

HERMENEUTICAL METHOD
Part 4: Principles and Applications
Jerry Moon¹

I. Review: The Hermeneutical Outline

1. Preparation

1. Heart
2. Mind

2. Wide Reading; All Available Evidence

3. Contexts

1. Literary
2. Historical
3. Theological

4. Principles vs. Particular Applications

5. Specialized tools for exceptional cases.

1. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, index and chapters on hermeneutics.
2. Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

II. Definitions

A. Principle: an unchanging rule of human behavior.

1. Historically timeless—true in all historical time periods
2. Geographically universal—true in all places.

B. Particular: the detailed *application* of some timeless and universal principle to a particular time and place. Unlike *principles*, particular *applications* of a principle *do* vary with changing circumstances.

C. E. G. White on principles and particulars.

The call to principled living is a frequently recurring theme in the writings of Ellen White.

1. “The Bible is the guidebook that is to decide the many difficult problems that rise in minds that are selfishly inclined. It is a reflection of the wisdom of God, and not only furnishes **great and important principles**, but supplies **practical lessons** for the life and conduct of man toward his fellow man. It gives **minute particulars** that decide our relation to God and to each other.

¹This lecture adapted by permission from GSEM 534 lecture outlines by Roger W. Coon, “Hermeneutics: Jemison’s Third Rule,” April 11, 1995, and Denis Fortin, “Ellen G. White and Hermeneutics: Part III–The Historical Context,” April 26, 2000.

2. “Every Christian will have to learn to . . . be controlled by principle. . . , controlled by the principles of God’s word....” (2T 347, 459 [1869, 1870]).

3. “There are **practical lessons** in the Word of God.... That Word teaches living, holy **principles** which... Men... are to bring into the daily life here, and carry with them to the school above.... We need the Word of God revealed in living characters. What pure, excellent language is found in the Word of God! What elevating, ennobling **principles**!” (Ms 96, July 20, 1899, cited in UL 215).

4. “The great conflict is right at hand in which all will take sides. In it the whole Christian world will be involved. Daily, hourly, we must be actuated by the **principles** of the Word of God. Self must be sanctified by the **principles** of righteousness, the mercy, and the love of God.

“At every point of uncertainty, pray, and earnestly inquire, “Is this the way of the Lord?” With your Bibles before you, consult with God as to what He would have you do. Holy **principles** are revealed in the Word of God” (Letter 94a, June 6, 1909, cited in UL 171).

D. Alternative terms for “principles” and “applications.”

1. W. C. White, in conversation with E. G. White: “principles” and “precepts” (3SM 221:3). “In my study of the Bible and in my study of your writings, I have come to believe that there is a **principle** underlying every **precept**, and that we cannot understand properly the **precept** without grasping the **principle**” (3SM 221:3, emphasis supplied).

2. Roger W. Coon: “principles and policies.”

3. Denis Fortin: “principles and applications.”

4. “Particulars” or “policies” or “precepts” all refer to time-and-location-specific “applications” of principles.

E. To summarize, then:

1. The **goal** for every Christian: to follow the way and will of the Lord.

2. The **method**: to study both principles and policies, as found in the inspired writings, applying both in hermeneutically appropriate ways.

III. Case Studies

A. Teaching Girls to “Harness and Drive” Horses

1. In 1903, Ellen White wrote this counsel to young women: girls who “could learn to harness and drive a horse ... would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life” (Ed 216, 217).

2. Is that counsel a principle or a policy/application?

- a. Today this counsel is universally ignored on SDA campuses on all continents.
- b. Perhaps some would take this as “evidence” that the SDA educational system has

“abandoned the blueprint.”

