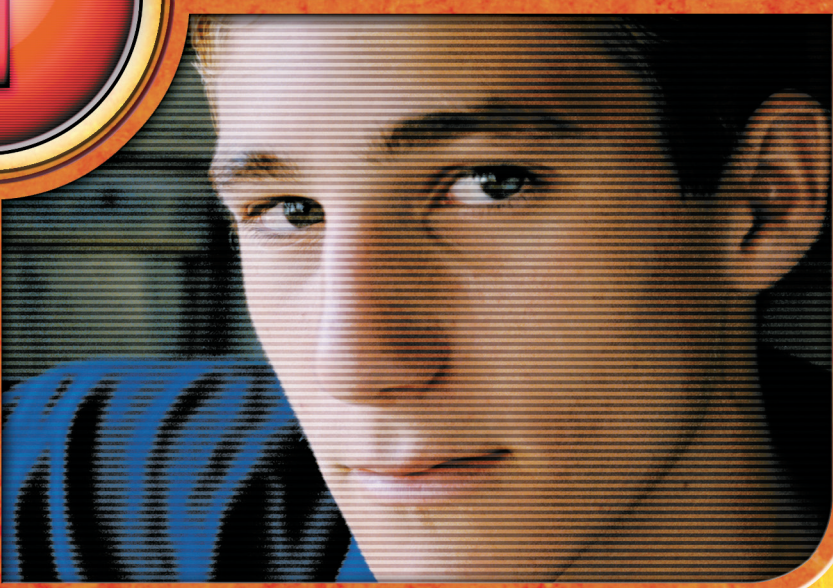


January 7, 2023



Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** "As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 35-38.

HARD TO HIDE

Ernest lived in a country in which military service was mandatory. When he turned 20, Ernest was drafted and sent to serve in another city, far away from home. In the military, orders are law, and every soldier has to follow them immediately without question. Disobeying orders results in severe punishment.

Part of the time spent in military service included mandatory agricultural labor. Ernest did his work faithfully and conscientiously each day of the week. Realizing that the soldiers would have to work on Sabbath as well, Ernest prayed to God with the determination to remain faithful to His law in keeping the Sabbath regardless of any risk to himself. Then he spoke to his supervising lieutenant and explained that he would not work on Saturday.

The lieutenant was not open to Ernest's request. It was harvesttime, and everybody was needed to work in the fields to gather in the grain. The lieutenant told Ernest that he would report this case of disobedience to the colonel.

"There is a young man here who does not work on Saturday," the lieutenant announced to the colonel.

Immediately Ernest was called in to the office of the colonel and was questioned profusely. Ernest stated his case humbly but confidently:

"Mr. Colonel, according to the Bible, the seventh day of the week is God's holy Sabbath. This is a day of worship and holy convocation. Based on this conviction, my conscience does not allow me to work on Saturday. I am more than happy to work longer hours on other days of the week and even at night if needed, but on Sabbath I cannot consent to work."

The colonel became furious and ordered Ernest to make a written declaration to state his insubordination. Ernest wrote that he was willing to obey the orders of his superiors and work anytime during the week, except on Sabbath.

When the colonel read the written statement, he decided to give the young man a lesson and make him a public example to his peers. He was confident that through peer pressure from the other soldiers, Ernest would quickly renounce his faith.

When the soldiers returned from the fields for lunch, the colonel spoke to them about Ernest:

"Young men, look at this soldier. He did not work today. Do you think he deserves to eat?"

The reply came quickly from the rest of the soldiers, "Yes, sir. Ernest is very conscientious. He works harder during the other days of the week than the rest of us."

The colonel was appalled. He was enraged. To prove his authority before his soldiers, he started shouting threats to Ernest, "I'll have you put in jail for seven years!"

The colonel reported his case to higher-ranking officers and made several more attempts to have Ernest punished for insubordination. Yet, after questioning Ernest, the committee of officers did not find any reason to punish him. On the contrary, they gave him the freedom to observe the Sabbath. Several months later Ernest completed his military service and was released. Thanks to God's intervention, Ernest did not suffer severe punishment or imprisonment. He praised God for the privilege to be a witness for his Lord.

Being a witness for Jesus does not always come easy. It often means taking a stand for Him and His truth even when it is not convenient. It sometimes means taking risks that may involve personal injuries or losses.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 5:13-16.
- » Your school hires a new teacher right out of college. She has very little experience in teaching English to teenagers. She continually strikes out with the students. They are not being helpful. The teacher is losing her grip on the class and ultimately her patience. On your way home from school you see her driving out of the parking lot with tears in her eyes. What can you do to show her God's love?
- » Describe what a light-bearing agent in God's kingdom should act like.

