“I’ve lost a good friend!” So came the words over the telephone from an individual I’ve known for a long time. I wasn’t sure who he was speaking about until I got further into the conversation. “I’ve been taking Our Firm Foundation for many years (17), and my wife and I have looked forward to every month. It has been a highlight for both of us. We have enjoyed it more than any other magazine we have received.”

The fact that we are needing to discontinue the door to door magazine has been sad news for each of us at Hope International, and for many others who have subscribed to the magazine over the years. But the good news is that the magazine will continue, but only on-line. It has been on-line for many years, allowing many folks to read it for free. Several of those folks are in other countries. The cost of actually producing the hard copy has been prohibitive—about $4000 per month. Subscription revenue does not even come close to that. Hope has underwritten the cost of the magazine for several years.

I know that there are many folks out there, like my friend who called, who are not computer savvy, and therefore think that they are not going to be able to go on-line to obtain the magazine. Prayerfully, if they search among their family and friends, they can find someone who could get the magazine on a Kindle, or run a copy for them each month. A Kindle can be held in your lap just like a magazine. Of course the on-line magazine will continue to be free even though it will cost Hope International something for its production each month.

My friend spoke about getting a black and white copy from Hope. But again as I checked out the cost to run copies at 10 cents a page, plus the time it would take to do the copying and preparing the copy for mailing, the cost was again prohibitive.

We, at Hope, feel that we are here to serve our readership and help prepare them for the end times—and the things coming upon this world—but we are limited by costs. The bi-monthly newsletter will continue, as will the DVDs. We believe the time for the coming of Jesus is very close. The years seem to pass so quickly when you are looking back, but so slowly when you are looking forward. The first time I ever wrote an article for Our Firm Foundation was when I was a pastor in the Rocky Mountain Conference stationed in Cody, Greybull, and Powell, Wyoming.

Later, after leaving that district after my first wife passed away, and my moving to Montana with my present wife, I was asked to come to work at Hope International. This was in the early nineties. Once at Hope, I wrote articles almost every month for many years. The magazine has been a close friend to me, also, for all those years.

I am thankful that we can at least continue it on-line.

It is hard for all of us to get used to changes, but if we put our minds to it, nothing is impossible with God, and I think that He will guide us and help us to continue with the magazine in its on-line form.

A few of my favorite Scriptural and Spirit of Prophecy quotes are as follows:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5,6.

“The Father’s presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord’s permission, and “all things” that are permitted “work together for good to them that love God.” Romans 8:28, MB 71.

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31.

Clark Floyd, editor of Our Firm Foundation magazine, has been co-host of the radio program Bible Answers with Clark and Lee and is a licensed attorney and an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. He has spoken internationally and makes his home in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina.
Our Mission:
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days remaining for this world are few, and we must work quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world. —Editor

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Contents
September 2013 • Volume 28, Number 9

cover story
04 Who Was Cleopas?
Clark Floyd

features
07 In Canaan’s Language
Worthie Harris Holden

08 The King’s Reward
James Edson White

10 The Joys of Sabbath-keeping!
Joe Olson

16 A Work of Preparation
Mrs. E. G. White

20 The Power of True Worship
Emmanuel Machakeire

25 God’s Lamp
Patricia J. Smith

departments
02 Editorial

26 News Watch

28 Health Gem: Pure Air

30 Ellen White’s Vision: God’s Gift to Man

32 Christian Crossword

ad features
15 Vitamin D3

27 Ener-G

One week before the crucifixion, Jesus made His grand entry on a donkey in accordance with the prophecies of scripture. In 63 BC the Romans under Pompey had conquered the Jewish nation. The Jews were looking for a Messiah that would come as a conquering king and lead them to victory over the hated Roman rulers. Their minds were not open to a Messiah that would come as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

With the grand entry of Christ on the donkey much attention was focused on Jesus as the hoped for Messiah. Even His own disciples were blinded by the hope of freedom from the hated Romans.

The disciples could not accept the thought of Jesus’ impending crucifixion

Jesus, some nine months before the crucifixion, had revealed to the disciples exactly what was to happen—“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Matthew 16:21. “But Peter did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ.” DA 415. “Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” DA 415.

On two other occasions, Jesus again attempted to tell the disciples of His coming crucifixion, but they again could not accept what He said, and, in fact, put it totally out of their minds (see Matt. 17:22, 23 and Matt. 20:18, 19).

Thus when the crucifixion did take place, the disciples saw it as the end of all their hopes that Jesus was the true Messiah. They had not only missed what He said, but also the very clear description contained in Isaiah 53—“He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and a sheep to before her shearsers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Verse 7. He was referred by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God that “taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.

Jesus’ statements concerning the destruction of the temple were beyond their comprehension

The disciples also had a problem with Jesus in regard to His statements concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially the temple. At one time, not too long before the crucifixion, Jesus had sadly said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered my children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:37, 38.

He went even further in describing the total destruction that would not leave one stone upon another. Josephus indicated that some of the foundation stones of the temple were 75 feet in length. The disciples, as with the statement of Jesus’ death, could not really believe that a massive structure like the temple could be laid flat to the ground. It did not seem possible to them that God could
forsake His city and His temple. And how could the enemy, however strong, destroy the temple? Was it not built of massive stones, incapable of destruction? Perhaps Jesus had not noticed how large these stones were?

**Two disciples on the Road to Emmaus**

The crucifixion of Christ came right on time. His death happened on the Passover at 3 o’clock P.M. in the midst of the week of years in 31 AD, as prophesied by Daniel the Prophet in Daniel 9:27. This was a great sorrow to the disciples. They just didn’t understand the scriptures as they needed to. This was the first great disappointment.

But the resurrection was yet to come. And “the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, ‘After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.’” Matthew 27:63, 64.

But the resurrection did come, and Jesus, on the first day of the week, met with two disciples on the Road to Emmaus—apparently two relatively unknown disciples, Cleopas and his unnamed friend. And Jesus, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets opened to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27.

**Cleopas and the other disciples shared what Jesus explained to them**

And later in the upper room with other disciples present, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” Luke 24:45.

It was many years later before the Gospels and many of the letters of the New Testament were written. The Book of Matthew wasn’t written until 75 AD, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the earliest books was the Book of James, written in 45 AD. The Gospel of Mark appeared in 50 AD. Paul’s writings began in 51 AD with First and Second Thessalonians. Luke was written between 58 and 63 AD.

But Cleopas and his friend, as well as the other disciples, must have orally shared what Jesus shared with them regarding the Old Testament scriptures, as well as the information on the destruction of Jerusalem and the time for those who believed the Christians were to get out of the city.

Jesus revealed the true understanding of the Old Testament sanctuary service

The attack did come on Jerusalem, first under Cestius in 66 AD. But upon his withdrawal and retreat, every believing Christian left the city, never to return, while the Jews, who were not Christians, chased after the retreating Romans.

In 70 AD the Romans returned with a vengeance under Titus and fulfilled the words of Jesus—“See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Matthew 24:2.

In His discussion with Cleopas and the other disciples, Jesus opened all the Old Testament Scriptures including the true understanding of the Old Testament Sanctuary system, also explaining its prophetic relationship with the true sanctuary in heaven.

And to strengthen this understanding the additional witness of Paul in the Book of Hebrews was given in 68 AD, two years before the destruction of the earthly temple. “God does nothing without revealing His secret unto His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7.
The disciples and other Christians now understood that Jesus, when He left the earth, took His position as High Priest in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, that salvation was not completed at the cross, and that symbolically the blood must be applied in the records of the First Apartment.