- c. Actually, Ellen White never used the word “blueprint” to characterize her writings.
 - (1) The CD-ROM lists the word “blueprint” twice, and both times it is a supplied word, one never used by EGW herself.
 - (2) John A. Burden (1862-1942), the original compiler of *Loma Linda Messages*, inserted it in an editorial subtitle (“Divine Instruction the 'Blue-Print' Through the Inspired Pen of Ellen G. White”) on the title page (p.3).
 - (1) Donald E. Mansell, then-associate secretary of the White Estate, supplied it as a section heading for MR #883 (“Blueprint for SDA Health-Care Institutions”), (p. 11, cited in 11MR 187).
 - d. Sound hermeneutics requires us to study the context in examining potentially troublesome statements. So what about girls harnessing and driving horses?
 - (1) *Internal (Literary) Context*: It quickly becomes apparent that Ellen White here is urging girls, as well as boys, to obtain a practical education, in order to be self-reliant and prepared for unexpected situations.

“Since both men and women have a part in homemaking, boys as well as girls should gain a knowledge of household duties. To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly; it will make him happier and more useful. And if girls, in turn, could learn to harness and drive a horse, and to use the saw and the hammer, as well as the rake and the hoe, they would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life” (Ed 216-217).
 - (2) *External (Historical) Context*: In 1903, horses were still the major means of transportation.
2. The Principle: Both men and women need practical skills that free them from helpless, total dependence on others, and fit them for life’s practical emergencies.
3. Applications today:
- a. Transportation skills:
 - (1) Andrews Academy course, “Driver’s Education”
 - (2) Andrews University course, AUTO104 “Personal Auto Care,” teaches routine maintenance, tune-up, and minor repairs.
 - b. Typing and computer skills, for self-reliance in *academic* emergencies.

B. Physical Posture in Prayer

- 1. One Sabbath morning Ellen White was sitting on the platform of the Battle Creek Tabernacle as a minister was about to lead the congregation in the morning prayer.
 - a. As he seemed to intend remaining standing, Ellen White, calling him by name, whispered hoarsely, “Get down upon your knees!”
 - b. And in reporting this experience, later, she added immediately, “This is the proper position always” (2SM 311). (1897)
 - c. Does this mean, then, that it is never appropriate to sit or stand while prayer is being offered?
- 2. One hermeneutical principle calls for considering all available data upon the subject before making a final conclusion. So let us begin by attempting to do just that:
 - a. “Both in public and private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the

Lord when we offer our petitions to Him” (GW 178).

- (1) The internal context is “public and private worship.”
 - (2) The presence of the expression “it is our privilege,” and the absence of that word “always,” are interesting, and may even be helpful; do they allow a little leeway in the matter?
 - b. “There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition of God.... In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God. . . . We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul” (SC 99).
 - (1) “Crowded streets” and “business engagement” suggest that kneeling, here at least, would often be inappropriate, or even potentially dangerous.
 - c. “We may commune with God in our hearts. . . . When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart’s desire, inaudible to any human ear. . . .” (GW258).
 - (1) Again, the thought of a silent prayer while working does not appear to include the necessity of kneeling.
 - d. “We must pray constantly, with a humble mind and a meek and lowly spirit. We need not wait for an opportunity to kneel before God. We can pray and talk with the Lord wherever we may be” (Lt 342, 1906, cited in 3SM 266).
 - e. “You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance” (CH362:2, from *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 15, pp. 11-15, June 3, 1907),
 - f. “It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray” (MH510, 511).
 - (1) And now, superficially at least, we are faced with an apparent contradiction:
 - (a) In 2SM 311: “This is the appropriate position always.”
 - (b) But, in MH 510, 511: “It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees. . . .”
 - (2) Does “always” always mean always? (Does “only” only mean only?)
 - (3) And we answer, YES -- *within an immediate context*.
3. An examination of Scripture will prove helpful at this point:
 - a. The unconverted Pharisees apparently were not the only ones who, upon occasion, would “pray standing” (Matt. 6:5).
 - b. Solomon, at the dedication of his Temple:
 - (1) Knelt, for a prayer of confession (1 Kings 8:54).
 - (2) Yet he also stood, for certain other prayers, including certain “blessings,” and for the benediction (v. 14, 22, 23, 55).
 4. How about congregational or pastoral prayers? An examination of Ellen White's own personal experience in offering public prayers reveals she employed different bodily postures:
 - a. In one prayer, she and the congregation knelt, after first standing in consecration (RH, Mar. 11, 1909, cited in 3SM 267).
 - b. Upon another occasion, in Europe, she instructed the people to remain seated for the prayer (Diary, Feb. 20, 1887, cited in 1SM 147 and 3SM 267, 268).
 - c. On some other occasions, she stood, and invited the people to stand with her:
 - (1) Mar. 7, 1908, at Oakland, CA (3SM 268, 269).
 - (2) Feb. 8, 1909, also at Oakland (3SM 269).
 - (3) May 18, 1909, at a GC Session in Takoma Park, MD (3SM 269, 270).
 - d. D. E. Robinson, one of Ellen White's secretaries (1902-15), wrote on Mar. 4, 1934, “I

