



2020 Q3 Making Friends for God: Lesson 13 A Step in Faith

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SABBATH

I generally like the last lesson in the quarterly to kind of review and recap the concepts we've learned and discussed over the previous 12 weeks...to kind of hit the high points...to see how much we have really retained...how much of what we heard actually stuck...and then focus on practical application so we can put what we have learned into practice with the goal of implementing and integrating the concepts into our real daily lives – particularly considering the significance of what we have been studying on how to witness effectively, truthfully, the importance of our personal testimony...and how these are skills that can be honed and refined, and just like our muscles they must be exercised.

I didn't find too much of that in the Lesson 13 content, so hopefully it's okay with you if we take a bit of literary license from the quarterly this week and do a bit of an *interactive* recap...and quiz! I'm going to be quizzing you to see how much you remember, what concepts you found especially profound or those that really made an impact, maybe find out if there are some topics you still have questions on?

So all this quarter, we have been looking at making friends for God and studying the importance of our personal witness. In Week 1, we talked about the reasons why we witness and the primary goals of witnessing... remember any of those?

- To get people to accept the right doctrines? Not particularly—only as is necessary for healing their hearts and minds. It's more like our goal is to get them to accept the right understanding of their disease?
- To get them to join a particular denomination?
- To introduce people to Jesus and have them open their hearts in trust to Him so that they are turned from God's enemies to His friends?
- Will all of God's true friends agree on every point? Paul and Barnabas? Paul and Peter? What foods to eat or what days to treat as special?
- But what did the Apostles all agree on? Jesus is Lord and God's character and methods of love. Salvation is healing of hearts and minds through a trust relationship with Jesus.

Ultimately, we witness because we love and care about people...and love is outward moving and other centered. If God's love is poured into our hearts, we can't keep it to ourselves – it overflows onto people we come in contact with – we want the people we know and love to experience the peace, love, joy that we have found...particularly our family and loved ones.



We saw this concept so clearly illustrated **in Lesson 7** when we reviewed the parable of the laborers in the field. I know you all remember the familiar story from Matthew 20, where some laborers came early in the day looking for a vineyard job...agreed to the day's wage, and went to work. Then some other folks came at noon, were told by the vineyard owner, "I will pay you what is right," and then joined the others in the field. Later in the day, just an hour before quitting time, more workers joined for the same agreed-upon "right pay," and finished that last hour of the shift with the rest of the crew. Then when it was time to settle up, everyone got paid the same – the guy who *labored* 8-10 hours in the vineyard, in the heat of the day, got the same pay as the dude who came in at maybe 5 pm and only worked for one hour!

Don't you have an immediate kind of visceral reaction to that outcome? Doesn't it seem to violate some universal standard of fairness?

It definitely does – and under human law constructs, the whole story is completely unfair on every level. But the shift to a design law interpretation changes everything...and explains one of big reasons why we witness.

When we understand that the worker's reward – the agreed upon wage – the right payment – is eternal life with Jesus, and the vineyard is this earth where we witness and work to save souls...suddenly the story is completely fair and such a beautiful picture of reality. The ones who got called early accepted Jesus into their life early...and not only did they get reward of eternal life – just like the thief on the cross got in his last hour on this earth - but they also got to work with God their whole lives, they learned how to work in the field - which is the field of human souls. Thus, they learned God's methods, they learned God's principles of how to "fish" for men...they became more efficient in how to wield the sword of truth in love while leaving people free - these are skills that must be practiced, they must be exercised - remember the quote we read a couple of weeks ago that said,

"In this work [witnessing/ministering], as in every other, skill is gained in the *work itself*...It is in the water, not on the land, that men learn to swim." – {AH 90.2}

Their characters are more developed, they have become more like the landowner! Whereas the one who came in at the last hour, he received eternal life...he got the same pay, but he didn't get the blessing of working all his life with the landowner. See how design law removes any hint of arbitrariness and unfairness from the story? How there is no prejudice or bias being portrayed, but rather just an accurate depiction of how reality actually works.

But back to witnessing...this is why we witness!! Talk about laboring in the field...how many of you...how many of us have *labored* over our parents, our spouses, our families, our loved ones, and



maybe especially over our children - not just over their eternal salvation, but because we want them to KNOW the God we know...so that, as it says in John 17:3, their eternal life can start right now...we want them to know the blessing of working in the field in close communion with the landowner...we want their minds, hearts, and characters to be molded and shaped by the Holy Spirit to be like Christ. This is why we witness.

Is all witnessing helpful, or can witnessing ever be harmful? Does anyone remember from Lesson 1 some of the ways that witnessing might actually cause harm?