A first and second great disappointment

But we don’t want to get ahead of our story. The end is not yet. Daniel had pointed to the death of the Messiah in Daniel 9:27, which was finally being understood through the words of Cleopas and the disciples as they opened the scriptures, as Jesus had done for them.

But there was another time period given earlier in Daniel that was also to be connected to Jesus’ ministry in heaven. “And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Daniel 8:14.

And again as with the first time period leading to the crucifixion of Jesus, and His ministry in the first apartment, there was a misunderstanding and a second great disappointment. Miller had thought the earth was the sanctuary as had many others. In this error they were led to believe that Jesus was coming back on the day of atonement that would occur on October 22, 1844.

Many people all around the world were allowed to have their attention drawn to this time as were the people who watched Jesus being led on a donkey in the first disappointment. But, as with the first disappointment, things did not happen as the multitude thought they would. October 22, 1844 came and went, but Jesus did not come.

During all this study of the Bible, while looking for the return of Jesus, the true Sabbath was also rediscovered by a group of Baptists, and introduced to those future Seventh-day Adventists by Mrs. Rachael Oakes.

Like the Bereans, search the scriptures daily

In both cases, the first Cleopas, and the Cornfield Cleopas, the real discoveries were a closer understanding of the Scriptures. The Old Testament Sanctuary system makes no sense without its application eventually applied to what Jesus has been doing in heaven since His sacrifice on the cross.

Most present day Christians think that everything was completed at the cross, but like the Jews of old, they have not taken into account the whole Bible beginning at Moses and all the Prophets.

Jesus said in John 5:39, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” And in Acts 17:11, we are told that the Bereans “were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

The Cornfield Cleopas

On October 23, 1844, Hiram Edson and others prayed that the Lord would reveal to them the basis of their mistake. He then left the little group that had prayed with him—he was accompanied by a friend that walked out ahead of him. They proceeded through a nearby cornfield. They hoped to go and encourage others that were involved in the disappointment. Edson, who was lagging behind, became what Mervin Maxwell in his book, “Tell It To The World”, termed the Cornfield Cleopas. In Edson’s own words—“I was stopped short about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to earth (October 22, 1844), that He for the first time entered the Second Apartment of the sanctuary and had work to perform before coming to earth.”
In Canaan’s Language

The tongue that blights with words of strife,
Baptized, will breathe the words of life;
The heart that voiced a soulless prayer
Will fervent be when God is there;
The lips that smite, instead of praise,
Will glorify their Maker’s ways;
And all life’s thoughts and words will be
Imbued with heaven’s purity.

Ah, such must be when soon we stand
To sing his praise in Beulah land!
Ere we embark that shore to seek,
In Canaan’s language we must speak;
Our lesson book, the Word of God;
Our teacher is our gracious Lord.

No tongue so stubborn but his love
May teach it accents from above;
No lip too stiff for molding well
The tones that of his presence tell;
No heart so base, no mind so vile,
But God can purge them free from guile
Lord, let a mighty change be wrought
In heart and mind, in word and thought.

Worthie Harris Holden
The blessed Lord said to His disciples, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.” John 14:3. To have Christ, and be with Him eternally, is no small reward. But this promise was not for the disciples alone. When “Paul the aged” was in prison, waiting for his death sentence to be carried out, he wrote: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Many who now sleep in the dust have been righteous

A crown of righteousness is a part of the great reward which the King will bestow. This is called by some writers a “crown of life.” James 1:12; Revelation 2:10. Another says, “When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Peter 5:4.

But in order for this crown to be received by all for whom it is intended, some must be called from the dead; for many who now sleep in the dust have been righteous. The Lord, however, has made provision for all these. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16.

A new life, a new home, a new occupation, a new song

Thank God that though good men may die, the grave cannot hold them when the Lord comes and calls for them. No, indeed; for “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.” John 5:28, 29. Not only this, but at the very instant they come out of their graves the gift of immortality is theirs. This is the Lord’s promise: “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (immortal), and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Glorious change indeed; no more sickness, sorrow, pain or death, “for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4. “Death is swallowed up
in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54), and all things are made new—a new life, a new home, a new occupation, a new song—and best of all, these may be enjoyed throughout the eternal ages.

When the king comes, the faithful alone are raised to life

Is all this worth looking after? Who does not desire such a reward? Oh, to be able to receive it! But in order to have this, each one must be “counted worthy” of it. When the Lord comes, only the “dead in Christ” arise at His call. 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The rest of the dead do not rise till a thousand years afterward. Revelation 20:5. This shows that the righteous are separated from the wicked when the Lord comes. But even this is done in a moment, in the “twinkling of an eye.” There is no time for the judgment, then. No; before the Lord comes, He looks over the cases of those who profess to know Him, and decides who are faithful; all the rest are left out, and when the King comes, the faithful alone are raised to life. After these are taken to dwell with Him, the wicked have their resurrection, and are brought forth to be punished. John 5:29.

After the decision has been made as to who are worthy to come up in the resurrection of the just, then the Lord comes to give them the reward of everlasting life. Let us remember, then, that we must be ready to meet the Lord before this decision is rendered; for if we wait until the Lord is seen coming, it will be too late. We shall then be obliged to cry, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” Jeremiah 8:20.

The Lord’s coming will overtake those who are not prepared

The Lord gives us a solemn warning on this point. He says to all: “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Luke 21:34,35. Snares are placed in concealment, where they will take birds and beasts that are not looking for them; as they move along carelessly, not thinking of any danger, suddenly, in an instant, they are ensnared, never to escape alive. In just the same way will the Lord’s coming overtake those who are not prepared for it. “Watch ye therefore,” the Saviour said, “and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:36.

Death will be swallowed up in victory

We have seen that our resurrection, our immortality, our being with Christ, our crown of inheritance, all depend upon, and are to be given at, His second coming. How important, then, that coming is. If the coming were to prove a failure, all would be lost. But that can never be. All through the dim ages of the past, as the saints have fallen one by one by the stroke of death, angels have marked their places of rest. And when the order of the returning Lord shall be heard, “Go, gather My saints together unto Me,” with what joyful haste will the angels fly to meet those who have burst the tomb at the sound of the voice of the Son of God!

Oh, glorious awakening! Perhaps the first sight to greet the vision of those opening eyes in the dawn of eternity will be the face of an angel, radiant with glory. It must surely be an awakening of song, when death is thus “swallowed up in victory”, and the sweet voice of Him who is our Redeemer is heard to sing, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” Hebrews 2:12.

Then will the very heavens ring with the jubilee of that assembled throng.
Once we understand it, we will love God’s law

As I know so many of you have heard, the Law of God is a hedge of protection around us, not a list of do’s and don’ts. For everyone who does not kill, does not commit adultery, does not bear false witness or lie, or follows any of the rest of the commandments, they are the happier for it.

God’s law, or His commandments, are our delight and we love to keep them. The person who does not believe or accept that, simply does not understand. And that’s okay, for every single one of us was there at one time. We all have viewed the “law” as against us and not for us earlier in our lives. But once we saw the truth, once we realized what the law was, and what it was for, we understood, and we now love that law.

God blessed and hallowed the seventh day

In this message I would like to focus on just one of the law’s commands… the Sabbath, or specifically, the keeping of the Sabbath. Let’s go right to the law and read it from the Ten Commandments: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Ex. 20:8-11.

