

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.
Psalm 25:14

Vol. 31, No. 12

Straight and Narrow

December 2022



We have been told that “the houses of the saints should be kept tidy and neat, free from dirt and filth and all uncleanness” (Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 274.1) but beyond order and cleanness, what does the Bible mean when it speaks of setting your house in order?



Setting Your House in Order

By Allen Stump

When people are young and strong, they tend to have a feeling of invulnerability. Nothing can kill them, so they think. They are young and are going to live forever! Risks and chances that older people shun like the plague are taken. The thrill from risk is at its zenith in one's youth.

But as a person gets older, pains appear, muscles get weaker, legs get slower, and recovery time doubles and triples. It seems wisdom comes along and says not to do these stupid things anymore!

Tragically, sometimes youth does not reach old age or even middle age. Joe Hall was one of my best friends when I was young. We rode motorcycles together, and, honestly, we rode recklessly at times, but, it was not a motorcycle that did Joe in. It was a drunk driver, someone Joe had no control over despite his youthful strength and quick reflexes.

Sometimes things happen suddenly, unexpectedly, and without warning. One day when my son, Hans, was only seventeen, he experienced neck pain. What was perceived as only a chiropractic problem turned out to be malignant cancer before the day was out.

No one, despite youth, strength, or anything else has tomorrow promised. Jesus spoke of one person who felt that tomorrow was a surety:

*And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall**

those things be, which thou hast provided? (Luke 12:16-20; all emphasis in this article supplied unless otherwise noted)

This is a parable, and Jesus did not say that God actually uttered these words to the *rich man* or even brought him to an awareness of his foolishness any more than our Lord means to imply that the conversation between the rich man and Father Abraham actually took place.

The point is that the rich man would die unawares that night. He would not be alive in the morning. He had made no preparation for the possibility of death.

Remember the little child's prayer?

Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

This is a prayer to help children realize that they are here by God's grace alone and that there is no promise of waking in the morning. But that realization seems to disappear as one grows into adolescence and then into adulthood. We forget that we are mortal. Like the rich man we may be a fool at anytime.

It behooves all to be ready to die at anytime. We need to be ready for whatever comes our way, no matter if it is injury, illness, or something else. Case in point: On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a white man, opened fire during a prayer meeting in an historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine people, including a pastor. How could any of those nine have known such a violent tragedy would happen? They were either ready or they were not ready for death and the judgment. There was no in between for them, and there is no in between for you and me. We are either ready or not at this very moment.

No wonder Jesus said:

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 24:44)

What led him to say this? Jesus was speaking about his coming and the end of the world, and he illustrated the need to be ready by sharing some history about the time just before the flood:

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And **knew not** until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:36–39)

It was life as usual. All systems were on go, but they *knew not* that the flood was coming. Jesus also said:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the **thief** would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. (Matthew 24:42, 43)

Of course, Jesus is no thief, but his coming to most will be as a thief comes—unannounced and with stealth. Notice the *thief* motif in other portions of Scripture:

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, *I will come on thee as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:3)

But the day of the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

Behold, *I come as a thief*. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. (Revelation 16:15)

Jesus said that his coming should not take us by surprise:

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so that day come upon you unawares*. (Luke 21:34)

The Greek word we translate *unawares* is αἰφνίδιος (*aiphnidios*). It is defined as:

... pertaining to an extremely short period of time between a previous state or event and a subsequent state or event—'suddenly, at once, immediately' . . . (Johannes Louw, Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 463)

So, beloved, we need to be prepared at any time for our judgment and the Lord's return. We need to get our *houses in order*. This saying comes from the Bible and is first used in connection to the story when King David had to flee from Absalom. Ahithophel counseled Absalom to attack without delay, but David's trusted friend, Hushai, acting as a counselor to Absalom, gave him counsel to wait, knowing it would give David the time he needed to properly hide and prepare his army. Hushai's counsel was accepted, and Ahithophel knew it spelled defeat. He had encouraged the son of David in rebellion and had counseled him to do the most abominable wickedness to the dishonor of his father. He knew he would be convicted of being a conspirator and of committing treason, and so we read:

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and *put his household in order*, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. (2 Samuel 17:23)

We are not told specifically or even generally what Ahithophel did to put his house in order. Maybe he had outstanding debts to pay. Maybe he wanted to say goodbye to his wife and children, but whatever he wanted to have ready at his death, this is what he did.

There is another story that speaks with similar language:

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live*. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. (2 Kings 20:1–3)

Hezekiah did not want to die. We do not know why, but that is not the issue of our lesson. The point is his house was not fully in order, and it needed to be made in order. One point was to designate his heir; however, according to the some students of chronology, Hezekiah did not have a son at this time. In the verses above, Hezekiah claimed to have "walked before" God "in truth and with a perfect heart." What about that claim? Hezekiah was the thirteenth king of Judah. He was the son of the ungodly Ahaz. Hezekiah would become known as one of the most godly kings of Judah. Hezekiah's father had given the kingdom over to idolatry but upon his accession to the throne, Hezekiah decisively and courageously initiated religious reforms.

In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the temple doors that Ahaz had closed. Hezekiah also gathered

the priests and Levites and commissioned them to sanctify themselves for service and to cleanse the temple.

