid., p. 555.
3. Ibid., pp. 555, 556.
4. Ibid., p. 556.
George Whitefield (1714–1770) was a minister from England who preached throughout the English colonies that became the United States. He championed the renewal of Christianity known as the Great Awakening. From powerful and persuasive preaching, he became famous to his own and to later generations. His sermons became classics.

In contrast to the eighteenth-century movement known as the Enlightenment, which advocated that reason could help humankind understand the universe, the Great Awakening emphasized that Jesus was the Light of the world and that God’s Word explained reality.

Unless we cling to Jesus, we are bound to get lost.

Today there is still a myriad of beliefs that polarize the world. Unless we cling to Jesus, we are bound to get lost. The test of our faith as Christians is in the Bible. The Word of God shows us our true Source of spiritual light. “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.” “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:9, 14, NIV).

When we experience reformation, we become the rays of this divine source of light. Thus we are able to share the same light with the rest of the world. Christ, the true Source of light, is able to give us power through the Holy Spirit so that we reflect this light in how we think and act. The presence of the divine light in our life should be evident in our minds first and then in our relationships. Christ says, “‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12, NIV).

Just as George Whitefield’s preaching did in the eighteenth century, our new way of thinking and living should revolutionize the world. That is the essence of our reformation in the twenty-first century.

**REACT**

1. With so many religious beliefs in our world, how can you ensure that you do not deviate from the true Source of light?
2. How would you describe a person who has experienced reformation and is thinking new thoughts?
3. Describe the role of the Holy Spirit in your role as ambassador for Christ.
One reason why people seek university degrees is to acquire knowledge in specific areas or to become an expert in a particular field. As His disciples, Christ has given us the knowledge we need to help us be His disciples. After we accept Him as our Savior, His Holy Spirit helps us to develop a character like His. Even though we are living in a sinful world, God wants us to change our thinking and our behavior. He wants us to focus on His kingdom. And as we do, we become bold in the face of the daunting tasks and events that come our way. How do we tell the world that we truly are thinking new thoughts?

**Forgiveness helps us to shed our past grievances with one another.**

*Constantly grow in Christ.* Before we accept Him, we entertain sinful thoughts that often lead to sinful acts. But after we accept Christ, our thoughts slowly turn toward Him, and our behavior changes accordingly. Instead of treating people with disdain, we learn to care for them. We trade impatience for patience, a cold heart for a kind heart, and pride for humility.

*Forgive and forget.* When we forgive in full, we are starting afresh. Forgiveness helps us to shed our past grievances with one another. It helps us to come together as brothers and sisters in Christ, united by His love.

*Put godly love above all else.* Such love should motivate all of our thoughts and actions. Such love is so deep and wide that it draws us together. And after observing all of the above behaviors, our new thoughts will help us to remember that whatever we do should glorify our Most High God.

**REACT**

1. Which of these steps do you need help with the most in order to focus on God’s kingdom? How would you advise someone who is struggling in any of these three areas?
2. As Christians, why must love motivate our actions?
Two decades ago, my mother was a heavy smoker. She was addicted to nicotine. In one day alone, she would devour several packets of cigarettes. She did not notice that her physical health was declining because of this. Even though we were not attending church at that time, I still hated that my mother smoked. In my heart, I quietly wished she would quit.

Then one day, six people came to our home by chance. Or so it seemed. They were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who were doing visitation work during their Week of Prayer. They sang a hymn, prayed, and read a Bible verse for us. The following Sabbath, my mother went to their church and decided to be baptized.

My prayer was answered, for when she accepted Christ, she quit smoking. From this experience I learned that God wants us to change our minds and think anew. As His children, we must be faithful to Him in our minds as well as in our bodies. This is because there is a relationship between our minds and our bodies. Both must be in the best health possible. Jesus said that He came so that we might have a full life (John 10:10).

Because my mother changed her mind, she began to think new thoughts. Her health improved, and today she is one of the most devoted members of the church. She is also the chairlady of our community’s counseling group for drug addicts who are undergoing rehabilitation. Personally, I call this reformation. I have seen how a change of mind and heart can mean a change of life. Our Father in heaven wants us to change our ways of thinking so we can have a change of behavior and a balanced life in mind, body, and soul.