The law about the Sabbath is about doing some things during this 24-hour period, and not doing some things. This is the only commandment that states why you need to keep the law… because it is God’s, and God created everything. It even states how long it took God to create everything… six days. It took six literal 24-hour periods for God to make the heavens and the earth and everything else on the planet. Then the Bible says that God rested on the seventh day and He blessed and hallowed, or made holy, that day… that 24-hour-period day.

The devil always comes against God’s plans

Now there are all sorts of other sermons and ideas and messages in these commandments and even in the Sabbath commandment, but at this time I would like to address the “keeping” of the Sabbath day. As usual, if the Lord blesses something, the devil wants to make it a curse to us. If God makes it holy, the devil wants to make it unholy. If God wants the Sabbath to be a joy, you can be sure the devil wants to make it a pain. And of course, if God wants it to be the seventh day, you can also be sure that the devil will want to make it the first, second or third day… any other day but the day God said.

The devil cannot stand the Sabbath because it is THE sign that God, the true God, is our God. And our God sanctifies us, or sets us apart. “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall
keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.” Ex. 31:13. Keeping none of the other commandments acts as a sign between us and God. Did you know that? The only “sign” that God used to indicate our connection with him was the Sabbath. This is very important. “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.” Eze. 20:12.

Sabbath-keeping is a joy

God “sanctifies” us. What does that mean… “sanctifies” us? This relates to our Sabbath-keeping! The Hebrew word for sanctify is “qudash” (kaw-dash’) which means: “to be, make, pronounce or observe as clean or holy or pure.” The Sabbath is the sign that God, the true God, makes us clean, holy and pure. This is also very important, more important than many people realize. God said to keep the Sabbath so we would remember that. We are to remember that God sanctifies or makes us clean, holy and pure. With that in mind then, let’s look at the joys of keeping God’s holy day. Let’s also keep in mind that this day is set apart and hallowed, or made holy, to remind us that God both made us, and makes us holy.

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.” Isa. 56:2. “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;” Isa. 56:6.

God made it special; we should treat it special

It should be obvious that we should not “pollute” the Sabbath day. But what does it mean to “pollute”? The Hebrew word for “pollute” is: chalal (khaw-lal”) and means to: “wound, dissolve, profane or break something”. In other words, don’t do something on the Sabbath that would break it, or wound it, or make it like just a regular kind of day. The Sabbath is a special day and it should be treated as a special day. Don’t work on that day… it is a special, sanctified day.

The Sabbath is a day of remembrance of God and what He is doing for us… remember… making us separate and holy and pure. Working on that day will take away from that reminder. Can you see how and why the devil would want us to desecrate or wound or break the Sabbath? He doesn’t want us to see what God plans for us. The devil is enraged with the idea that we might go where he was cast out. He is out of his mind with madness that we get to be what he used to be… a worker for the God of the universe! And he knows that if we keep the Sabbath as it is meant to be kept, that we WILL end up where he used to be. So, we know not to do work on the Sabbath.

Common, every-day activities should be set aside on Sabbath

Nehemiah was working to reform the people of God who had strayed away from God’s commands about the Sabbath and he stated this…

“And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath…” Neh. 10:31. The Sabbath was not, and is not, a day of common business pursuits. This day is not for shopping or purchasing or selling. This is God’s day and He asks us not to do common things like engaging in commerce on that day. Again, what that will do is take from us the reminder that God made us and set us apart for holy service and use to Him and that He makes us holy.

We even have another special day to prepare for Sabbath!

Even when it relates to cooking and preparing meals, we have the instruction to keep it to a minimum on the Sabbath so you have more time with Him… “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the
sabbath day.” Ex. 35:3. Imagine in the days of Moses and even into Jesus’ time how you had to make a fire. You had to gather wood, and that might have been long distances; you had to get some kindling; you had to split the wood; you had to prepare it for lighting… Imagine how much effort and time that took away from the Sabbath!

Same thing with baths! They could not just turn on the tap and out came nice, hot water. It took hours sometimes just to prepare a tub of hot water to bathe in. And there was no “bathroom”. The tub was usually set up in the warmest part of the house. So everything related to a bath and cooking took a lot of time and effort. Therefore, God said to avoid those things and prepare on Friday for the Sabbath. That’s why Friday is called the “preparation day”. Prepare for the Sabbath! Prepare for the Sabbath because the Sabbath has been made for you!

**A day made just for us!**

“And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” Mark 2:27. This is another huge concept here related to the Sabbath day… it was made for us! We are to avoid working and cooking and shopping and ordinary household duties so we may enjoy the blessings of the Sabbath. God wants you to enjoy this day and get the blessing out of it that He intended. So, He specified that a lot of the mundane daily tasks that we perform on every other day, not be done on this day, for OUR benefit. Remember, He pronounced a special blessing on that day, and He wants us to have that blessing.

**We were given six other days to do our work**

Now let’s turn to another text or two. “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” Isa. 58:13-14.

These verses have a lot to do with what we do and think of the Sabbath, so let’s look into them a little deeper here.

First, let’s deal with the idea of “doing our own pleasure…” The thought here is about what we do on the Sabbath day. It is not designed for you to do your own thing. Although it is made for you, the Sabbath was made for a specific goal in mind… to draw you nearer to Him! Let’s repeat that… The Sabbath has the specific goal of drawing us closer to God. Anything that did not do that was not for the Sabbath. God set it apart and made it holy, so we could have that time, that specific, holy time, to get to know God better. And, when we get to know God better, we become clean, holy and pure. But doing our own ways, finding our own pleasure, speaking our own words, was to be relegated to the other six days of the week. The Sabbath was not made special for those things. And God said if we avoided those things on this day, we would delight ourselves in the Lord! Why? Because the closer we get to God, the better we get to know Him, the more we understand about Him, the more we will love Him and want to be with Him, and the more we become clean, holy and pure. THIS is what the Sabbath is for. THIS is why God made it. THIS is where we will get the joy of this special day.

**Worship and study about our Creator on the Sabbath**

Now that we have addressed what and why we should not do certain things on that day, let’s get into the joys of what we can and should do. If we really want to understand how to keep the Sabbath, or what can be done on the Sabbath, keep in mind this one overarching principle… this day is designed to bring us closer to God. For most of us, the first
thing that comes to mind on and for the Sabbath day is to get together for worship. The time for Sabbath School, or the collective study of God's word is a highlight of the day for many of us. To be able to share the common goals and desires to get to know God better is a joy to experience. Then to listen to someone who has spent many hours preparing a message for us to grow and learn more about our God is a special blessing on the Sabbath day.

**It is always right to do good on Sabbath**

And relating to what we can do on the Sabbath day, let's address another principle of the Sabbath… “And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.” Mark 3:4. It is always right to do good on the Sabbath, and specifically, to help someone if they are sick. Helping someone to be like God intended for them to be is always good on the Sabbath day. God wants us healthy and pure and holy. To engage in that pursuit is to be doing the work of God.

People will make all kinds of rules for the Sabbath that God never made. Jesus dealt with that a lot while He was here on this earth. But the Sabbath was made for us to get closer to God and to help others get close to Him. The possibilities for joyful Sabbath-keeping are endless when you keep these goals in mind. Nature is God's second Bible, or the second best way to know about God. Bible reading and study and memorizing are all good ways to know God better. And when you are tired of reading and need some time away from that, some time in nature is perfect for the Sabbath. There are few things outside of Bible study that can show you the love God has for us like nature. Even as corrupted as it has become, there are still such joys in nature as to leave you enraptured and praising God. A beautiful, white snowy day, or a gorgeous sunset or watching the animals play or admiring the majestic trees and ornamental flowers all point to God and show His handiwork.