There is more. Hezekiah invited the remnant of the people to come to Jerusalem to participate in the celebration of the Passover. Although some northern tribes scorned the invitation, many responded favorably.

Hezekiah's reformation was far-reaching. It extended beyond Jerusalem to include the cleansing of the land, even to the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. High places, images, and pagan altars were destroyed. The bronze serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness centuries earlier had been preserved, and people were worshipping it. Hezekiah had it destroyed. Judah had never undergone such a thorough transformation and reformation.

Of Hezekiah's great work, however, we read the following:

In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 32:24, 25)

We need to be very careful about how we view ourselves. Self-examination is not always easy. *Hezekiah said* he "walked before" God "in truth and with a perfect heart," but *God said* "his heart was lifted up."

God should not have had to tell Hezekiah to put his house in order because *it should have been in order!* But like so many of us, he was living on borrowed time that was about up, and he did not know it until that time had come.

Beloved, we have this plain counsel:

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Dear reader, what needs to be done in your house today that it might be in order? Sometimes we get sick and pray like Hezekiah, and we think that God is going to do something to heal us, just like he did for Hezekiah. Sometimes God brings healing, but sometimes he does not!

Notice some of the counsel we have concerning praying when we are sick:

*Many who should set their house in order neglect to do it when they have hope that they will be raised to health in answer to prayer. Buoyed up by a false hope, they do not feel the need of giving words of exhortation and counsel to their children, parents, or friends, and it is a great misfortune. (Ellen White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 376.2a)*

Part of putting our house in order involves giving words of exhortation and counsel to our children, parents, or friends. We should not neglect to share the requirements of the gospel with those within and without our family circle whenever we can.

Accepting the assurance that they would be healed when prayed for, they dare not make a reference as to how their property shall be disposed of, how their family is to be cared for, or express any wish concerning matters of which they would speak if they thought they would be removed by death. In this way disasters are brought upon the family and friends, for many things that should be understood are left unmentioned because they fear expression on these points would be denial of their faith. (Ibid, p. 376.2b)

*Wills should be made in a manner to stand the test of law. After they are drawn they may remain for years and do no harm, if donations continue to be made from time to time as the cause has need. Death will not come one day sooner, brethren, because you have made your will. In disposing of your property by will to your relatives, be sure that you do not forget God's cause. You are His agents, holding His property; and His claims should have your first consideration. Your wife and children, of course, should not be left destitute; provision should be made for them if they are needy. But do not, simply because it is customary, bring into your will a long line of relatives who are not needy. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church.*, vol. 4, p. 482.3)*

The future of our property should be carefully considered, and a last will and testament which will stand the test of law should be properly prepared. In doing this death will not come one day sooner, but your estate will be ready when it does come. In doing this we are told that disasters can be avoided instead of being brought upon our family and friends. Very importantly, in considering these matters we are not to forget the work of God.

To Brother L, Sister White wrote:

*I was shown that you have a work to do to set your house in order. Brother L, you have not properly represented the truth; you have loved the truth, but it has not had that sanctifying influence upon your life which it must have if you would be fitted for the society of heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. You are a rough stick and need much hewing and need to remain in the workshop of God until the rough edges are removed, the uneven surface made smooth, and you are pronounced fit for the building. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church.*, vol. 2, p. 78.1)*

This is a most interesting and important point about setting our houses in order. Brother L had not properly repre-

sented the truth in his life. He was a living epistle but in the wrong way! Though he had a love of the truth, its sanctifying influence had not been felt in his life. In fact, she wrote, "You are a rough stick and need much hewing." Do you know what hewing is? It means to chop or hack. It is not a small or subtle movement; rather, it is a rough and deep cut into the wood. Brother L's life did not need sanding, but was so rough it needed to be hewed. Let us make sure our lives properly represent truth, so God does not have to hew into our characters. But it is of encouragement that God loves his children enough, such as he loved Brother L, that if it is hewing they need, it is hewing he will supply! She continues writing to him:

You should be careful not to introduce the subjects of present truth everywhere. You can do more in living the truth than in talking it to others. You can do very much by example. You need to be very circumspect in your business transactions, to carry out in them the principles of your faith. Be faithful in deal, thorough in labor, ever bearing in mind that it is not your employer's eye alone that is to inspect your work, but that the eye of God is upon all the transactions of your life. Angels of God are viewing your work, and it should be a part of your religion to have every piece of work marked with truth and faithfulness. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." God wants to make you right, holy, and true. (Ibid, p. 78.2)

Many want to preach the truth, but Brother L was told he could do more by living the truth. All of his transactions were to be weighed and only that which would be triumphant in the test of truth would be triumphant in the judgment, where *every piece of work is to be marked with truth and faithfulness.*

God, in his mercy, revealed even more to Brother L about having his house in order:

You do not speak wisely and judiciously to your wife and children. You should cultivate kindness and gentleness. Your children have not had the best influence and example before them. They should not control you, but you them, not harshly, not overbearingly, but with firmness and steadiness of purpose. (Ibid, p. 78.3)

If we are not speaking wisely and judiciously to our spouse and children, we do not have our house in order. If we have not cultivated kindness and gentleness, our house is not in order. If we are not in proper control of our children, our house is not in order.