REACT

1. Should your physical desires or your thoughts dictate your behavior? Explain your answer.
2. What is the difference between thinking new thoughts and standing by your old ways of thinking?
CONCLUDE

We start out as babies, then mature into adults. Our entire body grows, both inside and out. Our mind changes. Our focus changes. We experience a paradigm shift. Growing up to be like Christ also produces a change of mind. In fact, growing up to be like Christ signifies conversion. It’s evident when it happens, yet it isn’t something we can do on our own. In the same way our parents, teachers, and friends helped us to become adults, the Holy Spirit helps us to become mature in Christ. He helps us to shift our focus from worldly pleasures to Christ’s joys.

CONSIDER

• Researching the topic of child development on the Internet. Relate the various stages to the stages of growth as a Christian.
• Helping out in one of the children’s divisions of your church. How do the children relate to you? Compare that with how you relate to God now and how you related to Him when you first became a Christian.
• Singing or playing hymn number 488 in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, “At First I Prayed for Light.” What do the lyrics teach us about the Christian growth process in relationship to prayer?
• Creating a collage on the computer using Internet pictures or on paper with magazine clippings of the different stages of the Christian walk.
• Taking a walk through nature and observing trees, plants, animals, and so on, in their current phases of life.
• Writing an essay on the topic of “To Grow or Not to Grow? That Is the Question!”

CONNECT

Romans 8:14–16; Colossians 2:6–15.

Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, chapter 61, “Zacchaeus”; The Ministry of Healing, chapter 40, “Help in Daily Living.” (Find these online in several different languages at https://egwwritings.org/.)

John Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress.

Kristi Rich, Bozeman, Montana, U.S.A.
Reformation—Healing Broken

Relationships

“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10, NKJV).
She adjusted her hands on the heavy water pot as she made her way across town. She detested fetching water. It was a constant reminder that she was the lowest of the low, the continually despised. All the women were suspicious of her promiscuity. And every man was aware of her easy vulnerability. But she was dependent on this village with its unhealthy relationships, hopelessly dependent on men to provide for her, and hopelessly dependent on her continual need for water.

Rough voices tumbled through the air. Jewish men, coming down the road toward her, laughing and joking. She stared straight ahead, conscious of their stares. It was obvious why she walked alone to the well in the heat of the day.

They jostled past, and she continued in the relative comfort of her solitude. Her eyes focused on the well. She was nearly there. But her heart sank again at the sight of a figure. A man . . . on his own. She hoped he was a Jew like the others. Then he wouldn’t have anything to do with her.

He turned to her, smiling a warm, open smile. Not one of those “I know what kind of woman you are” sort of smiles. She smiled back. Then he spoke: “Please, may I have a drink of water?” A Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman, and even asking for her help! Maybe he was an outcast too. She happily quenched his thirst. But he was even more delighted to quench hers.

She came to the well in a tangle of broken relationships, enslaved by her sins and her status. She came despised and rejected by those who considered themselves to be more righteous than she. She came with painful memories, heavy regrets, and an overwhelming sense of loneliness. But a few moments with Jesus had transformed her life. A few drops of His living water had trickled down her love-parched throat, reviving every fiber of her being. He spoke gently of her sinful status. He showed her the respect she’d never experienced and the hope she’d never known. Even though she hadn’t asked for forgiveness, she knew she’d been forgiven, washed clean, and now had a brand-new life to live. She just had to share this experience with everyone, even those who despised her!

She ran back to the town, and the love she’d been looking for all her life overflowed like water from her generous heart.

Karen Holford, Auchtermuchty, Scotland
It seems that in today’s world, we draw a line between our “religious life” and “everyday life.” Our “religious life” includes going to church, praying, reading the Bible, and so on, while our “everyday life” includes everything else. We ask people, “How is your religious life?” Or we start our sentences with “Spiritually speaking . . .” However, this is foreign to the biblical worldview. Of the Ten Commandments, four talk about relating to God, while six deal with how we relate to others.