And to sit on a bench or casually walk on a path and just look at all the beauty God has created is both extremely restful and it draws us to our Creator… which is what God is trying to do. He knows that if left to our own devices, we will stay so busy we won't have time for God. So, He built in this time for us and Him to be together. Just thinking about that fact will bring us great joy too!

God made the Sabbath for us to be with Him! The more time we are with Him, the more we become like Him. By beholding, we become changed.

**Enjoy nature from a window**

But let's say that it is too cold or hot or muggy or it is raining outside. Then what? How can we enjoy God's nature then? If we live out in the country, we can simply look out the window, from the comfort of our homes.

Putting up squirrel feeders and bird feeders and houses are a wonderful way to enjoy God's creation from the comfort of your window. If we don't have those luxuries, most places have an arboretum or a botanical garden that you can enjoy. Many of those places are free, or you can obtain yearly passes to go to them. Make the effort to get into God's nature to get the rest and closeness He wants for us.

Then, if all else fails, there are nature programs on TV that we can enjoy if we cannot get out in God's nature. There are excellent programs that talk all about God's creation.
Unfortunately, they rarely give God the glory for it, but we know better, and watching nature on TV is not our first choice, but it is an option if we need it.

**Blessing others blesses you**

Visiting the sick or shut-in or helping someone get to church or sharing the Sabbath School lesson with those who can’t go to church is a holy thing to do on the Sabbath as well. This is a very special time and we should really try to take advantage of it more often. There are so many people who I talk to who can’t get to church. And when we go to be with them, they love it, but we get a huge blessing out of it as well. Doing for others really does bless us more than doing for ourselves. If we have children, teaching them to be helpful to others is a great way to grow their characters heavenward. I used to be a nursing home administrator and I can tell you that visiting an old person is one of the greatest blessings you can receive. For many of them, it will be the only visit they will receive all week. And if you ever feel you are not important or that you have nothing to offer… go visit a nursing home and see how much you are needed and wanted.

The Sabbath is also a very special time to get closer to our families. We can get so busy during the week that our wives or husbands or children can get left by the wayside. This is a time to get to really visit and listen to one another. How often does that happen during the week? How much time do we really set apart to just sit and visit with our children or our spouses? The Sabbath offers a perfect time to get to do just that. And the more we learn about one another, the better we can help each other get closer to our Lord and Saviour.

**Think of creative ways to share God’s word with others**

Another excellent activity for the Sabbath is missionary work; and there are endless numbers of tracts or booklets or even books that are so reasonably priced that we can hand out to people. Go for a walk and just offer them to people as they pass by. Is it too hard for you to come up to someone directly? Leave it in a bathroom of a store. Put it on a park bench. Leave it on top of a gas station pump. There are endless ways to be creative with literature and even… DVDs. Mail them to friends. Mail them to people’s addresses in the phone book. Many times we have bought little plastic bags with holes in them to leave on doorknobs and put a piece of literature or a DVD in them.

One of the best ways to distribute literature is to have your children hand it out. No one can refuse a small child coming up to them and giving them something. Another fantastic character-building experience for the children! Children are fabulous for the nursing homes, too, by the way! Teach others God’s truths

We can start our own Bible correspondence school. What is more convenient than sitting at home and grading Bible studies and sending personal notes back? Amazing Facts has great Bible study guides to hand out or to mail. What about letter writing? Who does that any more? Who doesn’t love to receive a card or letter in the mail? And don’t forget phone calls! Even if we don’t reach the person, leaving a message that we were thinking of them can go a long way to making someone’s day. And in all of these things, we have blessed others and in turn blessed ourselves, too. Who knows the results for eternity for each of these endeavors?

**One…**

When we begin to look at things like this and incorporate our children in them too, everyone will begin to look forward to the Sabbath day to do these special things. This is what God made this day for. This is why He wants us to avoid all the rest of the week’s activities on this special day. He knows that if we will take the time out of our busy schedules to do these things, we will come closer to Him and become more like Him. It happens a little at a time and almost imperceptibly, but it happens all the same.

We are often tempted that we have to do some big or great thing on the Sabbath day. No we don’t. Who told us that? Start with one phone call… one piece of literature… one visit. See what God will bless you with and see what a delight the Sabbath becomes for you. One letter… one walk… one bird feeder. One day a week.

Joe Olson serves as the executive director and chairman of the board of Hope International. He also travels as an international speaker.
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There is an earnest work of preparation to be done by Seventh-day Adventists if they would stand firm in the trying experiences just before them. If they remain true to God in the confusion and temptation of the last days, they must seek the Lord in humility of heart for wisdom to resist the deceptions of the enemy. At this time every believer in present truth should stand identified as a laborer together with God.

Ever are we to keep in mind the solemn thought of the Lord’s soon return, and in view of this to recognize the individual work to be done. Through the aid of the Holy Spirit we are to resist natural inclinations and tendencies to wrong, and weed out of the life every unchristlike element. Thus we shall prepare our hearts for the reception of God’s blessing, which will impart to us grace, and bring us into harmony with the faith of Jesus. For this work of preparation great advantages have been granted to this people, in light bestowed, in messages of warning and instruction, sent through the agency of the Spirit of God.

The world needs to see a people who are laying aside their own will and are seeking to do God’s will

Because of the increasing power of Satan’s temptations, the times in which we live are full of peril for the children of God, and we need to learn constantly of the Great Teacher, that we may take every step in surety and righteousness. Wonderful scenes are opening before us, and at this time a living testimony is to be borne in the lives of God’s professing people, so that the world may see that in this age when evil reigns on every side, there is yet a people who are laying aside their will and are seeking to do God’s will,—a people in whose hearts and lives the law of God is written. There are strong temptations before us, sharp tests. The commandment-keeping people of God are to prepare for this time of trial by obtaining a deeper experience in the things of God and a practical knowledge of the righteousness of Christ.

Trifling words and careless actions are not pleasing to the Lord

In the night season I heard words spoken, reproving the speech and deportment of those who indulge in trifling words and careless actions. The Lord is not pleased with the careless speech, the frivolous words that come so often from lips professing to serve him. His Spirit is grieved that those who are called by his name do not perfect his righteousness in their words. The righteous judgments of God will not spare the trifler. The people who have had great light will not be excused if they neglect to give, by a godly example, the light of truth to those with whom they associate.

Not to unbelievers only, but to church members the words are spoken, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” With the
light that has come to him, the believer has serious responsibilities placed upon him. He must not allow trifles to lead him to neglect the religion of Christ.

**Not all will enter into the kingdom of heaven**

It is dangerous for us to subordinate matters of eternal interest to the common affairs of life. “Enter ye in at the strait gate,” the Saviour declares, “for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

**Our lives are to present a living witness to the power of the gospel to transform the character so others may be aroused from their unbelief**

What can I say to you, my brethren and sisters, that will arouse you to the importance of the times in which we live, and lead you to a faithful examination of heart and life? Are your lives in harmony with the life of sacrifice that Christ lived on the earth? In giving his Son to the human race, the Father gave to his church a wonderful example of self-forgetting love. Christ came that he might open to the comprehension of men and women the principles that underlie the great plan of redemption, that they might be led to cooperate with him in his work of sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. But the want of fervor, the lack of self-denial, on the part of many who bear Christ's name, hinder the doing of the very work for which his church on earth was organized. The selfishness and indifference manifested by professing Christians soothes the consciences of many who would be aroused from their unbelief, had they before them in the lives of professing Christians, a living witness to the power of the gospel to transform the character.

