



2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 2 Winsome Witness: The Power of Personal Testimony

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I received this email yesterday:

I want to thank you for the work you are doing in revealing God's love through your teachings.

I recently shared your blog (Dinah: A lesson in Satan's tactics for today) with my mother in Ghana. We have had a few discussions about how understanding God's love can transform our hearts. I am actually overseas for my studies so the only medium I can reach my family is by calling them online or sending them an article.

My mother called me with tears in her voice. As a "good" seventh-day Adventist, she didn't know how Satan gets access to us even when we feel we are right with God. She came face to face with her inner self as someone who isn't easily forgiving and had a little knowledge of the fact that it is one of Satan's working principles to sow a seed of pain and resentment just so we will be like him.

She told me she was having problems with a tenant and has always prayed to God to "sack" this tenant from her house. Little did she know that she started harboring some hate in her heart against this tenant. After reading the article, she now prays that the Lord should help her love this tenant the more.

Due to the positive impact of this article, she told me that she printed it out and have shared copies with friends and family. Today whenever she calls someone on phone, she cannot keep quiet about this message.

My heart is filled with so much joy that I can share with her the truth as it is in Christ concerning his LOVE. God bless your ministry. I know there are frictions from within and without trying to prevent the message from being preached but God is still working on minds and hearts and my family is one of them.

After reading this, I thought it would be nice to start class by reading Psalms 32 from *The Remedy of the Lord in Song*:

Happy are they
whose wicked minds are restored to perfect purity,
whose selfishness is eradicated.

² Happy is the person



whose infected heart the Lord transforms to perfection,
in whose mind there is no deceit.

3 When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God,
I stressed myself and my body decayed
because every day I screamed, “no!” denying the truth.

4 But day and night
your healing hand pressed firmly upon me;
my resistance evaporated
like water in the summer heat.

5 Then I admitted my sin-sickness to you
and did not hide my character-deformity.
I said, “I will confess
my selfishness to the Lord”—
and you healed me
and freed me from guilt.

6 Therefore let all the faithful ask you for this same healing
while healing is still possible;
then when the guilt, shame and regrets of life come flooding in,
the faithful will not drown in them.

7 You are my safe harbor;
you protect me from the storms of life
and turn my life into a song of deliverance.

8 The Lord says, “I will teach you my methods and how to live in harmony with my designs;
I will guide you and watch over you.

9 Don’t be like the unthinking horse or mule
that do not reason or understand
and must be forced by bit and bridle
to follow the simplest instructions.”

10 Many are the sufferings of those who defy your designs,
but those who trust the Lord
are healed by his never-failing love.

11 Celebrate God’s goodness and be happy, you spiritually-healthy;
sing for joy, all you with hearts like God’s!

I also received this email yesterday:

The SS lessons have been so great, [my wife] says each time, “I have to listen to this again,”. And we do. I have used the lessons when I teach our SS class and we have been able to see the growth and understanding of the class members. The Blogs on the current events are courageous and “right on” so thanks for that also. These are truly difficult times and such a major change from what I lived in the 1950’s. When I read of the statements in The Great Controversy, I thought, how can this be? This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have lost so much freedom and so fast. Tim-I am amazed over and over at all you do and



*how you have been inspired to teach us so clearly of God's love and Design law concepts.
Thanks again*

For those who are not familiar with the reference in *The Great Controversy* the online listener was referring to, this is a one of them. But, what I want you to do is replace “church” with the church of social justice or the church of political correctness, and honor Sunday with any example of imposed law to coerce consciences you can think of going on in our country—i.e. examples of freedoms being eroded.

The dignitaries of church and State will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: “The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
[Revelation 12:17.] GC88 592.3

Read second paragraph, “It is difficult to argue...” It is true that when you tell people how your life has been changed by Jesus that it is a powerful witness.

Does anyone want to share how Jesus and the truth that we have all come to know has changed your life?

What about the idea that “It is difficult to argue against personal experience.” I think this is true, particularly if we mean trying to convince someone who has had the personal experience to believe something that contradicts their personal experience.

I don't think it is as hard for us to negate or argue against a personal experience in our own understanding when we recognize their personal experience as dangerous, fraudulent, destructive, false, erroneous, or we simply are not convinced their experience is valuable.

The challenge is in dealing with friends, family, church members, who have personal experiences that we believe are dangerous, false, destructive and trying to convince them that their experience is lying to them.