Consider Adam and Eve. As soon as their relationship with God was damaged, the relationship between the two of them suffered (Gen. 3:12). Although the Bible isn’t your typical “relationship handbook,” it does have many examples of broken relationships being healed. In fact, the entire Bible is precisely about that—the reconciliation of a broken relationship between God and humanity. The Bible also shares principles that are helpful in pointing us in the right direction.

The apostle Paul wrote several letters to churches that were dealing with relationship issues. He urged them to be loving, humble, and nonjudgmental toward one another. However, Paul himself wasn’t immune to friction. In Acts 15:36–41, we read about a disagreement between him and Barnabas. Regarding the original word for “disagreement” in verse 39, we read that the “word in Greek is paroxysmos, from which of course we get ‘paroxysm.’ . . . It carries overtones of severely heightened emotions, red and distorted faces, loud voices, things said that were better left unsaid. A sorry sight.”* Although we don’t know exactly how it happened, it seems that the issue was dealt with, and, after a time, Paul ended up highly regarding John, called Mark (Col. 4:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:11).

The following are a few biblical principles that might be helpful when conflict arises:

- **Love the person** (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; John 13:34; Phil. 2:2). Get over your pride (Eph. 2:8, 9; 4:2; Phil. 2:3–11). **When issues arise, communicate** (Matt. 18:15–17; Eph. 4:26; James 1:19). **Forgive** (Matt. 18:21–35; Eph. 4:32).

**REACT**

How does our “vertical” relationship with God influence our “horizontal” ones? Is it possible to have one without the other?


Filip Bajic, Glasgow, Scotland
Healing Fractured Friendships (John 13:35; Acts 15:36–40; Col. 4:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:11)

In the beginning God created the perfect man and placed him in a perfect world. God spent time with him. But even in the perfection of Eden, there was something “not good” (Gen. 2:18). When we begin to understand the “not-goodness of aloneness,” we can begin to understand the needs of the human heart. As children and adults, we experience pain when we are abandoned by people who are important to us. We can learn how to mend some of those wounds by being there for each other. Friendships are healed when we work hand in hand with God to take away each other’s aloneness. We do this when we share in each other’s sad and happy emotions (Rom. 12:15), when we forgive each other, when we comfort each other, and when we support each other in our struggles (Gal. 6:2).

Let His love soak into you like water soaks into a sponge.

Healing Imbalanced Relationships (Philemon 1–25)

People are hurt when we create imbalances and inequalities in relationships. In God’s eyes we are all equal—male and female, slave and master, young and old. When we’re in positions of power and higher status, we often don’t realize or understand the pain and distress we cause others. Christians strive for equality among all people, driven by their desire to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with each other and with God (Mic. 6:8).

God’s ideal solution to this problem is described in Romans 12:3, 10, and 16. When we treat everyone we meet as if they are more important than we are, regardless of their age, gender, or abilities, a healthy respect flourishes and potentially damaging imbalances in relationships cannot take hold.

Healing Pride and Jealousy (1 Cor. 3:5–11; 12; 2 Cor. 10:12–15)

Pride and jealousy cause pain and broken relationships. It was Satan’s pride and his jealousy of God that fractured the perfect relationships of heaven. Now, pride divides and isolates, and jealously continues to destroy relationships. It was Jesus’ willingness to be completely humble that saved us. His gentle, loving, and submissive attitude enabled Him to be born into poverty, live with us in the sweat, blood, tears, and dirt of humanity, and eventually die the worst kind of death. Such humility is redemptive.
Paul’s metaphor of the church being like a body is powerful and practical. Every part of a body is important, even the unseen and taken-for-granted parts. No part of the body can flourish without the rest. We are to use all of our gifts to serve, bless, and strengthen each other. Pride has no purpose in loving, sharing relationships. The only thing we can be truly proud of is the way in which Jesus brings us all into a closer friendship with God.