**Selfishness must be cut out of our lives**

Self-sacrifice is the key-note of Christ's teachings. Often this is enjoined upon believers in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save men than to cut them away from their life of selfishness. Christ gave, in his life on earth, a true representation of the power of the gospel. He suffered the cruel death on the cross, that we might have a true conception of his love for us, and of the spirit of self-sacrifice that must take possession of every believer in him. He became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. To every soul
who will suffer with him in resistance of sin, in labor for his cause, in self-denial for the good of others, he promises a part in the eternal reward of the righteous. Through the exercise of the spirit that characterized his life-work, we are to become partakers of his nature. Partaking in this life of sacrifice for the sake of others, we shall share with him in the life to come the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

**Every unnecessary expense is to be avoided to save for the cause of God**

Angels marvel that those who have so long had the light of truth are so slow in bearing it to the dark places of the earth. There are many calls from unworked fields. From many lands the call is sounding, Come over and help us. Shall we not do our part to make it possible to respond to these calls? Shall we not give freely of our means to plant the standard of truth in new territory? There are some who are doing their utmost to aid the work of missions; but there are many who seem indifferent to the claims that God makes upon them for unselfish service. Shall we not at this time study ways by which we can save for the cause of God? Much can be accomplished by small acts of self-denial. While our sisters should dress becomingly, they should, in their expenditure of means in this respect, seek to represent the simplicity of Christ.

Let every unnecessary expense be avoided. Bring the tithes into the storehouse, and let free-will offerings be made. In this way those who can not go as missionaries to foreign lands may act their part toward saving many who are perishing in the darkness of heathenism. When men and women are truly converted, they will not only be willing, but anxious to have a part in the saving of the lost.

**The weary and heavy laden are to be relieved by the message of truth**

Christ’s life on earth was an object-lesson of the spirit that must possess those who would be faithful stewards of the grace of Christ. He traveled long distances that he might give temporal and spiritual blessings to those who needed both. He supplied the physical and spiritual needs of the multitudes who followed him. It is our privilege to unite with Christ in his work of mercy and benevolence. The weary and heavy laden are to be relieved by the message of truth. All who will humble their hearts before him and be converted, the Lord will use in his great purpose of salvation.

Never was there a time when it was more important that men and women discern present duty, nor a time when decisive action was more greatly needed, than now. My brethren and sisters, withhold not from God at this time that for which he is asking. Let your daily lives witness to the faith you profess. Do not feel that you must follow every prevailing fashion, but dress plainly and neatly; deny self that money may flow into the treasury for the
advancement of the message.

When the eternal welfare of others means more to us than our present ease and enjoyment, we shall sacrifice in order to advance the work of God. The great object of Christ’s mission -- the salvation of perishing souls -- will urge us to self-denial and sacrifice.

Every believer in present truth has a work to do

My brethren and sisters, your gold and silver is needed to carry the work effectively in the large cities. Will you not deny yourselves of needless things, and use the means thus saved for the progress of the work? The Lord will be pleased to see you moved to acts of self-denial; for thus you will show yourselves laborers together with him at this time when new doors are opening to the message. It was a most costly sacrifice that the Lord of heaven made in our behalf. His divine benevolence was stirred to its depths that the blessings lost to man by the fall might be restored. And “he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Upon every believer in present truth God has laid a work. This last message of warning is to be given in all our cities, large and small. This message is to be revived in the hearts of believers, that they may go forth to publish its warnings and instruction throughout the land. The evidences that have been given of the truthfulness of this message are to be repeated with power. Medical missionaries are to go forth; workers in every line are to proclaim, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”

Find your place and take hold of the work

I am instructed to say to believers everywhere, Find your place. Do not stand questioning, but take hold of the work that you see waiting to be done. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,” is Christ’s commission to his followers today; and, he says, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” I am thankful that some are being led out to work with intensity for the extension of the message of truth. I pray that their zeal may be tempered with wisdom, that the spirit of kindness and of consideration for the rights and privileges of others may be manifest in all their efforts.

Great is the need of consecrated workers who will bear to the world a living testimony of the truth and its power to transform the life. O for men who will stand in their lot and place to do the work that is essential to be done in giving the message to mankind! Soon we must render to God an account of the deeds done in the body. There is much earnest work to do. My brethren and sisters, proclaim the message of warning for this time, and show the blessedness resulting from obedience to all of God’s commandments.

RH September 28, 1911

Ellen G. White, 1827–1915, received the spiritual gift of prophecy, and the fruits of her life and work accord with the biblical tests of a true messenger of God. To this day, her counsels are an incalculable blessing to God’s people around the world.
Let Haggai, Malachi, and Matthew speak

When we were little we used to play church. We’d get the chairs into rows, fight over who’d be preacher, vigorously lead the hymn singing, and generally have a great time. Now that generation has grown up, but most of us haven’t changed that much. Every Sabbath we still play church. That’s the problem - playing church can become continuing. You learn the routine, you do the same thing every Sabbath. We need to discover the reality of true worship, and when these three witnesses speak we better pay attention, listen and reform our way of worship.

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men.” Matt. 15:8-9.

If the power of true worship is ever to become a reality in our life, we need to discover the reality of true worship and we will never play church again. True biblical worship is about meeting the awesome living God when we come together every Sabbath. True worship must become a way of life for us.

To worship means “to give honor and praise to someone or something”

When we worship God in the biblical sense we give him the honor and praise which is rightly his because: He is the creator, He loves us so much, and He has given us His all. The best God has given us includes the gift of life, good health, love, family, friends, food, water, the air we breathe, clothes, freedom to speak and to worship; above it all includes God’s very best gift to the world in Jesus Christ who was given to pay for our sins through his death.

The heart of biblical worship then,
is a shift in focus from us and our concerns, to God and his concerns. It points us toward God and away from ourselves. It directs the mind and emotion upward toward heaven. True worship is a response to God’s love.

**When we are at church what are we - audience or performers?**

This touches the reason for coming to church. Do you come to get something for yourself or do you come because you have an appointment with God? Your answer makes a world of difference. It’s the difference between “Did this service help me?” versus “Did I meet God today?”

The traditional view in which the pastor, elder or preacher is the leader and the congregation is the audience, is wrong. That view leads us to ask a very me-oriented question: “What will I get out of the service?” The biblical view stresses that worship is actually “ministering to God”. In that scenario, leaders and the congregation are the performers, and God is the audience. That view leads us to a radically different question: “How well did I do today?” and “Was God pleased with my worship today?”

**True worship is about doing that which pleases God to our best abilities**

- If it pleases God for you to come to church at 10am and leave at 1pm, do it.
- If it pleases God for you to give Him your change and leftovers, then do it.
- If it pleases God for you to give Him a lip service, then do it.
- If it pleases God for you to ignore His church in your budget, then do it.
- If it pleases God for you to ignore the need among you, then do it.

When you play church, you just go through the motions for your own benefit. But when you worship God, you offer him the best that you have.