For instance:

- One I deal with in my practice quite regularly is trying to convince people that marijuana is harmful to their brain. (I am talking about marijuana with THC, not CBD oil with no THC). It is difficult to try and convince them that marijuana is not a good treatment for mental health problems, but actually worsens them. It is difficult because they have an experience in which the marijuana makes them feel better so if they feel better how could the marijuana be bad. They are basing wellness on feelings, and limiting their conclusions to only how they feel, not



the totality of the evidence—including their total life experience; they typically don't include their actual functioning or evidence of brain health. They then will search the internet for data that seems to support their view—which is propaganda or anecdotal, but not science. How do I deal with their experience? I point out they are there to see me, if it was really helping and they were doing well they wouldn't be there to see me. Then I show them evidence from brain scans of people who use marijuana. Then we examine their own life and function. Then I take them through other examples in their life when their feelings lied to them. Ultimately, they have to decide and most of the time my patients decide to give up marijuana and with proper treatment they get better. But some don't and they don't get better.

- Within Christianity there is a great divide over what some call “speaking in tongues.” Those who practice it will talk about their experience and those who don't will consider their experience fraudulent, either emotional hysteria or demonic and want nothing to do with it. Yet, those who have had the experience are almost never open to have their views changed about the experience.
- What about the current craze in America of people claiming “Well that's my truth” as a way of saying their experience overrides all evidence?
 - This is a dangerous phenomenon because it relabels experience as truth, thus creating a lie and confusing minds. Experiences and truth are not the same. It might be true that a person has had a certain experience, but the experience doesn't mean what the person believes about the experience is true.
 - Example—a person may experience incredible feelings of attraction to another—they may believe they are in love and that this person is the right person to be their spouse. But, later, they come to realize that the person was not the “one.”
 - Example—survivor's guilt—a person survives a trauma, whether war or a home fire or natural disaster, and someone they loved didn't. And the loss causes them to blame themselves for not saving the others, when they did nothing wrong. It is their truth that they survived and lost someone, but their belief about themselves and the loss are not true. It is often difficult to get people to change their belief about this. Their “truth” is actually not true.

Let's explore how experiences can deceive and mislead:

- Substituting someone else's experience for your own. Here is a historic quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, describing events over 100 years ago—but these human problems persist today.

If we mistake the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God we are led astray by the foolishness of man's wisdom. Here is the great danger of many in -----. [This is happening to many right now with the social justice movement. Let me put it this way—there is a difference between a just cause and just actions. Satan tricks people by presenting a just cause combined with unjust or worldly methods of resolving the issue, thus following the foolishness of man's wisdom instead of following God's wisdom. In every human society and government in history some group has been treated unjustly, sometimes on race, sometimes on nationality, sometimes on religion, sometimes on politics (not joining the



party). It is a trap to use human governments to advance God's kingdom.] **They have not an experience for themselves.** They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, with **unprejudiced, unbiased judgment**, questions and subjects that are new and that are ever liable to arise. [How many in our society today are taking the time to prayerfully consider for themselves, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgments the questions of social justice? Or, how many are accepting the views put forth by the media, the angry and hurt, and following what others think? In my blog for this week some commented against it without even reading it, just by reading the title. Is that taking the time to prayerfully consider for themselves this issue? Our society and our church are in danger because people are being conditioned to react, to follow, but not to think reason, weigh evidences with unbiased judgment through God's design law lenses] **They wait to see what others will think. If these dissent**, that is all that is needed to convince them that the subject under consideration is of no account whatever. [How many people are doing this, waiting for the latest post, tweet, blog or statement from their party leader or movement leader?] Although this class is large, it does not change the fact that **they are inexperienced and weak-minded through long yielding to the enemy, and will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others' light, living on others' experience, feeling as others feel, and acting as others act.** [This is the mob, mob mentality, in which a person's individuality is submerged into the group.] **They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others; they are merely shadows of those whom they think [are] right.** Unless these become sensible of **their wavering character and correct it, they will all fail of everlasting life**; they will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days. **They will possess no stamina to resist the devil, for they do not know that it is he.** [How many will be duped into fighting just causes by unjust methods? Historically Adventism has taught that one day religious leaders will take the reins of government and pass Sunday laws. Why will people seek to do this? Because they think they are fighting for justice, for God's kingdom, trying to make the world a better place, a moral place, they have a just cause—but we recognize the methods are unjust. What about if we substitute Sunday legislation, with other legislation designed to pursue social justice? Could such laws be passed that cross the line of simple equal opportunity to coercion, i.e. using methods of the devil to promote a just cause? How many will possess no stamina to resist such a movement?] **Someone must be at their side to inform them whether a foe or a friend is approaching. They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are not wise in those things which relate to the kingdom of God.** [I see this happening right now, so many Christians don't seem able to differentiate the kingdom of God from the kingdoms of the world. They see no problem with using the state to promote their understanding of social justice, i.e. morality. And the reason is they don't differentiate God's design law from human imposed law. Accepting imposed law it makes sense to use the state to promote social justice.] Neither young nor old are excusable in trusting to another to have an experience for them. Said the angel: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare. 2T 129.2