**Healing Hurts Through Forgiveness (Luke 23:32–34; Rom. 2:1–4; 5:8–11; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21)**

Forgiveness is the greatest gift God has given us to restore our relationship with Him and our relationships with others. Because He forgives us, we can experience the wonder of His total acceptance of us, and the cleansing power of His forgiveness. Once we understand how much we’ve been forgiven, we can begin to offer forgiveness to others, even when they’ve tried to destroy our lives. One of the most powerful witnesses for God that this world can experience is when a broken relationship is restored through reconciliation and forgiveness.


In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus describes a respectful and caring way to bring sinners back to Him and the loving family of believers. But before we do that for each other, we need to inspect our own lives through God’s eyes, and ask ourselves some questions about our own sinfulness (Matt. 7:4, 5).

Jesus modeled several restorative conversations with sinners, such as the woman caught in adultery, the woman at the well, and Zacchaeus. These conversations teach us how to talk to those we love who are struggling with sin. Whatever we do or say in such situations must express God’s love, acceptance, respect, encouragement, challenge, and support for the person concerned. Our words and actions must flow from our godly love for that other person if he or she is going to desire a closer relationship with God and other people.

**The Healing Power of Love (1 Corinthians 13)**

Relationships are restored to God’s ideal when we direct the healing power of God’s love into wounded hearts. We can only do this when God’s perfect love is pouring into our own hearts. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, replacing the word *love* with God, and let His love soak into you like water soaks into a sponge. Then capture that patient, kind, respectful, forgiving, positive, hopeful love and live it out in each of your relationships, making sure that the restoring power of His love is reaching the desperate, lonely, distressing, and hurting places where it’s needed most.

**REACT**

1. How can God’s relational principles transform any relational struggles you may have encountered?
2. Which of your close relationships is most in need of healing?

 Bernie Holford, Auchtermuchty, Scotland
“Give the erring one no occasion for discouragement. . . . Let him feel the strong clasp of a sympathizing hand, and hear the whisper, Let us pray. God will give a rich experience to you both. Prayer unites us with one another and with God.”

“No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word—a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God.”

“They had long suffered anxiety and remorse, and now they rejoiced that he was still alive.”

may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word—a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God.”

“His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. The ruler of Egypt their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, and finally sold as a slave! All their ill treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams and had labored to prevent their fulfilment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams; and now that they were completely in his power he would, no doubt, avenge the wrong that he had suffered.

“Seeing their confusion, he said kindly, ‘Come near to me, I pray you;’ and as they came near, he continued, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.’ Feeling that they had already suffered enough for their cruelty toward him, he nobly sought to banish their fears and lessen the bitterness of their self-reproach.

“. . . ‘And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.’ They humbly confessed their sin and entreated his forgiveness. They had long suffered anxiety and remorse, and now they rejoiced that he was still alive.”

2. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 129.
Mending broken relationships is at the heart of Christ’s mission. God demonstrated excellent ways to heal and restore dysfunctional relationships. We can restore our relationships by using His guidelines.

**Action.** (1) Attending to a broken relationship defines you as a child of God (Matt. 5:9). (2) Clearly identify the fault you have experienced (Matt. 18:15). (3) Seek out the person who has offended you, gently explaining your concern. Jesus places the responsibility on you to seek them (Matt. 5:23, 24; 18:15).

**Environment.** (1) Privacy is important for creating a respectful context in which discussion and healing can take place. Initially, the fault is only to be discussed between the two parties involved. This is a primary environment. There are three possible relational environments in which conflicts can be resolved: one to one; one to two or three; and one to many. (2) If a resolution is achieved, you have gained a friend. Otherwise: (3) Employ a secondary environment by involving one or two other people. If this fails: (4) Employ a tertiary environment by involving the church. (5) The fourth step is to treat the person who refuses to be reconciled as someone who really needs to know Christ. How do we treat those who do not know Christ? Do we reject them? Of course not! Rather if they need something, we provide it for them. If they need a listening ear, we listen to them. If something’s troubling them, we pray for them. If they need food, we feed them. By ministering to them as people in search of God, we are more likely to win them back (Rom. 12:17–20).

**Attitude.** Christ’s method promises a win-win-win situation. It’s a win for you because you’ve gained a friend. It’s a win for humankind. And it’s a win for God’s kingdom. All that’s left to do is to apply it. Forgive so you may also receive forgiveness (Matt. 6:12, 14).