**God speaks of a case of misplaced priorities through a man called Haggai**

In 586 B.C. The Babylonian army, under King Nebuchadnezzar—defeated Judah, destroyed the walls of Jerusalem, laid waste to the city, and utterly destroyed Solomon’s temple. Nothing was left when the Babylonians were finished. The entire city was a smoking ruin of rubble. Meanwhile the Jews themselves were taken into captivity in Babylon. In 538 B.C. Zerubbabel led about 50,000 people back to Judah. There they found shocking devastation. Nothing had changed since the defeat some 50 years earlier.

Immediately, the returnees set about to rebuild the temple in about 536 B.C. They re-laid the foundation amid a great celebration. Then suddenly the Samaritans (who hated the Jews) began to oppose them. Because of their constant opposition, the Jews stopped the rebuilding process and never got started again. After all, there was plenty of other work to do—they were trying to restart a nation from scratch. As the years passed, slowly but surely Jerusalem came to life again. Homes were built, stores opened, commerce established, fields planted, crops harvested, and life began to resemble something of a normal pattern.

“You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses.”


**This is what the LORD Almighty says about a case of misplaced priorities:**

- You are busy building your own fine houses – and no one is building my house
- Your houses are completed –
while my house lies in ruins

- Your houses are finely furnished – while my house is not
- Your houses are warm – while my house is not
- Your houses are filled with food – while my house is empty
- Your houses are well maintained and clean – while my house lies in desolation

What excuses can we give for doing this?

- One is able to host an expensive wedding alone and feed hundreds of people but the same cannot feed a few guests at church.
- One is able to build expensive houses alone but the same cannot do it for the Lord.

This is what happens, when there is a battle between two Gods - the god of self and God the Creator. Self always gets the best of everything, including quality time, while God the Creator is given leftovers of everything - including time. We must give God priority over self.

God speaks of a case of misplaced priorities through a man called Malachi

With all that as background, we turn to the book of Malachi. When we do, we find that “playing church” is not a new problem. Malachi was an Old Testament prophet who wrote at the very end of the Old Testament period—about 430 years before the birth of Christ. By this time the Jews have been back in the land for over a hundred years. The Temple has been rebuilt, and the worship of God re-established. Outwardly the nation flourishes; inwardly a cancer eats away at the soul of the Jewish people. It is the cancer of complacency. God speaks through Malachi to his disobedient, cold, uncaring people calling them back to serious worship.

We pick up the story in Malachi chapter 1 where God says, “A son honors his father and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? Says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, How have we despised your name? By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, How have we polluted you? By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? Says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? Says the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 1: 6-9.

Professional worshipers

A father, but without honor. A master, with no respect. And who is the guilty party? The priests! Of all people, they should know better! The priests were set aside to honor God. They were “professional worshipers”. How could they not honor God? So the Lord gives two pointed examples:

1. They were offering defiled food (1:7)
2. They were offering inferior sacrifices (1:8)

It’s easy to understand what was happening. Say a man has 50 lambs in his flock, of which ten were excellent, 35 were good, and 5 were blemished somehow. Now he knows that those five blemished animals won’t bring him much money on the open market. So what does he do? He uses those five blemished animals as his offering to God. What does it matter if they are lame or sick or covered with sores? It’s still an offering. It’s like killing two birds with one stone—he gets
rid of his blemished animals and he still meets his obligations to bring a sacrifice to God.

There’s only one problem. God knows exactly what this man is doing. He’s keeping the best for himself and he’s giving his junk to God. Notice what God says about this: “Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” (1:9). God is saying, “You’re treating me worse than you treat your own government. But God is clear on this point: He will not accept cut-rate religion!

1. Such worship is useless (1:10)
2. Such worship is spiritual profanity (1:12)

God expects, and deserves only the best from us

They light fires before the Lord, but the fires are “useless”. And God says, “I will accept no offering from your hands!”

“ But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering? Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD.

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.” Malachi 1:13-14.

In Leviticus 22 God specifically instructs his people that they were not to bring God animals for sacrifice that were blemished in any way. You couldn’t bring the blind or the maimed or the injured or the deformed. Why? Because God deserves the best!

1. The Lord does not deserve our leftovers, second love, double-mindedness, or lukewarm worship and service!
2. He took the firstborn of families and animals, and He expects first fruits giving! Second best stinks.

When we give Jesus our absolute best — our time, talent and resources, it is truly an act of worship. We are saying with our actions, “God, You mean more to me than anything. Because You are so loving, I want to give you everything that I am.” It pleases Him when we come to Him with this attitude. When we draw near to Him with an open and humble heart, He draws near to us. Remember, when you give Him your best, He gives you His best in return.

But listen to what the lord is saying to you:

You promised to give him your best, but then you gave him your worst.

You promised to serve him forever, but now you’re going back on your word.

You sang, “Take my silver and my gold, not a cent would I withhold.” But now you’ve changed your mind.

You promised to serve Jesus Christ in his church, but when the call comes for Sabbath School workers, you sit on your hands.

You said, “Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe,” but you pay every other bill first and if you have anything left over, you give something to God.

You promised to be a living sacrifice, but now you’re trying to crawl off the altar. No wonder the Lord is angry.

Worship that costs nothing is worth nothing! Some of us have an easy-come, easy-go attitude toward our religion.

God is Lord of the universe!

Suppose you knew that next Sabbath you were going to meet the president of the United States. You’d start preparing right now, buying new shoes, taking your suit to the cleaners, getting your hair done, practicing your greeting. You’d spend Friday night getting ready and you’d get up early on the Sabbath so you wouldn’t be late. After all, it’s not every day that you get to meet the president. The dignity of the office would cause you to act with utmost respect. How, then, do we take God so lightly? We are
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If you are tired of playing church, if you want more out of your worship, then go ahead - put God to the test and see if he will not open the floodgates of heaven. When we give ourselves completely to the Lord, all giving becomes easier.

Lord, for too long we have lived as if you did not exist. For too long we have simply been going through the motions. Forgive us, Lord. The fault is ours, not yours, because you told us long ago that we could put you to the test. Thank you for being a God of grace. Thank you for always being there when we need a new beginning. As we open our hearts to you, may your love overcome our fear and your grace our hesitation for There is Power in True Worship. Amen.

God's advice strikes home to my heart. When I am tempted about priorities, he says, “Put me to the test and see if I will not open the floodgates of heaven.” When I think, “The house payment must come first,” God says, “I am a great king. Put me first and I will bless you so much that you will not be able to contain it all.” When I think, “What’s the least I can give?” God says, “I gave my Son for you. That’s the best I had to give. What will you give to me?” “This I did for Thee. What hast thou done for me?” And God says, “My child, I love you more than you will ever know. I love you more than you love yourself. All my thoughts toward you are good. I gave my only Son to die for you. What else can I do to prove my love?”

God has a bigger shovel!

He invites us to give because he wants to bless us. Someone said it this way: “I shovel it out and God shovels it right back in”. And God’s got a bigger shovel. Exactly! That’s what God is saying in Malachi 3. We can’t out-give God. That’s what tithing is all about. It’s based on the grace of God who longs to bless us.

God always speaks loud enough for a willing ear to hear

If worship is boring it is because we are bored with God! When man is bored with God even heaven does not have a better alternative. If God bores you, then nothing else will satisfy. Nothing heaven can offer will meet your need if you are bored with God! That’s why how we worship God is important. We worship the king of the universe. He demands the very best we can offer! He will accept nothing less.