have been present repeatedly at camp meetings and General Conference Sessions in which Sister White herself has offered prayer with the congregation standing, and she herself standing” (3SM 267, footnote).

- e. Her grandson, Arthur L. White, helpfully adds:
 - (1) “That Ellen White did not intend to teach that on every prayer occasion we must kneel is made clear both by her words and her example. To her there was no time or place where prayer was not appropriate. Her family testified that in her home those at the dining table bowed their heads and not their knees. She was not known to kneel for the benediction at the close of services she attended. The earnest counsel on kneeling would seem to have its principal application in the worship services in the house of God and private devotions at home. In public ministry there were times when she stood for prayer” (3SM 270, footnote).
- 5. Principles that appear to emerge contextually from the data:
 - a. *Reverence for God*: “There should be an intelligent knowledge of how to come to God in reverence and godly fear with devotional love. There is a growing lack of reverence for our Maker, a growing disregard of His greatness and His majesty” (MS 84b, 1897, cited in 2SM 312).
 - b. *Dependence upon God*: “Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God” (2SM 312).
 - c. Form vs. spirit: On Feb. 13, 1892, in Melbourne, Australia, she mentions of having to be carried up a long stairway to a meeting hall in the arms of her son and a layman, because of being “compassed with infirmities” [rheumatism, and possibly arthritis]. And she lamented:

“I was not able to bow my knees in the opening prayer or when I entered the desk [pulpit] as I usually do, *but the form is not the essential part*. My heart went up to God in earnest prayer and He did help me and I believe gave me a decided message for the people assembled” (Ms 29, 1892, emphasis supplied).
 - d. It becomes clear, then, that it is not a violation of principle to stand for certain prayers (such as an invocation, benediction, or even a consecration prayer), or to sit for certain other prayers (an offertory, and even a consecration prayer).
 - e. Form and culture: Different cultures demonstrate respect/reverence in different ways:
 - (1) In Eastern Europe, Slavic congregations generally stand, not only for the pastoral prayer, but also for the reading of God’s Word. This is how, in their particular culture, they manifest deference, respect, reverence.
 - (2) In certain parts of Africa, if an African wears Western costume (business suit, shoes, etc.) to church, he will walk straight into the sanctuary, to take his seat in the pew. But if he is wearing national costume, he will first remove his sandals at the door, and leave them neatly in pairs on the vestibule floor (after the manner of Moses, at the burning bush), before taking his seat.
 - (3) For further study, see W. E. Read (GC Field Secretary, 1945-58) seven-page monograph, “Our Posture in Prayer,” undated, White Estate Document File DF 568s; cf. Also Q/A File, 25-D-1.A caution about cross-cultural influence in this matter:

And when you assemble to worship God, be sure and bow your knees before Him. Let this act testify that the whole soul, body, and spirit are in subjection to the Spirit of truth. Who have searched the Word closely for examples and

direction in this respect? Whom can we trust as teachers in our schools in America and foreign countries? After years of study shall students return to their own country with perverted ideas of the respect and honor and reverence that should be given to God, and feel under no obligation to honor the men of gray hairs, the men of experience, the chosen servants of God who have been connected with the work of God through almost all the years of their life? I advise all who attend the schools in America or in any other place, do not catch the spirit of irreverence. Be sure you understand for yourself what kind of education you need, that you may educate others to obtain a fitness of character that will stand the test that is soon to be brought upon all who live upon the earth. Keep company with the soundest Christians. Choose not the pretentious instructors or pupils, but those who show the deepest piety, those who have a spirit of intelligence in the things of God (2SM 314.2).