**REACT**


2. How crucial is it that we restore our relationship with God, as well as restoring broken relationships with one another?
Relational conflict is inevitable. Everyone’s different, and personalities can easily clash in some way or another. However, although no one enjoys it or seeks it, conflict is not necessarily harmful to a relationship. “Well-managed conflicts can actually bring people closer together. It encourages them to listen to each other’s needs, opinions, perspectives, hopes and feelings.”

If we allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, we can resolve conflicts in healthy ways that will enable us “to build up, to edify, to strengthen, and to genuinely praise the goodness of God in [others].”

When conflicts arise, we should try to resolve them in ways that leave both parties feeling forgiven and accepted. But what’s the point? If I’ve been wronged, why should I bother to make it right? Christ says that we are all integral parts of His body (1 Corinthians 12). We are all meant to work together for the glory of God, accepting each other as unique and indispensable in Christ (1 Cor. 3:5–11). We have no authority to judge others, as we are just as much a sinner as the next person (Rom. 2:1–4). If we come into conflict with another child of God, we should work toward reconciliation.

But why? I’ve got lots of friends. If I lose one, so be it. It’s not about you. It’s about God. It’s about Christ’s perfect example in dealing with us, “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:80). He forgave us completely and willingly at the height of our rebellion against Him. This is a beautiful example of how we can forgive each other (Eph. 4:32). However, if someone hurts us, we should ask God to help us forgive and mend the relationship because this is what Christ has done for us. “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Rom. 5:20, NIV). “Conflict is inevitable; resolution is not. . . . [It] is not automatic. It doesn’t happen over time or by accident. . . . [It] occurs on purpose.”

**REACT**

What sort of wrongs are the most difficult for you to forgive? How can you handle these?

3. Ibid., pp. 132, 133.
CONCLUDE

All of us are in wounded relationships caused in part by abandonment, inequalities, jealousy, and pride. The relationship that matters above any other is the one we have with God. He comes to us, speaking gently, respectfully. As we receive His friendship, His Spirit fills us so we can extend forgiveness to others. Christ in us facilitates healing in our damaged relationships.

CONSIDER

- Creating a piece of art in the medium you prefer. Capture and portray what you felt when you lost a relationship that was dear to you.
- Reconciling your checking account (see http://www.ehow.com/how_4581683_reconcile-checking-account.html). An accurate outcome requires that the bank and you are honest with each other and the systems in place to correct any errors on either side. Dealing with errors requires further communication between you and the bank. Compare and contrast dealing with the bank and dealing with a broken relationship.
- Listening to these songs: “Slow Fade” by Casting Crowns; “I Will Never Go” by Twila Paris; “Arise, My Love” by Michael Card. You can find all three on YouTube.
- Taking two lengths of rope. Twist together one end of one piece with one end of the other. How easily can you pull them apart? Now tie the same two ends together using a sturdy knot. Now try to pull them apart. Cut the joined pieces of rope into two lengths, either by slicing the middle of the knot or by cutting just rope somewhere near the knot. If you cut the middle of the knot, there are likely several pieces where previously there was one, made from two. Or, one piece is missing a length of what it used to have, and the other is still “dragging around baggage.” Rejoin the two parts. Now what do you have? One joined length of rope, but it is shorter now than it used to be. Compare this to healing broken relationships.
- Recalling a recent argument you had. How were you thinking only of yourself, and why? What was the basis of your resentment? How were you demonstrating a lack of faith? How were you dishonest and demanding that you have things your way? Were you defiant or in denial? What could you have done to improve the situation?

CONNECT

The Promised Revival—God’s Mission

Completed

“Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7, 8, NKJV).
I am not afraid of failure. I am terrified of it. Growing up, I wanted to be a part of student government at school, but I was petrified at the thought of running for election. I wasn’t nervous about speaking in front of people or expressing my ideas. But what stopped me in my tracks every time was the fear of losing. If I lost, would people think of me as not having been good enough?