It is by training in the common duties of life and in ministry to the needy and suffering that efficiency is assured. Without this the best-meant efforts are **often useless and even harmful**.
– {AH 490.2}

- What happened to Pharaoh when Moses witnessed to him? Why did this happen to Pharaoh? Does that mean Moses should not have witnessed to him?
- What did Jesus say about the cities in His day having had His witness to them? That their guilt would be greater than Sodom's. Does that mean Jesus should not have witnessed to them?
- So they are not harmed by the witness of truth—they are harmed by the rejection of truth, the witness of truth gives them opportunity for healing and eternal life—even if they reject it.
- What about if we witness because we want to get the most baptisms in the conference? Do we risk witnessing with wrong motive and perhaps not even witnessing the truth?
- Jesus told the religious leaders in His day that their witness caused their converts to become twice the son of hell than they themselves were, why was that?

In Lesson 2, we discussed the power of personal testimony and how telling people how your life has been changed by Jesus and your personal experience with Him can be a winsome, effective witness. But we also talked about how personal experience, strong feelings and emotions can be deceptive or misleading or even false...which is why the three overlapping threads of evidence are so important, and why experiences and feelings must be checked against testable laws, evidence, and reality. Remember this historic quote regarding 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. 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. 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}

See how reality always has evidence associated with it? A genuine experience with Jesus is always evidenced by a changed life.

This is the very evidence that can help us witness about Christ to folks who may not already believe in God or Jesus or even in scripture. Remember this from Lesson 2?

For people who may believe in the Old Testament or in the Bible, 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 what if a person doesn't believe in the Bible at all, then what do you do? What evidence can you provide to demonstrate Jesus is real? We just talked about it!

What do you think of 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. [But miracles are problematic because they can be counterfeited. Even so, people want something besides a verbal testimony or proclamation – that 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.** [Uh oh. Sounds like we might 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 becomes a protector, the cruel becomes kind, the fearful becomes courageous, the liar becomes honest, the cheat becomes trustworthy. 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... **This is God's witness before the world** to the divine mission of His Son. – {DA 407.1}

I once was lost but now I'm found...was blind but now I see.

In Lesson 4, we studied ways we can intercede for others - particularly the impact of intercessory prayer. What is the purpose of intercessory prayer? Is the purpose to influence God to love more, to be more kind, to get God to do something good that God would not otherwise want to do?

If God always wants to do good, always wants to heal and save, then why do we need to pray?

What are God's methods and how does He achieve His goals?

Does God violate freewill?

Does He force His way in?

Thus, one aspect of prayer is our freewill consent inviting God into a situation. But there is another aspect: Does the process of praying have an impact upon the one who prays? Can our conversations with God be healing, transforming, maturing to us?

Additionally, is there an aspect of prayer that exercises our own individual mental energies focusing our beings toward the welfare of others?

Prayer not only brings God into the equation, but it allow us as believers to join our energies together and focus our intentions on the healing of others.

In God's universe, can this directly exert a positive influence? Yes, if we understand quantum physics and string theory...which of course I don't, but I'm fascinated by it... our prayers, when focused with love and good intention, can have a direct positive healing physical impact on the one being prayed for, through the quantum connections that God built into His universe. Just as a person can use their physical body through Newtonian physics to massage muscles or put pressure on a wound, perform



CPR, set a bone, just as that direct physical contact and intervention can be healing, so too our prayers through quantum connections can exert positive impact on others!

In Lesson 5, we discussed Spirit-empowered witnessing...and honestly, God forbid that we attempt any of these witnessing endeavors without first inviting the Holy Spirit into the midst of it – to prepare/convict hearts (the witnesser and the witnessee), to have us cross paths with and make divine appointments with folks who are open and seeking truth, and to give us insight into unspoken needs and the right words to say. Consider the implication of this historic quote from *Acts of the Apostles*:

“Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension [def: a condition of decline or moral deterioration] and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, **though offered in infinite plenitude [does that offer ever expire?].** Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, **why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?** The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. **For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God.** Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. – {AA 50.2}

I know we do that here in this ministry.

What in the world might cause us to value the Holy Spirit so little? Perhaps being frightened by the fear of false spirits?

The Bible tells us to test the spirits, perhaps movements that smack of fanaticism, emotionalism, that claim to be the movements of the Spirit of God frighten us into not seeking the true Spirit of God?

Perhaps accepting a legal theology in which one falsely believes salvation is in claiming a legal blood payment to have one’s heavenly record books adjusted—thus no real need for the Spirit, the payment is being made in heaven.