To another has been written:

You have a work to do to set your house in order. Pure, sinless angels cannot delight to come into a dwelling

where so much iniquity is practiced. You are asleep at your post. Things of minor importance have occupied your minds to the exclusion of more weighty matters. It should be the first business of your life to seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness; then you have the promise that all things shall be added. Here is where you have failed in your family. Had you been agonizing that you and yours might enter in at the strait gate, you would have earnestly gathered every ray of light that the Lord has permitted to shine upon your pathway, and would have cherished and walked in it. (Ibid, p. 399.1)

If iniquity is practiced in our homes, they are not in order. If we are not seeking first the kingdom of God, our houses are not in order, and we have failed our families.

Finally, there is a special work before attending camp meetings which is defined as a part of putting our houses in order!

Here is a work for families to engage in before coming up to our holy convocations. *Let the preparation for eating and dressing be a secondary matter, but let deep heart searching commence at home.* Pray three times a day, and, like Jacob, be importunate. At home is the place to find Jesus; then take Him with you to the meeting, and how precious will be the hours you spend there. But how can you expect to feel the presence of the Lord and see His power displayed when the individual *work of preparation for that time is neglected?* (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 164.3)

For your soul's sake, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of others, work at home. Pray as you are not accustomed to pray. Let the heart break before God. *Set your house in order. Prepare your children for the occasion.* Teach them that it is not of so much consequence that they appear with fine clothes as that they appear before God with clean hands and pure hearts. Remove every obstacle that may have been in their way,—all differences that may have existed among themselves or between you and them. By so doing you will invite the Lord's presence into your homes, and holy angels will attend you as you go up to the meeting, and their light and presence will press back the darkness of evil angels. Even unbelievers will feel the holy atmosphere as they enter the encampment. Oh, how much is lost by neglecting this important work! You may be pleased with the preaching, you may become animated and revived, but the converting, reforming power of God will not be felt in the heart, and the work will not be so deep, thorough, and lasting as it should be. Let pride be crucified and the soul be clad with the priceless robe of Christ's righteousness, and what a meeting will you enjoy. It will be to your soul even as the gate of heaven. (Ibid., p. 164.4)

Continued on page 9, column 1

Loving One Another

By Winnie Anderson

We want to study about loving one another. Love is the one topic, the theme, of the whole Bible. Jesus, directly and indirectly, talked about God's love for mankind more than anything else in the Bible, and we want to see some of what he said on this great theme. In John 13:35 we read:

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)

Let us notice what Peter, another disciple of Jesus who learned firsthand from the Master, said:

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: (1 Peter 3:8)

Reading now from an epistle of John:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (1 John 4:7)

These three passages of Scripture admonish us to love one another. The word *love* is used three hundred ten times in two hundred eighty verses in Scripture. With variations, such as *lovely*, *loved*, *lover*, and *loving*, there are four hundred nineteen usages in three hundred sixty-four verses, so love is the key topic in the Bible. As we noted earlier, Jesus talked about God's love for mankind more than any other subject that he spoke about, and Christ summed it up quite well when he spoke to Nicodemus one night and said:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

When you look at the meaning of the word *love* in most dictionaries, you will usually find a definition that states love to be "an intense feeling of deep affection" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). For example, I love music, or I love riding motorcycles, but love goes beyond more than just a strong affection towards something or someone. Inspiration tells us that love is a principle:

True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse and which suddenly dies when severely tested. (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176.3)

Love is doing right, even when you do not feel like doing what is right, and Jesus demonstrated this the night before his crucifixion. Jesus had the Passover meal with his disciples and after leaving the upper room, they went into the Garden of Gethsemane. At this point he had eleven disciples with him, and eight of them he admonished stay in a place just past the entrance into the garden. Jesus took

those eight to remain there. He took Peter, James, and John a little further into the garden and just before they reached the place where Jesus knelt and prayed, he told Peter, James, and John to remain there to watch and pray. Then Jesus went on to his place where he was going to pray, and there he fell on the ground

Christ was so burdened with the responsibility on his shoulders, and he prayed to his Father. He said:

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matthew 26:39)

Christ prayed this prayer three times. He struggled because not only did he come there to die for all of humanity, but he was also there to vindicate his Father. All of heaven was at stake. All of God's creation was at peril, and, as all of this responsibility was on him, he began to sweat blood! Blood was pouring out of his very pores. This was not for himself, but all this was for others. That is love. His human nature recoiled against this struggle, but he persevered, and he did what was right. This precious treasure, this *high and holy principle* that is called love, is highly esteemed in heaven. God's law is based on love. His government is based on love.

Yet, sadly, love is so lightly valued by mankind. Love is so little sought by many, even by those who profess to be followers of our Master. We need to seriously consider what Christ has done for us. Jesus came to this earth and lived a selfless, self-denying perfect life, and then he died the most cruel, demeaning death on the cross and now serves as our advocate and our high priest in heaven. How patient has he been with each of us? How long has he borne with our faults, with our rebellion, and with our shortcomings? Yet, despite this, he pleads before his Father and our Father, holding up his nail-scarred hands, saying: "My blood, Father, My blood, My blood, My blood" (Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 38.1)!