It was not until eighth grade that I finally faced my fears and threw my hat into the ring as a class representative. Several times during that week I nearly gave up, not to mention how many times I felt sick to my stomach from nerves. Yet after a grueling week of campaigning, the votes were all counted and, to my surprise, I had won by a unanimous vote! This would have been more impressive, however, if there had been someone running against me.

Yes, as embarrassing as it is, I was terrified of losing even when I was assured the victory. In reality, I had won before the votes were even counted, but I was still afraid because I lacked faith to believe in the results I had been promised from the beginning. The Bible gives us a sneak peak of what the final results will be in the conflict between good and evil. *Spoiler alert:* Jesus wins, and He will “‘carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality’” (Rom. 9:28, NIV).

Though I was guaranteed victory in my epic campaign, there were still steps I had to take in order to prepare. I had to fill out the proper paperwork, and I had to decide what I would do in the position and present these ideas to my class. As Christians, we are given time now to prepare ourselves through revival and reformation. This includes teaching others how to spend eternity with God. We see the challenging mission before us in Christ’s commission to “‘go and make disciples of all nations’” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). But as we face this challenge, equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, let us not forget that this is already Christ’s victory, and that every day He continues to draw each of us closer to an eternity with Him.
God Has Promised a Revival (Joel 2:28, 29)

One of the greatest events that can happen in the Christian church is revival—an unprecedented act that aims to awaken spiritual qualities within the church so it can complete its mission. A promise of revival was given in the time of Joel, during which it was common to veer away from the true God and worship idols.

Today the same thing happens. Some of us put our hope in money, academic achievements, medications, and illegal drugs to achieve the success we so long for. In doing so, however, we push aside the only One who is truly capable of transforming our lives. In the days of the prophet Joel, God called for a revival. This call is the most appreciated and well known portion of the book of Joel. However, the revival did not come about by chance, but as part of a process which is to be completed by His people.

The Process of Revival (Joel 1:1–15)

Revival will occur when God’s people, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discover the context of revival and its requirements:

“Hear this, you elders; / listen, all you who live in the land” (verse 2, NIV). For revival to occur in our lives it is first necessary for us to hear. What should we hear in a world that has become so materialistic? The answer is simple: God’s Word. Because the Bible tells us about God’s will for our lives, it is imperative that we study it and meditate upon it every day.

“Tell it to your children, / and let your children tell it to their children, / and their children to the next generation” (verse 3, NIV). Part of the telling also includes our behavior. Remember that actions often speak louder than words. Do we act as God would have us act? Do our actions match what we tell others about God? This week, you will have many opportunities to teach someone about God through what you say and do.

“Wake up, you drunkards, and weep!” (verse 5, NIV). The spiritual condition of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was so degraded that God com-
pared them to drunkards who needed to wake up from their stupor. Today many of us are in a stupor caused by the routines of life, and we do not realize we are lacking in faith. What about your life is lulling you into a drunken stupor? Prayerfully ask the Lord to help you wake up.

“Put on sackcloth, O priests, and mourn; / wail, you who minister before the altar” (verse 13, NIV). This verse can be better understood in light of verse 9, where it mentions that “grain offerings and drink offerings / are cut off from the house of the Lord. / The priests are in mourning” (NIV). Through the offerings presented in the sanctuary the Israelites could learn about the Messiah, who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world (Isa. 53:4, 7). Imagine how painful it was for God to see His people forget the sacrifice He would make on their behalf.

Christ died for us. He paid the price for our sins. He is our Savior. How often do you think about the sacrifice He made for you? What He did for us should motivate us to live a life of gratefulness and faithful service.

“Declare a holy fast; / call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders / and all those who live in the land / to the house of the Lord your God, / and cry out to the Lord” (verse 14, NIV). These are the last of the requirements for revival. We should consistently practice them, just as Christ and His disciples did (Luke 4:16; Acts 1:14; 2:1–4). What we see occurring in Acts 1 and 2 is considered to be the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise in Joel. God is ready to do His part. He is simply waiting for us to grant Him permission to work through us.