Perhaps anti-trinitarian teachings that propose that there is no Holy Spirit, that there is only God the Father and the Father is omnipresent, and we can ask for the Father’s presence into our lives, but we don’t seek the presence of the Holy Spirit because we don’t believe He exists?



What happens if we reject or don't value the Holy Spirit? Here is one view of the importance of the Holy Spirit, from *The Desire of Ages*, do you agree?

“In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.** The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.** – {DA 671.2}

This entire quarterly was about witnessing – witnessing the story of Jesus, the story of His saving remedy...and Lesson 4 contained such a brief, concise, on-point summarization of the central theme of scripture I wanted to include it here as something to really commit to memory – not memorized by rote, but as a part of your story, that you can relate (during an elevator ride) when someone asks you why you believe the Bible or what is the Bible even about.

- There is a God in heaven who created the entire universe. This Creator God is love and created all things in sinless perfection—without disease or defect.
Real love requires real freedom, so God did not create His intelligent beings as robots or puppets, but gave real freedom.
- This freedom was abused and lies were told about God. Those lies were believed, which broke the circle of love and trust, and resulted in fear and selfishness.
- God's design for life was broken, love and trust was displaced by fear and selfishness stemming from believing lies. This is a terminal condition, the result of being out of harmony with God's design for life.
God's laws are the design laws He built life to operate upon and any deviation damages and destroys.
- God loved us so much that when humankind became infected with fear and selfishness, He did not abandon us but sent His own Son to reveal the truth to destroy the lies and win us back to trust, and to cure the condition by procuring the remedy that heals all who do trust.



- This remedy is freely available to everyone and will heal all who trust God and cooperate with the treatment plan.
- That Remedy is the perfection of Jesus Christ, the truth revealed about God that wins us back to trust, and then in trust we open our hearts and receive a new human character by the indwelling Spirit...and by partaking of that divine nature, we are transformed in character, our hearts actually change, and we develop new desires and new motives.

In Lesson 7, we covered almost every single one of Christ's parables through the natural design law...we don't have time to go through them all here, but I encourage you to get those notes and save them, because they're profound. One key point that really stuck with me was the differences between the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son...remember those?

- The lost coin was lost but didn't know it was lost, and the owner searched for it and found it. The lost sheep knew it was lost but didn't know how to get home and the owner searched for it and found it.
- The lost son knew he was lost *and* he knew the way home, and the father waited for the son to make the choice to come home.
- In all three what does the father/owner reveal about himself? He is always, always working to woo, to heal, to save...in whatever way is in our best interest and for our best good. What kind of law is involved?

Just a couple of high points from **Lesson 8**, we reviewed some prescient quotes from an interview of Ellen White that took place in 1895, where she said this:

“When you begin to work with parliaments, that sets the devil to work, and if he cannot make the work hard for us, who can? [If we seek human governments to work with us in the advancement of God's kingdom we set the devil to work. We corrupt the gospel and the church by ultimately bringing in the methods of the world—imperialism and coercion into the work. This corrupts the minds and hearts of people and obstructs the kingdom of God.]

This gives us some insight into the extremely practical applications we have learned this quarter, and how what we are learning about design laws...about how human governments work – *all* human governments – the methods they use...and how we apply these concepts to what's going on in our world today...how we interpret end time events...and how important it is to recognize what methods and principles are being used, even in the promotion of righteous and just causes. Check out the rest of that jaw-dropping interview in the Lesson 8 notes.



One last concept from Lesson 8 that I don't believe we got around to covering in class. The quarterly asked the question, "Is it possible to live the abundant life Jesus offers if you are poverty-stricken or sick? Did Jesus offer people something deeper than physical healing?"

Have you ever heard the name Fanny Crosby? She was a prolific song writer who wrote many famous hymns such as:

- "More Like Jesus Would I Be"--1867
- "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"--1868,
- "Near the Cross"--1869,
- "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus Our Blessed Redeemer!"--1869,
- "Rescue the Perishing"--1869,
- "Blessed Assurance"--1873,
- "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"--1875,
- "To God Be the Glory"—1875
- "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"--1879,
- "Tell Me the Story of Jesus"--1880,
- "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!"--1882,
- "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home"--1883,
- "He Hideth My Soul"--1890,

Now Fanny was blind from infancy and later in life, wrote:

“It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour.”

So can we have the abundant life with sickness, poverty, infirmity?

What is it that Jesus promises us today?

What happened to all the people Jesus healed of physical illness 2000 years ago?

Is God's primary concern that we live an extra 50 years here on earth?

What is God's primary concern? That we receive eternal life, and that we are reconciled to Him.