- So, substituting someone else’s experience for your own, letting someone else do your thinking for you is one way experience can deceive.
- Accepting feelings as truth or reality
 - As we mentioned feelings in relationships can lie and many people get into relationship in which they have powerful feelings and have a wonderful experience, but the evidence is that this person they are with is not healthy, mature, or trustworthy, but they don’t want to examine evidence because their experience tells them it is perfect, this is the one. In talking with people in such situations it is most effective to back away from the specific person they are with and ask more general questions about what are the qualifications a person must possess to be qualified to fill the role of your life partner—and lead them to list qualities such as loves you more than self, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability etc. and then compare that list with the actual person. Other truths can be brought to bear, such as the law of liberty, or healthy relationships require healthy people.
- Not checking the experience against testable laws, evidence and reality
 - I was consulted to see a patient once who had type I diabetes mellitus. He was in his twenties and was in the hospital for diabetic ketoacidosis because he stopped taking his insulin. The primary MD wanted to know if he was suicidal. He wasn’t—then why did he stop his insulin? He went to a faith healer who publicly placed hands on him and “healed” him. He had a wonderful experience, felt euphoric, was overwhelmed by the spirit, spoke in tongues and was convinced by his experience that he was healed. When I asked if he continued to monitor his blood sugars he said no. When I asked why, he said, “Because it would demonstrate a lack of faith and if I don’t have faith then I can’t be healed.” He had an experience, but he didn’t want any actual evidence or truth or reason or thinking to challenge that experience.
 - A person who loves God’s kingdom of truth would do just the opposite, if healed they would want to check their sugars and keep a log and document the evidence so they can show everyone that God had healed them. Do you notice the lies imbedded in the cloak of so-called “faith” that kept the young man from checking his sugars? Even his “faith” became a lie to obstruct the truth—this is what Satan does with experiences that are not consistent with reality and God’s design laws.
- Another way experiences mislead is Globalization: Using a real experience from a specific situation and then applying it to all other examples or situations of similar nature. Witnessing a miscarriage of justice—say a police officer abusing their power and hurting or even killing a suspect, and then globalizing that officer’s misconduct to conclude that all police are abusers and can’t be trusted and police departments need to be defunded.



- Someone this week told me of conversations with their 18 y/o son who is doing this. Because of recent events and the social media he follows, he has concluded that all police or untrustworthy and police forces need to be defunded.

How do you talk to people who think like this? Don't argue against the specific experience—the misconduct of the specific officer. Initially, don't even focus upon the police at all. Instead move away from the discussion about police and talk about something they can relate to in order to expose the fallacy of globalization. You must understand that the problem the person has is not with the police, but with their misapplication of a specific incident globally.

So, in this case, the young man is a video gamer—I would ask: Are there any video gamers that cheat? When he answers yes, I would say, does that mean all video gamers are cheaters?

Then I would present the following scenario: Imagine that you entered a video game contest in which the winner receives a \$10,000 prize, and you win. But when you go to claim your prize, you discover someone has stolen your identity and already taken the \$10,000. Would you be okay with that? When they say no, then I would ask—what would you want done? When they say they want the person caught and the \$10,000 returned to them, I would say—and who do you think will do that? At that point no matter what he says it is merely labels because he will be describing law enforcement, which is the police. He might call them rule-enforcers, he might call them gaming commission, bank regulators, rightifiers, but regardless he is talking about someone with authority to enforce order in society—this is the role of police.

Another example, when you graduate from high school you parents buy you a new car, would you be excited? Yes! What if two weeks later it is stolen, what would you want to happen? Who would do that? And whatever he describes is again police.

How do we challenge someone's personal testimony or experience that you believe is leading them astray?