**REACT**

1. Do you believe that revival can be a reality for you? If not, why not?
2. How are you preparing your life to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?
We all long to experience genuine revival. But facing the enemy’s attacks and the magnitude of the evil that we see today, we may fear that revival is impossible. However, God’s promises offer us hope for a happy ending that goes above and beyond our imagination.

“In Him we have a complete offering, an infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour.”

“There is no limit to the usefulness of those who put self to one side, make room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, and live lives wholly consecrated to God.”¹

“Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one. . . .

“He who through His own atonement provided for man an infinite fund of moral power, will not fail to employ this power in our behalf. We may take our sins and sorrows to His feet; for He loves us. . . . He will shape and mold our characters according to His own will.

“In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ. ‘He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.’ Isa. 40:29.”²

“In Him we have a complete offering, an infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In love He comes to reveal the Father, to reconcile man to God, to make him a new creature renewed after the image of Him who created him.”³

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children.”⁴

God provides what is needed to finish His work in us. The only person who can stand in the way of what He wants you to be is you.

**REACT**

1. How do we know that God will finish His work in us?
2. What is the biggest obstacle you are facing when it comes to revival?

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The Acts of the Apostles could also be called The Acts of the Holy Spirit, for in Acts 1:8 Jesus made the following promise to His disciples: “‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’” (NIV). The word dunamis, translated as “power,” refers to the “supernatural ‘power,’ received only by those upon whom the Holy Spirit comes. . . . This power is for witnessing: it gives (1) power within, (2) power to proclaim the gospel, (3) power to lead others to God. . . . This Spirit-given witness was to be a distinguishing mark of the Christian church.”¹ The English word dynamite (a powerful explosive) comes from the same word as dunamis.² This gives us an idea of how powerful the Holy Spirit really is.

Was such success meant only for these Christians?

Acts 1:15 tells us that at that time there were approximately 120 disciples. “Since there were about 4,000,000 Jews in Palestine, this means that fewer than 1 in 30,000 were Christians.”³ What a great challenge these first disciples faced! There were so few of them, and they didn’t have the technology we have today. But with the Holy Spirit’s power, they “dynamited” their world with the gospel with marvelous results (Acts 2:47)!

Was such success meant only for these Christians? By 2114, there will be one Adventist per 300 people.⁴ Technology will continue to improve our ability to spread the gospel. However, we certainly will not be effective if we do not have the promised dunamis, if we ourselves are not revived and reformed. There are people far away and nearby who need the love that only someone who has experienced God in their own life can share.

REACT

The dunamis promised by Jesus is available to all of us. Are you willing to accept His power today in order to lead others to Christ?

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¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 2nd ed., vol. 6, p. 124.
² Ibid.
The last words Jesus spoke to His disciples were, “‘You will receive power’” and “‘you will be my witnesses’” (Acts 1:8, NIV). Thus He summarized the reason for the existence of His church. We have received the promise, and the resources are available. The question now is, “How can we let the Holy Spirit use us?”

1. One way the Holy Spirit can use us is found in Isaiah 60:1, 2: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, / and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. / See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, / but the Lord rises upon you / and his glory appears over you” (NIV). God has put us as lights in this world of darkness so that through our good deeds, others will learn about salvation (Matt. 5:14–16). Such good deeds can only be achieved through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and through the spiritual gifts with which He endows us.

2. Another way in which the Holy Spirit uses us to encourage revival and reformation is to train others to light the world with the gospel. Jesus Himself prepared His disciples to teach the world about salvation through their changed lives, sermons, and personal testimonies. Later He chose 72 other people and sent them out in pairs (Luke 10:1, NIV) with the authority to heal illnesses and to preach the gospel.

Christ calls us to teach others about revival and reformation. Put your life in Jesus’ hands so He can revive and transform you through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then you, too, will be able to share the good news of salvation. Once you are in a relationship with Him, you, too, will arise and shine.

**REACT**

1. How we invest our time leads us either toward revival and reformation or away from it. How can you spend time with God today in order to receive His light?