School-Entrance Age

1. In 1872, Ellen White wrote her first major treatise on Christian education (“Proper Education”).
 - a. This 30-page document was first published in 3T 131-60.
 - b. In it she twice in the same paragraph used the word “only”:
 - (1) “Parents should be the only teachers of their children until they have reached eight or ten years of age.”
 - (2) “The only schoolroom for children from eight to ten years of age should be in the open air amid the opening flowers and nature’s beautiful scenery” (3T 137).
2. Some 30 years later, this counsel was taken so literally by SDA school administrators (“from Maine to California, and from Manitoba to Florida,” lamented her son, Willie), that he could not enroll his children (who were Ellen White’s grandchildren) in the SDA elementary school at St. Helena, CA, after returning from Australia.
3. Is this a principle or a precept?
 - a. Empirical vindication of this counsel.
 - (1) Physical development of the eyes not complete till 8 or 10 years of age. (In many cases, a child’s eyes are not yet ready for close study until 8-10 years of age).
 - (2) Psychological development of longer attention span. (Many are not psychologically and emotionally ready for the confinement and concentrated attention the school room require).
 - (3) Students home-schooled in early years consistently achieve higher than similar children who began school early. Raymond Moore, *Better Late than Early*.
 - b. Question: Did Ellen White intend her words as a prohibition against any organized schooling for children under age 8?
4. Historical context:
 - a. W. C. White called a meeting of the local church school board for Thursday morning, Jan. 14, 1904, to which he brought his mother, whose words, in 1872, had caused all this stir in the first place.
 - b. A verbatim transcript of the proceedings of this meeting (lost for years in an unmarked box in a GC warehouse storeroom), is today published in 3SM 214-26.

- c. Basis of the Discussion: “There is a principle underlying every precept” (W. C. White 3SM 221:3; see also 222, 224).
- d. Principles that Underlay the 1872 Counsel.
 - (1) A child’s mother is its first and best teacher.
 - (2) In 1872, there were no SDA schools. Children needed to be taught at home until they were spiritually strong enough to “not be led astray [by] the wickedness carried on in the common [public] schools” (3SM 217).
- e. Other principles emphasized in 1904.
 - (1) When parents cannot or do not teach their children at home, it is better for them to be in school at an early age, than wandering the streets without training or restraint (3SM 217:3; 220:3).
 - (2) Some children are mentally, physically and emotionally ready for school at an earlier age than others (3SM 219:1).
 - (3) If parents neglect their responsibilities, the church has a responsibility to come to the aid of the children (3SM 219-220, 225).
 - (4) Doing “the very best possible” to achieve the “harmonious development” of the individual child.
 - (5) The exercise of “common sense.” During this session with the school board, Ellen White said:

“God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things” (3SM 217).
 - (6) Ellen White often stated an “ideal” goal toward which we should strive, but also recognized that realizing the ideal may often be impossible because of circumstances. (That’s what we call God’s plan A/plan B.)
- f. For further study, see:
 - (1) Betty S. Nelson’s, “Ellen G. White’s ‘Eight-to-Ten’ Statements: Principles and Early Usage,” unpublished monograph, 1981, 32-pp., White Estate Q/A File 28-A-1 (also available in AU Adventist Heritage Center).
 - (2) “In a Class of Their Own,” *Newsweek*, Jan. 10, 1994, p. 58.