By asking questions, not typically by direct confrontation. First, affirming them in some way—be careful not to state agreement or affirmation for what you believe to be false. But you could affirm them by thanking them for sharing their story or experience with you, by showing interest in them as a person. But then you can ask questions that are designed to engage thinking. Typically, when people have false experiences those experiences are sustained by denial of some reality or evidence. The goal in discussion is to get the person to think and examine their experience.

Consider this historic quote when dealing with people's experience:

Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before.



Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly **referring to the feelings** they had at such and such a time. **But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling.** They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away. MYP 71.3

Many poor souls are groping in darkness, **looking for the feelings which others say they have had in their experience.** They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The convicted sinner has something to do. He must repent and show true faith. MYP 71.4

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? **A changed life.** There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. MYP 72.1

Thoughts? Do you see how reality always has evidence associated with it? One cannot have a genuine experience with Jesus without having the life changed.

What does it mean to withdraw the affections from the world and fasten them upon Christ?

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the demoniac from whom Christ cast out the demons that went into the pigs. Then Christ instructed the healed man to go back to his town and tell what God had done for him.

The lesson asks, “Why do you think Jesus sent the man into Decapolis to witness to his family and friends rather than nurturing him in his newfound faith by keeping him with Himself?”

The lesson points out several very good reasons:

- The demoniac was well known in the region and people would recognize him and the marked change in him would stimulate interest in what he had to say.
- His healing would demonstrate the essence of the gospel which is the restoration of godliness into people
- His healing would become a point of community interest and people would tell people and help spread the interest in Christ

But what about for the healed man—any reason for the man himself that Christ sent him to do this witness rather than keep him with his disciples?

The law of exertion—we get stronger by exercise—so having the man go and tell what the Lord did for him, would reinforce his faith in Jesus and help him grow spiritually. In doing so the man’s will aligns more and more with God’s, his confidence in God grows and his mind becomes less vulnerable



to fear, doubt, and thus less accessible to demonic influences. Why? Because he was speaking truth and acting upon truth and this always heals.

But, what happens if a person doesn't speak truth, but instead speaks falsehoods or just constantly voices criticism or doubt, not from an honest heart asking questions to search out the truth, but from a heart that loves to cause conflict?

I read this in *The Desire of Ages* and it describes the principle of the law of exertion and how what we say reinforces itself upon us. And as all principles do, this one works regardless of whether you are doing something positive or negative:

The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” **But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words.** Often under a momentary impulse, **prompted by Satan**, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that **which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation.** Having once expressed an opinion or decision, **they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are.** It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. **The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief.** Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” DA 323.1

This is a principle—speak critically, negatively and it changes the mind, alters brain pathways, reinforces the negative. But speak positively, share what God has done for you, speak truth, then these words react back upon the individual and helps them grow and reinforce their ability to discern truth in the future.

Do you see in this the danger of a non-Christian education? What happens when in school young people are taught ideas that are contrary to Bible truth? What happens to the mind when the student has to write papers that are critical of Christianity? What happens to the mind when they have to speak, or answer questions, or give presentations that are critical of Christian principles and values?

Is it any wonder that our society is in the mess it is in today—the public education system, including the university system, has indoctrinated the last several generations in a godless philosophy of life.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on Paul's personal testimony of his conversion to Agrippa and emphasizes again the power of personal testimony.



But it makes a very good point, “Kindness opens hearts where abrasiveness closes them.”

What enables us to be kind to the unkind?

When you see injustice being done do you respond with patience, understanding, kindness?

Do we struggle with the temptation to retaliate? Is that desire to punish the wrong doer from God?

Keith Johnson is an online friend, who has worked for years in prison ministry teaching inmates developed four questions to help them understand more clearly what justice is from God’s viewpoint. I have these in my book *The God Shaped Heart*

Take a moment and answer each question for yourself.

1. What if I told you that your youngest child was murdered? Would you want mercy or justice for the perpetrator?
2. What if I told you that the murderer was your oldest child? Would you want mercy or justice for the perpetrator?
3. What if I told you that you are guilty of the murder of the only begotten Son of God? Would you want mercy or justice as the perpetrator?
4. What if I told you that you had a daughter, your only daughter, the apple of your eye, who has never given you a moment’s grief, but tonight, as her father, you happen to have your tux hanging in the closet, because tomorrow you are scheduled to walk your daughter down the aisle and give her away to someone whom you approve? If you’re the mother, you have your new dress hanging next to her wedding gown that you have been planning and preparing for since the first time she held her in her arms. But tonight, your daughter is at a bachelorette party with her peers and they talk her into having “one-for-the-road,” the first ever in her life. Two, three, four, five, six, seven (drinks) later, while on her way home, she wipes out a school bus full of little children on their way to camp. Everybody aboard the bus dies in a fiery inferno, but you daughter survives. Do you want mercy or justice for your daughter (?) and...what do those who are related to the victims who were on the bus want?