2. What do those closest to you and in your community need from you? Think of small ways you can shine to those around you today.
I have always enjoyed playing in the rain. Unfortunately, I lived in a place where it almost never rained, and when it did, it rained just enough to mist the leaves on the trees. One year for vacation, I had the chance to go to another country with my brother to learn a new language. I was eight years old at the time, and this vacation was actually months of intense study. During one of the calls we made to our parents, they told us something we never expected to hear. It had rained hard in our hometown. The river had overflowed, and a large part of the city was flooded. “Large drops of rain fell for a long time!” they told us. “There were large puddles everywhere!” How is it possible that it rains exactly while I’m gone? I wondered to myself.

Ask the Father to revive and reform you.

This story reflects the life many of us are living today. Many of us grew up in the church and always wanted to see the power of God rain down. But deep in our hearts we thought it was impossible. There is another group of people who, knowing how difficult it would be to witness something of this magnitude, decided to abandon the basics. Thus they lose the opportunity to see the powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Into which group do you fall?

Revival and reformation are essential for living the Christian life. As you read this, people are being baptized and attending revival meetings and evangelistic campaigns all around the world. The church is being awakened by the Holy Spirit, but what are we still lacking?

How are you participating in this great movement? Right now where you are, ask the Father to revive and reform you. Just as I dreamed of playing in the rain as a child, I will continue to desire to feel the powerful drops of Christ’s love pouring over my life. May God bless each and every one of us!

REACT

1. What is keeping you from receiving the spiritual change you need?
2. How can we prepare ourselves to receive the showers of blessings poured out by the Holy Spirit?
CONCLUDE

Released from sin and its consequences, we are finally free to soar to the destiny God originally designed for us. Sin brings a terrible curse that debilitates and destroys. For all eternity, God promises to erase the curse and its cause. When His power and message, demonstrated at Calvary, find their way into our hearts, revival inevitably occurs. Then we are transformed with a renewed mind, and we are released from the sinful behaviors and attitudes that have perpetuated guilt, anxiety, and shame.

CONSIDER

• Visiting a wilderness area or a park with lots of foliage shortly after a substantial rainfall. Observe how the rain renews the greenery. Then apply the renewal metaphor to your spiritual life.
• Composing a song based on the themes of spiritual release, personal renewal, emotional rejuvenation, and divine refreshment.
• Brainstorming with a small group of friends about ideas, practices, and strategies that have facilitated personal spiritual revival in your lives.
• Reflecting on times when you felt especially close to God. Note the circumstances and timing that contributed to these experiences.
• Sculpting or drawing the figure of a flame, a traditional symbol of revival.
• Photographing scenes and experiences that illustrate something dead producing life, life fighting to sustain itself, or life in its most vibrant expressions.

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, chapters 7 and 13.
Edward Heppenstall, Salvation Unlimited, chapter 8 (Review and Herald®, 1974).
If you have not yet received a copy of CQ for fourth quarter 2013, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Heavenly Sanctuary

**Logos:** Deut. 25:1; Pss. 11:4–7; 89:14; Jer. 23:23, 24; Heb. 8:1, 2; Revelation 4; 5.

**Memory Text:** “‘Then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause’” (1 Kings 8:49, NIV).

**Key Thought:** The greatest revelation of God’s love was the cross, where He Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, was sacrificed for our sins.

We know from the Bible that God dwells in heaven where He is actively working in our behalf. The Bible also teaches that the center of His work is in the heavenly sanctuary. The heavenly sanctuary is a real place, and from it we can learn about the character and work of God.

Lesson 2: “Heaven” on Earth

**Logos:** Gen. 1:31–2:3; Exod. 25:9; 39:32, 43; John 2:19–21; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Heb. 8:5; Rev. 21:1–22.

**Memory Text:** “For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’” (Heb. 8:4, 5, NKJV).

**Key Thought:** The earthly sanctuary teaches us about God’s character, salvation, and the end of sin. It also helps us to understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest.

God created the Garden of Eden as a symbol of the heavenly sanctuary. The heavenly sanctuary and its function in salvation were represented in the earthly tabernacle and the larger structure of the Israelite temples. In Jesus,
the temple was made manifest in a human being. Ultimately, the heavenly temple will come down to the new earth. God has used concepts relating to the heavenly sanctuary to reveal truth.