D. Vegetarianism vs. Flesh Diet

1. Ellen White was a 17-year-old Sunday-keeping pork-eater when she received her first vision, in December 1844.
 - a. The light on Sabbath-keeping did not come until April 3, 1847, nearly two and one-half years later (EW 32).
 - b. And the light on vegetarianism was not given until some 18 1/2 years later, on June 6, 1863 (RH, Oct. 8, 1863, cited in CD 481).
 - (1) Because she was a “great” meat-eater, she then had a “special battle to fight” against appetite (2T 371, 371).
 - (2) But “I accepted the light on health reform as it came to me” (Ms 50, 1904, cited in CD 482); and “I broke away from everything at once” (2T 371).
2. For the next 30 years, however, she would occasionally depart, temporarily, from her habitual practice of excluding flesh articles from her diet, in at least three categories of “emergency” situations:
 - a. Problems in travel, where it was especially difficult in those days to obtain a vegetarian,

- non-flesh diet.
 - b. Therapeutic use in certain medical situations.
 - c. Transition periods in her extended family, between the departure of a cook who knew how to cook vegetarian, and the training of the replacement cook.
 - (1) See Roger W. Coon, *Ellen G. White and Vegetarianism: Did She Practice What She Preached?* (Pacific Press, 1986, 30 pp.) (a brief synopsis appeared in *Ministry*, April, 1986, pp. 4-7, 29).
3. Despite these temporary departures from habitual vegetarianism, Ellen White claimed ever to have followed “principle” in the matter of her diet:
- a. **1870:** “I have not changed my course a particle since I adopted the health reform. I have not taken one step back since the light from heaven upon this subject first shone upon my pathway.... I left off these things from principle. I took my stand on health reform from principle. And since that time, brethren, you have not heard me advance an extreme view of health reform that I had to take back. I have advanced nothing but what I stand to today” (2T 371, 372, cited in CD 483, 484).
 - b. **1897:** “I present these matters before the people, dwelling upon general principles” (Ms 29, 1897, cited in CD 493).
 - c. **1904:** At the age of 76, she reported she was experiencing better health than “I had in my younger days;” and she attributed this improvement in health to following “the principles of health reform” (Ms 50, 1904, cited in CD 482).
 - d. **1908:** “It is reported by some that I have not lived up to the principles of health reform, as I have advocated them with my pen. But I can say that so far as my knowledge goes, I have not departed from those principles” (Letter 50, 1908, cited in CD 491, 491).
 - e. **1909:** “It is reported by some that I have not followed the principles of health reform as I have advocated them with my pen; but I can say that I have been a faithful health reformer. Those who have been members of my family know that this is true” (9T 158, 159).
4. Vegetarianism, *per se*, is *not* a principle--though principles, and moral issues, are certainly involved.
- a. Vegetarianism, itself, cannot be a principle, because principles, by definition, are unchanging, unvarying rules of human behavior and conduct that apply to all peoples in all ages.
 - b. If vegetarianism, itself, were a principle, it would have been wrong for the followers of God in Old Testament times, and of Christ in New Testament times, to have eaten meat and fish.
 - (1) Abraham fed veal to the Lord and His two accompanying angels, under the oak at Mamre (Gen. 18:7, 8).
 - (2) God instructed Moses to command all Israel to eat roast Passover lamb on the night of the Exodus, and annually thereafter (Ex 12:1-14).
 - (3) And Christ and His disciples, in addition to eating Passover lamb annually, repeatedly ate fish from Galilee--even after the resurrection! (John 21:9, 10).
5. While vegetarianism, itself, is not a principle; it *is* a divinely-inspired policy--and, remember, policies are just as binding upon Christians as are principles, when they find themselves in the same contextual situations which called forth the prophetic application initially.
6. Vegetarianism is a policy, based upon certain eternal principles of health:

- a. Eat and drink to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
- b. Practice temperance in all things; total abstinence from all that is hurtful and harmful, and moderation in the use of that which is healthful (PP 562; Te 138).
- c. Promote and maintain life and good health:
 - (1) "Preserve the best health" (YI, May 31, 1894, cited in CD 395).
 - (2) "We are, as it were, under bonds to our Maker to preserve our bodies in the very best condition of health that we may in our lives render to God perfect service (19 MR 314; cf. 14MR 222; YI, Nov. 8, 1900; MYP 69; MH 130; 3T 63).
 - (3) "Eat that food which is most nourishing" (9T 163).
- d. Like all policies and specific applications of eternal and universal principles, sometimes emergency situations require emergency solutions. Sometimes we may, indeed, be required to choose between the lesser of two acknowledged undesirable practices; but we should always do the very best possible under every circumstance in life.

E. The "Bicycle" Testimony

1. Following an 1894 vision relating to some events in Battle Creek, Ellen White wrote:

"[The] Guide . . . said, 'Follow Me' . . . There seemed to be a bicycle craze. Money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm. . . . A bewitching influence seemed to be passing as a wave over our people there. . . . Satan works with intensity of purpose to induce our people to invest their time and money in gratifying supposed wants. This is a species of idolatry. . . . There were some who were striving for the mastery, each trying to excel the other in the swift running of their bicycles" (8T 50-52).
2. Historical Context:

"Toward the end of the last century the American people were swept with a consuming passion which left them with little time or money for anything else. . . . What was this big new distraction? For an answer the merchants had only to look out the window and watch their erstwhile customers go whizzing by. America had discovered the bicycle, and everybody was making the most of the new freedom it brought. . . . The bicycle began as a rich man's toy. Society and celebrity went awheel. . . ."

"The best early bicycle cost \$150, an investment comparable to the cost of an automobile today.... Every member of the family wanted a 'wheel,' and entire family savings often were used up on supplying the demand." (Frank Tripp, "When All the World Went Wheeling," *The Readers's Digest*, Dec., 1951, pp. 121-23).
3. Principles Involved:
 - a. Stewardship and influence

"Money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm that might better, far better, have been invested in building houses of worship where they are greatly needed. . . . The example will be followed . . . while hundreds are starving for bread" (8T 51, emphasis added).
 - b. Witness

"My brothers and sisters in Battle Creek, what kind of witness are you bearing to an unbelieving world? . . . your practice contradicts your profession (8T 51).
 - c. Competition and rivalry for status

"There was a spirit of strife and contention among them as to which should be the

greatest. The spirit was similar to that manifested in the baseball games on the college ground. Said my Guide: 'These things are an offense to God. Both near and afar off souls are perishing for the bread of life and the water of salvation'" (8T 52).

d. Radical discipleship

"Let nothing, however dear, however loved, absorb your mind and affections, diverting you from the study of God's word or from earnest prayer. Watch unto prayer. Live your own requests. Co-operate with God by working in harmony with Him. Expel from the soul-temple everything that assumes the form of an idol (8T 53).

e. Changing Circumstances

Because of rapid strides in technology and manufacturing, within a few years after the invention of the bicycle, it became one of the most *economical* and *practical* means of personal transportation. The use of inexpensive bicycles for practical purposes does not violate the principles. The principles remain, however, and would apply to many other situations.

F. Certain Practices Involved in Sabbath-Keeping

1. Although Ellen White's counsels pertaining to the detailed specifics of proper Sabbath-observance (e.g., 6T 349-68; 2T 701-5) are widely ignored by most Adventists today, three in particular arise to trouble Adventists who genuinely seek to follow her counsels:
 - a. No "cooking" during the Sabbath hours. All meal preparation should be done on Friday, the Preparation Day (6T357; 355).
 - b. The "baths" should be taken before sunset on Friday (6T 355).
 - c. "Shaving" should not be done "after the beginning of the Sabbath" (ST, May 25, 1882).
2. Sabbath Cooking:
 - a. The Counsels:
 - (1) "Cooking upon the Sabbath should be avoided" (6T 357).
 - (2) "On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that ... all the cooking is done" (6T 355).
 - (3) "In cold weather," however, an exception may be made.