When we talk about justice—do we use human law or God’s law? When we understand God’s law and see injustice then are we able to show kindness, compassion, grace, forgiveness to the wrong doer?

How many people have you heard in the last few weeks interested in the redemption and salvation of the police officer that killed George Floyd? Do you think Jesus is interested in that officer’s salvation? Should we be interested in that man’s salvation?

What happens when a sinner experiences grace, versus when a sinner experiences condemnation? Which is more likely to lead the sinner to repent?



What is the responsibility of the Christian?

Will state agencies typically show grace and seek to lead sinners, criminals, to repent, or do they seek to condemn and inflict punishment? Do we see why we can never get God's justice through human governments?

MONDAY

The lesson is about witnessing the risen Christ, how do you do that?

Anyone want to share what they have found effective in sharing the risen Jesus with people who don't already know Him?

I think this is a great question—any ideas on effective ways to witness the risen Savior to people who do not already believe in Him?

The lesson focuses merely on the historic account as described in Scripture of the women going to the tomb, not finding the body of Christ, the angel telling them Jesus has risen and their sharing this truth.

There is nothing wrong in sharing this Scripture with people who do not yet believe in Jesus—but do you find this is likely to help people come to know Jesus who don't already believe in Jesus or the Bible?

If they believe in the Old Testament then perhaps going through the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled all of them would be helpful to bring a person to believe in Jesus. But if a person doesn't believe in the Bible at all, then how do you witness to the risen Jesus?

What evidence can you provide to demonstrate Jesus is real?

What about this idea from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. **[People want some evidence and commonly cry for a sign or miracle. What is the problem with miracles? They can be counterfeited. And, we are told that before Christ comes satanic spirits will perform miracles to deceive. But people want something besides a verbal testimony or proclamation, what they hear as a claim without evidence, to base their faith upon.]** Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan's insinuations. He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride. **[Does this mean we may have to endure ridicule, accusation, condemnation from people who reject our belief in Christ?]** But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan? Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. **When one who has been**



controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God's heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth. [What is the miracle, the evidence that can be pointed to? The evidence of a life transformed to godly principles, the dishonest becomes honest, the exploiter a protector, the cruel becomes kind, the fearful becomes courageous, the liar becomes honest, the cheat becomes loyal. Transformation of character is evidence of our risen Savior.] Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezekiel 36:26. **The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle.** In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son. DA 407.1

So, how can we reach people who don't know Christ? First, we have to personally know Him—we can't share what we don't know. And this means we have to have an experience—a transformation of our lives so that we become like Christ in heart/character.

Then, we seek to treat people like Jesus did. We get to know people, spend time with them, seek to help them. And this opens an entire other area where the battle between truth and deception rages—what does it mean to help someone?

This requires that we actually know God's law, His design law, how life is built to operate. Then, our goal is to help people know God personally and move to live in harmony with His design for life.

This means they must exercise their power of choice, to engage their abilities, to apply truth to their lives. They must live the Christian life. We cannot do it for them. Which means there are times when we must not resist and refuse to rescue people from their situation because they need to choose and act for themselves or they will never grow and develop.

It requires wisdom to know where we intervene to rescue and where we do not. If we don't intervene when we should then someone may be lost—if we do intervene when we shouldn't then someone may be lost.

I found a couple of historic quotes that I thought were quite interesting from a book *Counsels to the Church*:

There are two classes of poor whom we have always within our borders—those who ruin themselves by their own independent course of action and continue in their transgression, and those who for the truth's sake have been brought into straitened circumstances. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and then toward both these classes we shall do the right thing under the guidance and counsel of sound wisdom. {CCh 284.2} [Is this suggesting that perhaps we are to think about what a person needs in various circumstances?]



That the help provided may vary depending on how and why a person is in need? Could we harm if we confused the two classes or lumped them all into the same class?]