If you ever get a glimpse of what Jesus has done for you, you’ll never play church again. When worship has lost its worth, people will even rob God. God’s people were robbing him. How? By withholding their tithes, by giving God the worst instead of the best, by giving Him the least and not the best. Their attitude was, “How little can I give and still keep God happy?”

not coming here to meet some earthly ruler. We are coming here to meet the Lord of the universe! That’s what Malachi 1:14 says, “For I am a great king,” says the LORD Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.”
God’s Lamp

The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light,
On the path of the just it shines ever bright.
By fighting God’s law, we cannot please Him
But fall victim to Satan’s deceptive whim,
No light from God’s Truth illuminating our night.

The light of the law reveals just what is sin,
“Transgression of the law”, God says, and then,
Should believers in Christ continue to break
The Ten Commandments which God’s finger did make?
Oh, no! We are dead to sin and can’t live longer therein!

To break one commandment is to break them all.
Just like ten Dominoes, down, down they all fall.
With the light of the law gone, in the soul it is night!
We lie, steal, covet, disobey parents—and think it’s all right,
To Satan’s lies and temptations we so quickly fall.

Our precious Savior came our sins to take away,
For transgression of God’s law breaks His heart every day!
Commandments 1-4 teach us how to love our God,
Commandments 5-10 teach us how to love Bill, Jane, and Todd,
And so, to the young ruler, “Keep the commandments”, Jesus did say.

Patricia J. Smith
**Time Magazine—August 12, 2013, World, page 10—Is Tunisia the Next Egypt? by Vivienne Walt**

Compared with the chaos in Egypt and Libya, the one Arab Spring revolution that seemed to have a shot at success was the one in Tunisia, the tiny Mediterranean country whose uprising in 2010 kicked off a protest wave across the region. Now even that nascent democracy looks shaky. After gunmen assassinated the secular politician Mohamed Brahmi on July 25—the second such hit this year—thousands of enraged Tunisians stormed the streets and burned barricades...

**End Time Perspective:**

“The world is becoming more and more lawless. Soon great trouble will arise among the nations—trouble that will not cease until Jesus comes.” RH February 11, 1904.

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**Time Magazine—August 12, 2013, Nation, Page 12—What Supreme Court Ruling? by Sean Gregory**

At least 12 men had been arrested since 2011 [in Louisiana] under a sodomy law invalidated by the Supreme Court a decade ago…They were all released.

**End Time Perspective:**

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot.” Luke 17:18.
Do you have poor circulation? Some of the common symptoms of poor blood circulation may include: tingling sensation or numbness of either the hands or feet; shortness of breath; lack of energy; irregular heartbeat; poor memory; and a lack of stamina. If so, give Ener-G a try today!

Are you fatigued? Around 20% of Americans claim to have fatigue intense enough to interfere with normal activities. Physical causes are estimated at 20-60%, and emotional causes are the other 40-80%. Ener-G helps to improve symptoms of fatique, regardless of the cause.

Are you stressed, anxious, or sad for no reason? The main ingredient in Ener-G, Panax Ginseng, gives an overall relaxing feeling as it reduces stress & anxiety. Ginseng works in a multi-purpose fashion. It helps regulate hormonal functioning (which reduces fatigue and sadness), and at the same time, it helps create endorphins, making you happier!

More Extraordinary Benefits of Panax Ginseng, the Primary Ingredient in Ener-G:

Scientific Studies:
- Panax Ginseng has proven successful in relaxing the muscles of the lungs. By relaxing the muscles of the lungs that control the airway, Panax Ginseng may be able to provide some relief for symptoms associated with breathing problems, constriction of the airways, and other lung problems.
- One large study of men taking Panax Ginseng resulted in the increase of sperm count, quality, and movement; ultimately improving overall male fertility. It appears that the chemical makeup of Panax Ginseng helps activate certain hormones in the body leading to induced or increased production.
- Studies show that Panax Ginseng's ability to regulate the immune system can assist in the prevention of both seasonal sickness and serious illness.
- Panax Ginseng contains steroids such as panaxatriol. The steroids are remarkably similar in structure to anabolic steroids found naturally in our body. This makes it ideal for athletes and body builders looking for a natural alternative to anabolic steroids.

- It stimulates the formation of blood vessels and improves blood circulation in the brain, thereby improving memory and cognitive abilities.
- It may inhibit abnormal cell growth.
- It has been used for over 5,000 years and is considered to be the strongest form of ginseng.
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- It balances the release of stress hormones by supporting the organs that produce them (the hypothalamus, the pituitary, and adrenal glands).
- People who are pregnant or taking MAO inhibitor drugs should not use this herb.

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Every living organism on the earth needs it, every second of life - yet there’s probably nothing more taken for granted by us, it seems, than the air we breathe! Most of us don’t even think about the possibility of it not being available until we find ourselves in a situation which threatens to deprive us of it – such as travelling in an overcrowded elevator or train that has no air-conditioning, or caught outside in a swirling dust storm, or stuck behind some hefty truck in traffic that is blowing pollutant diesel fumes all over us. However, the truth is, fresh, clean air is something we cannot live without for longer than just a few minutes.

The atmospheric heaven around and above us includes the air we breathe, upon which all life depends. This is a 12 mile thick layer, wrapped around our planet, which consists of about 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen and 1% argon, helium, carbon dioxide and other gasses. It also harbors a fair amount of water vapor and an unwarranted amount, unfortunately, of pollution. As this mixture is inhaled into our lungs about one-fifth of the oxygen is retained, while the rest is exhaled along with carbon dioxide and water vapor.

Every one of our body cells, of which there are trillions, need a constant supply of oxygen for us to survive. The oxygen we take in is picked up by our red blood cells and carried to the rest of the body’s cells to create energy. If our cells get enough oxygen they will be healthy, and healthy cells make up a healthy body. However, every time we breathe out we also exhale carbon dioxide and other toxins, which are the by-products of the metabolism constantly occurring in our cells, and if we are in a situation where we are not getting oxygen but are always breathing in exhaled, toxin-laden air, our cells will become deprived of their most basic needs. The oxygen content in the air will deplete continually as these toxic wastes are breathed out, and that air will not provide your body with sufficient oxygen to keep your cells functioning properly.

If you are living or working in an area where you are breathing in stale air, you may start to notice dizziness, drowziness, nausea, headaches, fatigue and exhaustion, irritability, anxiety, depression, and frequent fevers, colds or lung diseases.

Fresh air, on the other hand, is refreshing and invigorating, and this is partly due to the fact that it is full of negative ions. Negative ions are invisible molecules that we inhale
in abundance when we are in natural surroundings such as at beaches, mountains, near lakes, rivers and waterfalls, and around plants, trees or other vegetation. When negative ions enter our bloodstream, they are said to produce biochemical reactions that increase levels of the mood chemical serotonin, which helps to alleviate depression, relieve stress, boost our daytime energy, and impart a degree of composure and serenity to the mind.

Nature is constantly producing negative ions to combat the pollution in the air. One example of this is something we are all probably familiar with - how the air before a lightning storm can be stuffy and even oppressive, but after the storm it becomes so immediately clear and refreshing. This is because lightning produces a high concentration of negative ions which purify the air and make it invigorating.

The health benefits of negative ions are now well-recognized. The problem is, compared to the tens of thousands of negative ions circulating in nature, the average home or office building today registers only dozens, or hundreds of these molecules – and even none at all!