"While cooking upon the Sabbath should be avoided, it is not necessary to eat cold food. In cold weather let the food prepared the day before be heated. And let the meals, though simple, be palatable and attractive. Provide something that will be regarded as a treat" (6T 357).
 - b. The Context:
 - (1) In Ellen White's day, cooking was done on wood stoves, without thermostats or automatic timing devices, which demanded labor-intensive, total personal attention by the cook.
 - (2) Even "simple" cooking required "work."
 - c. The Principles applied:
 - (1) All unnecessary "work" on Sabbath is to be avoided (Exod 20:8-11).
 - (2) Preparation. The joy of the Sabbath and its distinctiveness from week days are both enhanced by preparation (Lk 23:54-56; 6T 354).
- (1) Therefore, nothing that could be done on the previous six working days should be left

to Sabbath hours (6T 354:3).

- d. Application of the Principles Today
 - (1) Self-timing ovens can cook Sabbath dinner while the cook is worshiping in church.
 - (2) Microwave ovens and pre-prepared foods can reduce the work of cooking to the permitted level of “warming up” food already prepared.
 - (3) Preparation still needs to be made on Friday, but some aspects of cooking are no longer the “work” they used to be.
 - e. The use of modern labor-saving devices modifies the *application* of counsels originally given for substantially different conditions—but can also lull us into rationalizing away almost all need of advance preparation, with the result that the Sabbath becomes more and more like the six working days.
3. Sabbath Baths:
- a. The Counsel:
 - (1) “On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked and the baths taken” (6T 355).
 - b. The Context, ca. 1900:
 - (1) There were no automatic hot water heaters; all water had to be pumped, carried, and heated—probably on a wood-burning stove in the kitchen, with all of the attendant labor of this operation.
 - (2) Many of the houses of common people did not yet have bathrooms. Baths were taken in a tub on the kitchen floor.
 - (a) The water, first, had to be pumped from a well, then hauled indoors, one bucket at a time; then it had to be heated; then carried from the stove, one bucket at a time, to the tub; then removed again, as waste water, and thrown outdoors. This involved *lots* of work!
 - (b) Multiply all these tasks by the number of persons scheduled to take baths, and you begin to get some idea of the magnitude of the operation. Of course, in most families of the working classes, all used the same water.
 - (3) Most people bathed only once a week.
 - (a) Sunday-keepers typically took their weekly bath on Saturday nights.
 - (b) Sabbath-keepers, in this context, took theirs Friday afternoon, before the beginning of the Sabbath.
 - (c) Most Sabbath keepers lived in temperate climates, where for much of the year the problem of keeping warm was a much more pressing concern than keeping cool.
 - c. The Principles applied:
 - (1) Preparation. The joy of the Sabbath and its distinctiveness from week days are both enhanced by preparation (Lk 23:54-56; 6T 354).
Therefore, Sabbath keepers are to greet the holy day with clean bodies.
 - (2) All unnecessary “work” on Sabbath is to be avoided (Exod 20:8-11). Nothing that can be done on the previous six working days should be left to Sabbath hours (6T 354:3). Therefore, the “work” of bathing was to be done before the beginning of the Sabbath.
 - d. Application Today
 - (1) In many countries, houses have bathrooms, running water, and showers.
 - (2) A shower can be completed in five minutes, more or less.
 - (3) Most people take a daily shower, just as they clean their teeth daily.