The fact that we are under so great an obligation to Christ places us under the most sacred obligation to those for whom he died. Christ expects us to manifest unselfish *agapē* love to our fellow beings with sympathy and tender compassion. Jesus quoted from Leviticus 19:18, saying:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:39)

We need to ask the question, *can we do this of ourselves?* No, of course we can not! But we need to remember that God requires nothing of us that we he will not give us the

grace to perform. "All His biddings are enablings" (Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.1).

Jesus also said:

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:33, 34)

Why did Christ say this was a new commandment? As we noted, he had quoted from Leviticus 19:18. The people of the Old Testament were admonished to love their neighbors. They definitely were. So why did Jesus say it was a new commandment he had given to the disciples? Because humanity had never seen love demonstrated like Christ demonstrated in practical daily life. This love was demonstrated throughout the life of Jesus and especially on the cross. This was *agapē* love, a living example, something so revolutionary to his disciples and to the world that it could be called a *new commandment*.

Continuing in John 13:35, we read:

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)

Our Christlikeness of character will grow in proportion to our love towards those for whom Christ died. Christians who manifest a spirit of unselfish love for one another bear a testimony for Christ that unbelievers can neither dispute nor resist. The power of such an example is inestimable. Against such an example the powers of darkness stand little chance when we love one another as Christ loved us.

Believers are to stand and press together and cherish the faith that works by love. We must each individually examine ourselves ever so closely and ask ourselves, Do I possess the grace of love? Have I learned to be patient, understanding, and kind? We may have talents, learning, and eloquence, but all of these attributes are meaningless without the love that is born of heaven.

First Corinthians 13 contains the masterpiece of prose that the apostle Paul gave wherein he set forth the importance of that love which we as the disciples of Christ are to cherish.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

My brothers and sisters, what good are our good deeds if they are not accomplished in love? Paul says they will mean nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5)

There is no passion or revenge in the heart that is filled with love.

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (1 Corinthians 13:6, 7)

This love never fails nor loses its value because it is an attribute of heaven and as a most precious treasure, it will be carried by the possessor through the portals into the city of God

Another Pauline gem on love is in Colossians:

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (Colossians 3:12-14)

This forgiveness based upon love is the very same thing Christ taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, when we read:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14, 15)

This is straightforward and to the point! We are the ones who determine if we can be forgiven or not. These are wonderful terms, but how little they are understood and heeded! How often do possessed followers of Christ cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before their God and ask to be forgiven *as* they forgive. Brothers and sisters, we are dependent upon God every day, every hour, and every moment for his pardoning mercies, so how can we cherish bitterness and malice towards our fellow sinners? We need to carry out the principles of the Lord's Prayer. What a beautiful change would be brought about in our church, but most of all in ourselves, if this principle of forgiveness and love were followed. And think of the convincing testimony that could be given to the reality of biblical religion to the world, if we lived this love.

Another Pauline treasure on love is in Romans 12:

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned

one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; (Romans 12:9, 10)

Let love be without dissimulation which means that we do not want it disguised or pretentious. Our love is to be real and true.

Christians should be able to distinguish between the pure unselfish love that is prompted by the Holy Spirit and the meaningless deceit and pretense which abounds in this world. How many souls have been misled by this base counterfeit?

Let us review the scenes the night before the crucifixion. Jesus and his disciples have left the upper room after sharing the Passover supper, and they walk through the night streets of Jerusalem. I imagine they are still singing (Matthew 26:30), and they pass through the gate that leads down to the Kidron Valley. Next they descend the stairs down the valley and reach the bridge that crosses over the Brook Kidron and come to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knelt there, and he prayed the intercessory prayer that we find in John 17. Jesus prayed not only for his disciples there, but he prayed for you and me.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:21–23)

Jesus was asking that we would be one with him just as he is one with his Father, but the intent goes further than that. Jesus wants each of the believers to have a oneness among themselves, to be one within one another, just as Jesus is with his Father

While we might consider this basic *Christian Love 101* and even though I am not telling you anything here that you do not already know, the great question is are we truly putting this principle of love into practice in our daily lives in our homes, churches, and communities? This love was practiced by Jesus daily in his life, and he is our example. Are we following that example? Have we seriously considered what the cost of discipleship is and are we willing to pay the price of discipleship?

Jesus taught that we must be willing to give all for him, and we cannot live like him without being willing to give all as he gave all.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after

me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26–33)

We need to consider, Do we really have that sincere a love for our Savior that we are willing to give up all, to set aside all else, to love Jesus and follow him at any cost? If you are sincerely willing to set aside all to be a disciple of Christ because you love him so unconditionally, you will love mankind with that same kind of love. Love to God and love to our neighbor constitute the whole duty of man. Love is like a tender plant that needs to be constantly cultivated.

This love cannot flourish in the carnal heart. The Spirit of God will not abide where there is disunion and contention among believers. Even if these feelings are not expressed, they take possession of the heart, and they drive out the peace and the love that should characterize the life of every believer.