When you are feeling ill or suffering from any disease, fresh air is even more important. When your body is healing and repairing you are most likely breathing out more toxins into the air than someone who is healthy, and even a short period in a warming sun and breathing in fresh, clean air will assist hasten the healing processes of body as well as clear your mind. Oxygen kills bacteria and strengthens the immune system. When the white blood cells are called upon by the immune system to destroy germs, bacteria and viruses, they need much more oxygen than normal.

People who need to be confined to bed rest should always have a supply of fresh air through the sick room, and any stale air that may have accumulated through windows being closed needs to be replaced. The strength of our body system is, in a great degree, dependent upon the amount of pure, fresh air breathed. We all need an abundance of fresh air filled with life and health-giving oxygen!

In the beginning the earth’s air consisted of possibly as much as 34% oxygen. Today this has reduced to around just 18%, and on a hot summer’s day in large cities, that level can be as low as 8%. This means we need to do what we can to ensure we receive the life benefits from fresh air wherever possible. One of the best ways to do this is to walk in the open air, preferably near to the sea, trees and bushes, a lake or waterfall. Even gardening provides fresh air to our bodies and enables the lungs to expand and be filled with negatively-charged oxygen molecules.

Oxygen is full of health and life qualities. It reduces depression, promotes healing, soothes the nerves, gives the blood its healthy red color and purifies it, and sends its life-giving current to every part of the body. Oxygen is essential for cell metabolism, and that metabolism occurs constantly.

Fresh air stimulates appetite, helps digestion and induces sound, refreshing sleep. Our skin needs fresh air, and a lack of it can cause the skin to almost die. It invigorates our vital organs and helps our bodies remove accumulated impurities. Superior aerobic benefits are gained by exercising outdoors, as inhaling more clean air improves our breathing technique. This in turn increases stamina. As well, increased oxygen supply to the muscles reduces the lactic acid build-up in them that can lead to cramping.

Diane, a(n) SDA since the late 70s, writes from Melbourne. In addition to writing, she enjoys art, literature, nature, and all animals - especially cats.
I have been shown the great love and condescension of God in giving His Son to die that man might find pardon and live. I was shown Adam and Eve, who were privileged to behold the beauty and loveliness of the Garden of Eden and were permitted to eat of all the trees in the garden except one. But the serpent tempted Eve, and she tempted her husband, and they both ate of the forbidden tree. They broke God's command, and became sinners. The news spread through heaven, and every harp was hushed. The angels sorrowed, and feared lest Adam and Eve would again put forth the hand and eat of the tree of life and be immortal sinners. But God said that He would drive the transgressors from the garden, and by cherubim and a flaming sword would guard the way of the tree of life, so that man could not approach unto it and eat of its fruit, which perpetuates immortality.

_A way of escape had been made for lost man_

Sorrow filled heaven as it was realized that man was lost and that the world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness, and death, and that there was no way of escape for the offender. The whole family of Adam must die. I then saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of sympathy and sorrow upon His countenance. Soon I saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father. Said my accompanying angel, “He is in close converse with His Father.” The anxiety of the angels seemed to be intense while Jesus was communing with His Father. Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father we could see His person. His countenance was calm, free from all perplexity and trouble, and shone with a loveliness which words cannot describe. He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; that He had been pleading with His Father, and had obtained permission to give His own life as a ransom for the race, to bear
their sins, and take the sentence of death upon Himself, thus opening a way whereby they might, through the merits of His blood, find pardon for past transgressions, and by obedience be brought back to the garden from which they were driven. Then they could again have access to the glorious, immortal fruit of the tree of life to which they had now forfeited all right.

Man’s transgression was so great that an angel’s life would not pay the debt

Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven, and the heavenly choir sang a song of praise and adoration. They touched their harps and sang a note higher than they had done before, because of the great mercy and condescension of God in yielding up His dearly Beloved to die for a race of rebels. Then praise and adoration was poured forth for the self-denial and sacrifice of Jesus, in consenting to leave the bosom of His Father, and choosing a life of suffering and anguish, and an ignominious death, that He might give life to others.

Said the angel, “Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no.” It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them. Angels were so interested for man’s salvation that there could be found among them those who would yield their glory and give their life for perishing man. “But,” said my accompanying angel, “that would avail nothing.” The transgression was so great that an angel’s life would not pay the debt. Nothing but the death and intercession of God’s Son would pay the debt and save lost man from hopeless sorrow and misery.

It was impossible for God to change His law to save the lost

But the work which was assigned the angels was to ascend and descend with strengthening balm from glory to soothe the Son of God in His life of suffering. They administered unto Jesus. Also, their work was to guard and keep the subjects of grace from the evil angels and from the darkness which was constantly thrown around them by Satan. I saw that it was impossible for God to change His law in order to save lost, perishing man; therefore He suffered His darling Son to die for man’s transgressions.

EW 125

Ellen G. White, 1827–1915, received the spiritual gift of prophecy, and the fruits of her life and work accord with the biblical tests of a true messenger of God. To this day, her counsels are an incalculable blessing to God’s people around the world.
ACROSS
1. Saul’s son made king by Abner
2. One of the sons of Aaron
3. Conspired against Moses with Korah and Dathan
4. Father-in-law of Caiaphas
5. Jewish wife of the Procurator Felix
6. The Shunammite’s son was raised from the dead by this prophet
7. Priest and Judge of Shiloh who preceded Samuel
8. Christ
9. Manasseh was the son of ____
10. Steward over Ahab’s household who saved 100 prophets of God
11. Runaway slave in Paul’s day
12. A sister of a person Jesus raised from the dead
13. Esther’s earlier name
14. Which Mary anointed Jesus?
15. Saul’s daughter, wife of David
16. Influential Rabbi and member of the Sanhedrin
17. In which Book does Jesus speak of prophecy to build faith?
18. Rebekah’s brother
19. First king of the northern kingdom of Israel
20. Disciple who tried to deceive the church
21. “In the beginning was the ____.”
22. Father of Noah
23. Which commandment do the Catholics leave out completely?
24. The father of Ham
25. In which Book does God speak of revealing his secrets to the prophets?
26. Priest and Scribe who returned to Jerusalem with exiles
27. Stoned for taking spoil from Jericho
28. How many epistles did John write? [THREE]
29. In which Book are the 10 Commandments repeated after Exodus? [DEUTERONOMY]
30. Eldest of Jacob’s 12 sons

DOWN
2. Wife of Herod Antipas
4. Peter cut off his ear
6. Nabal’s wife; later married David
8. “With His stripes we are healed,” according to which prophet? [ISAIAH]
9. Job’s friend that was a Shuhite [BILDAD]
10. Which prophet spoke of God doing nothing without revealing His secrets? [AMOS]
11. Runaway slave in Paul’s day
12. One of 12 apostles who was absent when others saw the risen Christ
13. Esther’s earlier name
14. Which Mary anointed Jesus?
15. Where was Paul traveling to when he was converted? [DAMASCUS]
16. Influential Rabbi and member of the Sanhedrin
17. In which Book does Jesus speak of prophecy to build faith?
18. Rebekah’s brother
19. First king of the northern kingdom of Israel
20. Disciple who tried to deceive the church
21. “In the beginning was the ____.”
22. Father of Noah
23. Which commandment do the Catholics leave out completely? [SECOND]
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Answers from Christian Crossword published in the August 2013 issue of Our Firm Foundation

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