There is no question in regard to the Lord's poor. They are to be helped in every case where it will be for their benefit. {CCh 284.3} [Does this imply that there are times when helping someone might not be for their benefit? Or when actions taken to benefit might actually harm? Can you think of any examples?]

God wants His people to reveal to a sinful world that He has not left them to perish. **Special pains should be taken to help those who for the truth's sake are cast out from their homes and are obliged to suffer... The poor among God's people must not be left without provision for their wants. Some way must be found whereby they may obtain a livelihood.** [What is the help advocated here? Is it only a handout or is it something else? What is the difference to the person in need to receive a handout versus receiving employment? What is it God wants for all humans? The restoration of godliness in them—which would mean not only a pure heart and right spirit, but integrity, intelligence, wisdom, ability to think and to act, industry, meaningful usefulness. Should we seek to help people develop these abilities, or should we infantilize capable people by merely giving handouts?] **Some will need to be taught to work. Others who work hard and are taxed to the utmost of their ability to support their families will need special assistance.** [What is special assistance? Perhaps a raise, perhaps a new job that pays more, perhaps a subsidy, perhaps a low-cost housing opportunity. The point is, assisting people in need is righteous—but we have to understand the actual need. Do you notice a single cookie cutter intervention won't work?] **We should take an interest in these cases and help them to secure employment.** There should be a fund to aid such worthy poor families who love God and keep His commandments. {CCh 284.4} [Do you know of any church that has an employment program?]

Methods of helping the needy should be carefully and prayerfully considered. We are to seek God for wisdom, for He knows better than shortsighted mortals how to care for the creatures He has made. **There are some who give indiscriminately to everyone who solicits their aid. In this they err. In trying to help the needy, we should be careful to give them the right kind of help. There are those who when helped will continue to make themselves special objects of need. They will be dependent as long as they see anything on which to depend.** By giving undue time and attention to these, we may encourage idleness, helplessness, extravagance, and intemperance. {CCh 285.1} [Could this be true regardless of the source of the aid—family, friends, church or state? And what would be the most likely initial response if such a person were cut off from the aid they were previously receiving? Protest, complaint, accusation of not being loved or valued, worsening in their condition, function, appearance. And what if they are a member of a group that has historically been mistreated or exploited, what might they do? Make accusations of discrimination?]

When we give to the poor we should consider: "**Am I encouraging prodigality [wastefulness like prodigal son]? Am I helping or injuring them?" No man who can earn his own livelihood has a right to depend on others.** {CCh 285.2} [Do we apply this principle well when we give without knowing to whom we are giving? So, what is required? We must get to



know people. But what is easier? Do we ever prefer to have the state involved, to pay our taxes, to have state social programs to help the poor because that way we don't have to do it and we don't have to feel guilty for not doing it? It relieves us as Christians from any responsibility.]

TUESDAY

The title: Changes Lives Make a Difference. How do changed lives make a difference?

Do lives changed to be like Jesus, as we read in the quote above, make a difference in society? How?

But what about lives changed in the other direction—to be more violent, selfish, exploitive, deceitful, do they also make a difference in society? How?

How do we resist being drawn into the methods of Satan?

If Satan cannot get good people to choose evil directly—such as cheating, stealing, committing adultery, murdering, exploiting, abusing, lying—then what other actions does the devil take to undermine good people—in other words, to change their lives for the negative?

By overwhelming them with righteous causes that they accept and thus burn out.

How about by inciting a wrong, an evil, an exploitation, an abuse, and stirring up the outrage, the heartache, the sense of injustice in the hearts of the righteous and then placing before them the option of seeking to address the wrong by implementing Satan's methods? Let's use power to inflict pain, suffering, punishment upon the wrong doer—or let's use violence to intimidate those that we perceive have failed us in order to coerce and intimidate them into doing what we think is necessary to fix the wrong.

This is not God's method and will always cause further corruption, division, and problems. Only God's methods heal, worldly methods always divide.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson is about telling what Christ has done for us personally—does anyone want to share?

With the current events going on in the world many people are become afraid. In fact, some parties use fear of the future in order to manipulate people.

I have found this quote very helpful to me throughout the years:



“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” Christian Experience and Teaching 204.1

This is one of the reasons to recount our personal experiences. Our experiences of how God has led us in the past, how He has delivered us in the past, helped us, been with us, builds our faith and reminds us that we can face an uncertain future without fear because God is by our side.

FRIDAY

Read both paragraphs, “The essence...” Read and discuss questions

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You’ll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click [here](#) for more information.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>