Beloved, we do not have time to play church. It is time to be serious. It is time for self-examination and to make wrongs right. Now is the time that we press together to finish this work so that we can go home and be with our Saviour forever, but we cannot press together without love for one another. Think about the disciples. Three and a half years they were together with each other and with Christ, but what was their attitude? There was selfishness, jealousy, strife, and contention. To accomplish the work Jesus had for them, they had to become one.

We today need to make all wrongs right. We have a message of salvation to give to this sin-sick world, We have a message to give with a loud voice to call the people to fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come. We have a message to call people to worship him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of water. We need to tell the world Babylon is fallen, is fallen. We need to tell the world that if any man worship the beast and his image and receive the mark, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Beloved, pride and selfishness are a poor exchange for the love of God and the reward that is being prepared for the faithful saints.

It is hard for us to fully understand what God has planned for his saints:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

I want that reward, don't you? I want to see and be with Jesus, don't you? I urge you again, dear ones, let us press together, press together so that we can finish this work and go home!

God has so blessed us with truth. He has laid out the cost of discipleship and our need to be faithful and to endure to the end so that we can be with him through eternity. May God bless us to be faithful in all things so that someday we can be with him and Christ forever.



“Setting Your House in Order” continued from page 5

The Bible teaching is plain that we all live on borrowed time, and death and the judgment could come suddenly at any given time. We are to prepare now to have our houses in order and to be ready so that if the Lord would see fit to allow us to die, our work on this earth of warning our families and friends, of preparing our own hearts, and of properly presenting the truth has been done to the pleasure of the Lord. We are to prepare for the transition of the physical, as well, in a proper will and testament that will stand the test of the law.

This last summer and fall I have had some health issues that resulted in emergency treatment and in some tests which indicated to the doctors that I might have colon cancer. More tests would need to be performed.

Having been mostly healthy all my life and trying to eat right, drink proper amounts of water, exercise, etc., this came as a heart-searching matter to me. Was my house in order? Had I made the proper spiritual and physical preparations needful, if my time was nearing the end? I prepared this study mostly, at first, to see if I was ready. Had I met the biblical requirements to be ready to die and have a house in order? In honesty I realized I needed to update my will and to do other things. Believing this topic important to our readers, this study was written before I learned from further tests that I do not have cancer. I am thankful that God has spared my life and that he has more for me to do. I realize, however, and I want you to realize also, that we live on borrowed time and that we are to have our houses in order so that if we were to be laid to rest at any given time, it will be well with our souls.



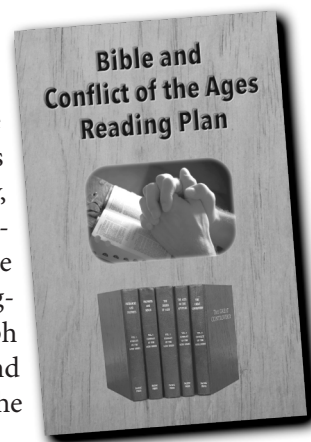
1889 HSDA Camp Meeting

The Smyrna Church has hosted a camping since 2000 and many have been blessed. This year, with the reorganization, others are able to help, and so we are joining efforts with the other churches to host a camp meeting May 16–20 at a great location—Fall Creek Falls State Park near Spencer, Tennessee. Many cabins and other facilities will be available, and we expect a great blessing. More details will be coming soon, but mark these dates in your calendars soon!



Bible and Conflict of the Ages Reading Plan

When I was canvassing forty years ago, we sold what we called “The Bible Reference Library.” This was actually what Adventists know as the Conflict of the Ages series, consisting of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*. To help people study systematically and regularly, a booklet was prepared that outlined a reading program so the student could read the Bible and this series through in a four-year period. The first year included the gospels and *The Desire of Ages*. The second year included the rest of the New Testament, with *The Acts of the Apostles* and *The Great Controversy*. The third year included most of the first half of the Bible and *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The fourth year finished the Bible, with *Prophets and Kings*. The booklet that was prepared for the canvassers was paged to the subscription editions of the Conflict of the Ages series and was not easy to use with books having the standard pagination. To make this study plan available to those who have the standard books and who wish to study deeply, we have prepared a new booklet, which follows the same plan but uses the standard pagination and has the paragraph numbers included, as is found in the electronic editions of the books.



We believe this booklet will be a great blessing to all who wish to study systematically in order to gain all the blessing they can. These booklets are available upon request, with a suggested donation of \$1.00, plus actual postage costs.



Youth's Corner – Kidnapped in Ecuador!

A Story of Faith, Surrender, Forgiveness, and Trust in God, Part 2

By Sheri Yohe

(In part one we learned of Sheri and her husband Don being directed by God to work as missionaries in Ecuador and how her kidnapping adventure began. You can read Part 1 in the November issue of *Old Paths*. Editor)

Locked in a storage room in Cuenca

I paid close attention to our route. We stopped at a gas station. I could see additional light under the tape covering my eyes. I figured we were in Loja from an estimate of the time since we had left the house. They pushed my coat-covered head to the floorboard, and the man beside me leaned over me as though he were sleeping on a bundle in the back seat. I heard the request to fill the tank from Allen. I hoped he was giving some signal of trouble to the gas station attendant. I took comfort in the fact that Allen was with me in the car.