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read Matthew 20:25-28; Matthew 25:31-46; John 20:21; Galatians 5:22-25.
- » How do these verses help us grow in Christ and become witnesses for Him? _____
- » Choose from the list of words below and fill in the blanks. All Bible passages are taken from the New King James Version.

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your _____. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to _____, and to give His life a _____ for many'" (Matthew 20:25-28).

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You _____ and feed You, or thirsty and give You _____? When did we see You a _____ and take You in, or naked and _____ You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the _____ of these My brethren, you did it to _____'" (Matthew 25:37-40).

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has _____ Me, I also _____ you'" (John 20:21).

"But the _____ of the _____ is _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we _____ in the Spirit, let us also _____ in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

- | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------------|--------|--------------|---------------|
| clothe | drink | faithfulness | fruit | gentleness | goodness |
| hungry | joy | kindness | least | live | longsuffering |
| love | Me | peace | ransom | self-control | send |
| sent | servant | serve | Spirit | stranger | walk |

Tuesday
REFLECTING

- » Read Isaiah 43:10-12.
- » Some people think that when the big question comes to them about their allegiance to God, they will be able to stand and say, "I believe in Christ, and I will not deny Him!" When you look at the stories of Scripture, it's not those life-or-death ultimatums that make the great witness for God, but the little moments along the way. "In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30). Frankly, if we can't stand up for God when it's easy, why do we think it will be any easier when our life is on the line?
- » Jesus told the disciples to be witnesses first in Jerusalem, starting close to home before working their way out to the ends of the earth. "When the heart is aglow with the love of Jesus, you will express it to others, and become witnesses for Christ" (Ellen G. White, in *Youth's Instructor*, May 4, 1893).

Thursday
CONNECTING

- » Read Philippians 2:14-16.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Have you ever thought, *If I don't say anything, someone else will?*
- » You may remember a letter written to a person named Philemon in the New Testament. The whole drama is about a slave named Onesimus, who was owned by Philemon but ran away and ended up running into Paul on the way. Onesimus actually means "useful." Paul makes a point to play on this, saying, "I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me" (Philemon 10, 11).
- » Poor Onesimus. He has a name that means "useful," but apparently he turns out to be "useless" until he meets up with Paul and becomes a giant help to the apostle, who is stuck in prison. Paul pleads for grace for this man, and we assume he received it from Philemon.
- » The same grace is extended to us, even though we may or may not feel useful to God at this moment. You may feel as if what you say or do doesn't matter. However, when we receive God's grace in our hearts, we have something to do and say on behalf of the One who saved us. It's safe to say that Onesimus wasn't perfect, but he gave Paul all he could, and it turned out to be a bigger help than he thought. Onesimus was immortalized in the words of Scripture because he did his best to be salt and light for an old person in prison. Who would have thought that in the end Paul would say about him, "I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart" (Philemon 12)? The important thing to remember from this story is that you may not know the value of your witness until later on.
- » 1. Why is it so important to say something?
- » 2. Why should you or I share Jesus with others? Why can't we just let someone else who is more qualified do it?

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the text with the phrase. All texts are taken from the NKJV Bible.
 1. Hebrews 12:1, 2 _____
 2. Matthew 5:13-16 _____
 3. Philippians 2:14-16 _____
 4. Colossians 4:6 _____
 5. Acts 1:7, 8 _____
 6. Luke 14:34, 35 _____
 - A. "You are the salt of the earth."
 - B. "... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ..."
 - C. "... that you may become ... children of God ..."
 - D. "... you may know how you ought to answer each one."
 - E. "Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its flavor ..."
 - F. "... you shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth."

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read 1 John 1:1-4.
- » "It is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. . . . The savor of the salt represents the vital power of the Christian—the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the life. The love of Christ is diffusive and aggressive. If it is dwelling in us, it will flow out to others" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36).
- » As you think about how you can be a witness, use the following illustrations to help you plan how you can apply this lesson to your life. Be specific!



Light—How can I make the darkness in someone's life go away?



Witness—How can I take the witness stand for God this week? How can I stand up for Him?



Magnet—How can I attract someone to God this week?



Salt—How can I bring zest and flavor to someone's life this week?

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