- (4) If one's Friday work gets one really dirty, the counsel to take a Friday evening bath before Sabbath would still apply.
- (5) But if one wishes to freshen up on Sabbath morning with a shower, that would not necessarily seem to be a violation of the counsel against Sabbath baths.
- (6) In tropical climates, when a man who hasn't bathed since Friday afternoon puts on a dark suit coat and hikes two miles to church in the hot sun, no one may want to sit near him.
- (7) Some Adventists, seeking to reduce the amount of time required for Sabbath morning grooming, and to preserve the concept of preparation, avoid washing hair on Sabbath.
- e. Two general principles that supersede all other principles regarding behavior:
 - (1) One must never violate one's conscience. Everyone must live before God in all good conscience. If what others do on Sabbath violates your conscience, you must be true to your conscience.
 - (2) Conversely, if others do *not* hold precisely the same convictions about what is right on Sabbath, each must respect and honor the convictions of brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. Sabbath "Shaving":

a. The Counsel:

- (1) There is only one known reference to this: "The violation of the fourth commandment is not confined to the preparation of food. Many carelessly put off the blacking of their boots, and shaving, until after the beginning of the Sabbath. This should not be. If any neglect to do such work on a working day, they should have respect enough for God's holy time to let their beards remain unshaven, their boots rough and brown, until the Sabbath is past. This might help their memory, and make them more careful to do their own work on the six working days" (ST, May 25, 1882).

b. Historical Context (1882)

- (1) Most men wore full beards; did not shave daily.
- (2) Shaving here primarily means trimming the beard.
- (3) Shaving involved heating water, sharpening the razor on a leather strap, brushing soap on the face, and scraping it off.

b. Principles

- (1) No work on Sabbath.
- (2) Preparation before Sabbath not only helps avoid Sabbath work, but enhances our anticipation and enjoyment of the Sabbath hours.

c. Applications Today

- (1) The work level may be different: With an electric razor, or even a safety razor and hot water, shaving is not the "work" it was 120 years ago.
- (2) American view: The social context is different. A weekly beard trim could be done before Sabbath, but a clean-shaven face needs daily maintenance. And for a normally clean-shaven man to appear on Sabbath with a 16-hour growth of whiskers would be about the same as appearing with uncombed hair.
- (3) Eastern European view: A shave with a blade on Friday afternoon will still look as good as a shave with an electric razor on Sabbath morning, and preserves one aspect of Sabbath preparation.

d. Summary:

- (1) If a man shaves daily, and does not do so on Sabbath, he may very well give the

impression that its proper to come to the public worship of God in a “grubby” condition, which contradicts other counsels about honoring God by appropriate dress and grooming when we come into His house on His holy day.

(2) In communities where these social expectations prevail, shaving on Sabbath would not

be seen in the same light it was under different conditions in 1882.

(3) With automatic hot water or electric shavers, shaving does not entail the level of work

it did in 1882.

(4) With every change in what we regard as “work,” we need also to reconsider how to retain the blessings of “preparation.”

III. Summary and Conclusion

- A. Principles are timeless and universal. Particulars/precepts/policies are applications of principles.
- B. Without specific concrete applications, a principle remains abstract and theoretical. To become real in human life, principles *have* to be articulated in terms of specific behavioral precepts.
- C. The dynamic that links principles and particulars is that of *incarnation*.
 - 1. Love without deeds is not real love (James 2:16).
 - 2. Faith without action is dead (James 2:17).
 - 3. Likewise, reverence, modesty, stewardship and Sabbath keeping are all principles that unless incarnated in behavior, remain empty of practical meaning and invisible to the world. Principles only become visible when actualized in a given situation.
- D. Therefore *particular applications given by inspiration are as binding within the context in which they are given as are the inspired principles they represent*.
- E. It is a fallacy to believe that because precepts are subordinate to principles, they are less obligatory, and can be ignored with impunity. In fact, *in the situation for which it was given, the particular application is the incarnation of the principle, to be obeyed as the principle*.
- F. Because *principles* are timeless and universal, we can never say that a *principle* “no longer applies.” When a particular *application* no longer expresses the principle as well as it originally did, the *principle does still apply* and *responsible obedience* to the will of God means *discovering anew how that principle applies in the current situation*.
- G. As leaders of the church as well as individual disciples, we have an unavoidable obligation to the church and to the watching world, both to *reveal* God’s principles in our daily lives, and to *explain* those principles to those with whom we live.
- H. Finally, we must always be faithful to our own conscience before God, while we also respect and honor the convictions of others.