I'd driven the curvy mountain road between Vilcabamba and Cuenca several times and knew of a few places that were unique. I knew we were on the road to Cuenca. There was a section where the road has a speed bump, crosses a bridge with two small speed bumps and then takes a sharp turn to the left. I paid close attention as we did indeed drive over those speed bumps and turn left. We were heading to Cuenca, which was a four-hour drive from our home in Vilcabamba. I remembered that we would have to go through Cuenca if we were heading to Columbia. Columbia was another twelve hours past Cuenca. Would they really take me to the southern border of Columbia? It is known as a very dangerous, military guerrilla-infested area.

A long while later, the car started slowing down more often and stopped at times for what I assumed were traffic lights. Light came through in places where the tape wasn't as tight over my eyes, and I could tell there were more streetlights, too.

Then we stopped.

The man next to me pushed my head down again and leaned over me. After a minute or so, we slowly moved forward and I heard Allen ask the man in the front seat, "Do you want me to stop here?" The man said yes.

The car stopped, and the back door opened. They pulled me out of the car and my bare feet touched a cold, concrete-type surface. I could tell we were outside from the cold night air and typical night sounds. I was again alarmed. Now what? Was this a temporary stop or the place my life

would end? I prayed; "God, please help me accept your will."

They led me a short distance, and I was surprised when I felt smooth tile under my feet. Where could we be? It was very dark, and then a light was turned on. They led me into a room with a cold concrete floor.

They had me sit down on a blanket on the floor and bound my hands behind my back with zip ties. They also put zip ties around my ankles to hold them together, but didn't make the zip ties around my ankles tight.

I had worked the duct tape off my mouth by this time from the moisture of my mouth and pushing the tape down with my lips. The man pushed a small, milky white plastic bottle to my mouth, which I could see below the tape. He told me to drink it. I refused twice but he kept insisting. Finally, I allowed the liquid into my mouth, waited a couple seconds, hoping the man would turn around satisfied that I had drunk it, or perhaps he didn't have any more, and then spat it out on my lap where it absorbed into my pajamas. My lips felt tingly and numb for a while.

Allen said that the kidnappers wanted him to tell me that there was a man outside the door who would come in and rape me if I screamed. He said he'd seen the man and he was very scary-looking.

Allen said the kidnappers wanted my security code for my credit cards. I gave him the three-digit code on the back of my card. He questioned me and then walked away. Then I realized that wasn't what they wanted. The kidnapper came in again, and I gave him my four-digit PIN for withdrawing money with my card. I was concerned that they would treat Allen worse if I didn't cooperate. The man repeated the code, then tied a soft cloth around my head and mouth and pulled it tight. He instructed me to lie down. It was difficult with my hands tied behind my back, so he guided me down onto my side, into a very uncomfortable position, with my right shoulder holding the weight of my upper body on the hard floor.

Someone put a quilted blanket over me. Then the light went out, the door shut, I heard a key in the lock, and it was silent. I worked the cloth off my mouth. I didn't know if they'd left Allen in the room with me, and called his name softly.

No answer. I was alone. It was cold and quiet.

I was thankful for the warm blanket, but I was very uncomfortable. Each movement I made tightened the zip ties. I tried lying on my stomach, but that wasn't good either. I pulled my feet up behind my back and worked the zip tie over the heel of one foot with my hands, and was able to free my ankles.

The ties on my wrists were very tight now. I was worried about the damage the zip ties would do as the blood was cut off to my hands. I tried to loosen them but couldn't.

I thought about my husband, bound in our home. Was he alive? Did he have another heart attack without anyone there to help him? I knew he would be terribly worried about me. I prayed for him.

I thought about Allen our friend who just happened to be staying at our house when this horrible thing happened, and who was now with the kidnappers. He knew where they were keeping me. How could they allow him to live? Would they take him to Colombia and kill him?

When would they come back? What would they do to me when they did? Would they kill me then?

I fought the terror that kept rising inside me. I again surrendered to God and chose to trust that He would allow what was right for me. It was a mental activity that I worked hard to internalize and accept in my heart.

We had not been in Ecuador one year and here I was beyond my wildest nightmares. I had been kidnapped and locked in a storage room. No one but kidnappers and our friend Allen knew where I was. Allen was obviously in grave danger and would be working to free himself. Probably he would be no help to me. He may not live through this.

It was November 20, 2013, when we flew into Quito Ecuador, and then the next morning took the short interior flight to Cuenca. We lived in the city of Cuenca for the last eight months while planning to move to the town of Vilcabamba in southern Ecuador after taking care of our residency papers. In researching the country, I'd concluded that Vilcabamba had the altitude and climate we thought would be best for us and there was a small church there that we could work with.

On our third day in Ecuador, we met a man I'll call Allen and his girlfriend Karol on the city bus (not their real names). This meeting seemed like a divine appointment. Allen introduced himself to us as a cardiologist who had just returned from Los Angeles, California. He was born in Loja, Ecuador—the closest city to Vilcabamba, where we would eventually move, and told us he'd done his medical training at UCLA and worked at Cedar Sinai Hospital in L.A. He told us many stories of his experiences there, in-

cluding being at the hospital when they brought Michael Jackson in when he passed away. He said that had caused quite a stir among the hospital staff, as we could imagine.

Allen seemed like a godsend. He researched rental apartments for us and came with us to see them. When we finally found a house, he read the lease agreement for us and found a typo that would have been costly. He always negotiated good taxi rates for us. He helped us get Ecuadorian SIM cards for our cell phones. Everything takes time and patience in Ecuador. People we had appointments with were late or didn't show up, and it took days to change to Ecuadorean chips in our cell phones. I teased Allen, who had taken the phones into the shop at the mall for us, joking that he was ripping us off and was making up stories. He has a very good sense of humor, and played along and laughed with us. I wasn't sure why this person we'd just met was so willing to help us, but I sure didn't know what we would have done without him.

On January 1, just a few weeks after arriving in the country, I came down with pneumonia. A month later, Don had a heart attack. Allen was right there to help us at the hospital, and he became a very good friend. It was hard to believe we had known him such a short time. He helped us through many difficult times over the next eight months. He went with us on a few family trips, including a five-day stay in the Galapagos Islands. Allen was always concerned for our safety. He would meet our flights in Guayaquil and meet the flights of our friends when they came to visit, and bring them back to Cuenca or to a safe hotel. It's a three-hour drive, one way, through the Caja Mountains from Cuenca to the airport in Guayaquil, yet he was always willing to make the trip for our friends and us.

On Wednesday, August 6, 2014, eight and a half months after arriving in Ecuador, we moved to a rental house in Vilcabamba, Loja province, Ecuador.

We began attending the Vilcabamba church and were just in time to help with the graduation service for local children who had been learning English with volunteers from the church. Allen, who was visiting us that weekend, also attended the graduation.

On Tuesday, August 12, 2014, less than a week after moving into our new rental home in Vilcabamba, Don and I were in bed for the night. Our friend, Allen, was spending the fifth night of his visit in our guest room. He planned to return to Cuenca the next day. That night, two men entered our home, and our kidnapping nightmare began.

To be continued

The Shame of Thy Nakedness

By Richard Cecere

Something we all do every day is wear clothes. Just how important are our choices? After all, it's just clothes, isn't it? Have you ever considered that we are getting dressed for God?

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). What, exactly, does dressing to the glory of God look like?

Recall the directions God gave to Moses regarding the attire to be worn in the temple service: they were to “make holy garments... for glory and for beauty” (Exodus 28:2).

“For glory,” so that the priestly office would be regarded with greater reverence by the people, and to constantly remind the priests of their holy station and its demand for consecrated living.

“For beauty,” to emphasize that these garments were representative of the character of God, which He sought to have reproduced in the hearts and lives of His people.

“The words of Scripture in regard to dress should be carefully considered. We need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates in even the dressing of the body . . . Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel” (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 96.3).

Whether we realize it or not, the clothing we choose to wear reveals a set of truths about ourselves that the world will readily understand: our economic level, our education level, our social status, our level of sophistication, our heritage, and also, believe it or not, our moral character.

☞ Consider what the following passages teach us about the distinctiveness of dress throughout the Old Testament:

☞ Tamar deceives Judah by dressing in the clothing of a prostitute (Genesis 38:14, 15).

☞ Moses was identified as an Egyptian by his clothing (Exodus 2:16-19).

☞ Israelites were to be identified by the details of their clothing (Numbers 15:37-40).

☞ Achan covets Babylonian clothing (Joshua 7:20, 21).

☞ Tamar was identified as a virgin by her clothing (2 Samuel 13:18, 19).

☞ Elijah was clearly identified by his clothing (2 Kings 1:5-8).

☞ Dress foreign to Israel indicated heathen manners and customs (Zephaniah 1:8).

Consider also the attire of the two women of the book of Revelation. One is clothed in light and in righteousness; the other in the fashions and adornments of this world. Two ideas of worship and practice. Two choices. The Great Controversy in dress.

FOUR PRINCIPLES

There are four main principles for us to consider when it comes to our clothing:

1) Simplicity

2) Modesty

3) Health

4) Gender Distinction

Let's briefly explore each.

SIMPLICITY

“In no better way can you let your light shine to others than in your simplicity of dress and deportment” (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 417.1). This surprising statement raises an interesting point. Can our clothing and physical appearance actually influence our conduct? Consider what the following verse tells us about how the external strongly affected the actions of an angel in heaven before the creation of the earth.

“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty” (Ezekiel 28:17).

Lucifer's pride in his physical appearance led to his downfall, and will lead to his ultimate destruction. God sees and values the condition of our heart, and longs to keep us from falling into pride as Lucifer did. The gift of natural simplicity contains many blessings, not the least of which is that we are protected from vanity, immorality, and impurity.

By following fashion, and attracting attention to ourselves with unnatural means, we'll be indistinguishable from the world. But the opposite is also true. When we observe God's principles of simplicity in our dress and deportment, we'll easily be identified as followers of Jesus Christ. Some synonyms for simplicity are integrity, restraint, and purity.

☞ To practice the principle of simplicity in our dress means that we will:

- ☞ look as nice and neat as we can, without using artificial means.
- ☞ have good quality clothes that fit well and are pleasant and comfortable to wear.
- ☞ follow the principles of cleanliness, good taste, and appropriateness for the occasion.
- ☞ avoid extravagant or costly apparel and accessories, or loud colors or designs.
- ☞ resist the unnatural in favor of what is authentic and uncomplicated.

Some key questions to ask when evaluating whether or not our clothing adheres to the principles of simplicity are:

Will my attire foster humility, or pride in the minds of others? (1 Timothy 2:9, 10)

What is my motivation for wearing a particular article of clothing? (Proverbs 7:10)

Could my appearance cause covetousness in the hearts of others? (1 Samuel 16:7)

Is God asking too much when He requires simplicity and plainness in our appearance? If we are willing to embrace His direction in this area, we'll begin to appreciate what God appreciates. And the so-called beauty of the world will look artificial and not so appealing.

MODESTY

Modesty is defined as “reserve in speech, dress, or behavior; moral purity in thought, manner, and conduct.” Jeff Pollard, in his book *Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America*, page 22, wrote, “Christian modesty then will not publicly expose itself in sinful nakedness.” But what exactly is nakedness?

The Bible tells us that human beings were created by God in a state of nakedness, but without shame. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image... male and female created He them... And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:25).

We are also told that God covered Himself “with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:1, 2), and that He created male and female in His image. From that we can conclude that Adam and Eve were also covered in light while in the Garden of Eden.

“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this

robe of light continued to enshroud them” (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.3).

However, Satan had a plan to entice the parents of the human race to disobey God. Eve separated from her husband and was deceived at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “The woman... took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:1-7).

The serpent successfully persuaded the fallen couple to trust in their own evaluation of what was good. We're told that Adam and Eve sewed together aprons made of fig leaves, indeed becoming the first human fashion designers. Whose influence were they under as they made these garments? The light of the glory of the knowledge of God had departed from them. As a result, a somber truth instantly became evident to them.

“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:9-10).

They recognized that they were now naked, in a state contrary to God's original design. But hadn't they made aprons for themselves? Yes, but apparently those garments weren't sufficient. They were still naked. And God saw that they needed additional covering.

“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). God's solution to the nakedness of the first couple was to clothe them in “coats,” not just mere “aprons.”

What about those who came after Adam? How were they dressed? In aprons or coats?

“Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours” (Genesis 37:3).

“Moreover his (Samuel's) mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice” (1 Samuel 2:19).

“Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace” (Daniel 3:21).

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments... and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout” (John 19:23).

What are some of the obvious differences between aprons and coats?

Aprons have a lower neck line, which exposes the chest; Coats have a higher neck line, which covers the chest. Aprons have no sleeves, which exposes the arms; Coats have long sleeves, which covers the arm. Aprons have a low back or no back at all; Coats have a closed back. Aprons usually fall above knee, which exposes the thighs and legs; Coats usually fall to the calf or ankle, covering the thigh and beyond.

It's interesting that from the very beginning, right up unto our day, Satan's design reveals the body, while God's design conceals our nakedness.

What are some of the characteristics of Satan's design? Most can fall into one of three categories (and much of this applies equally to men as well as women):

Partial exposure — peek-a-boo effect, low or loose necklines, slits, sheer material, lace (also sleeves revealing the underarms, shoulders or upper arms).

Accentuating — tight, clingy material which reveals the shape of the chest, hips, crotch or thighs (also high heels, leggings, and skinny suits).

Drawing attention to — writing or images across the chest or backside (monogrammed t-shirts, jeans), visible undergarments, cuts or lines that draw the eye.

Our bodies inevitably change. Our weight fluctuates. The dress that was fine six months ago may no longer be modest. If one has recently begun a work-out program, the shirt you've worn all year may no longer hang loose enough to be modest. A full-length mirror is a true necessity for every household as we dress ourselves each day. Ladies and gentleman can check their appearance while standing, sitting, crossing their legs, reaching and stretching to observe their appearance, and then make any necessary adjustments before leaving home.

Our goal is to please the Lord in all things, even, and especially, in our dress. Thankfully, we have been given abundant information about how Christians can choose appropriate garments. May we endeavor to clothe ourselves in simplicity and modesty, for God's glory.

“So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10).

HEALTH

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

You've no doubt heard the phrase, “You are what you eat.” Well, it turns out that we are what we wear, as well! “Satan is constantly devising some new style of dress that

shall prove an injury to physical and moral health” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p 634.4).

Most of us have an understanding about how important proper eating and drinking is for health; but how much do we know about dressing for health? Proper dress is actually an essential part of the health message.

“Perfect health depends upon perfect circulation” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 531.2), and perfect circulation is dependent upon two things: 1) clothing must be evenly distributed; and 2) clothing must be loose fitting. Let's explore these two points a little deeper.

1). Clothing should be evenly distributed - “Because optimal health requires a balanced circulation, special attention should be given to the extremities, that they may be as thoroughly clothed as the chest and the region over the heart” (Mary Ann McNeilus, M.D., *Temperance in Dress: A Reform Less Followed*, p. 33).

When considering the apron style of dress that we looked at in Part 1, we saw that the limbs would not be equally covered, but rather unprotected. We are told that “Satan invented the fashions which leave the limbs exposed” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 531.3). So, dressing in that manner is not only immodest, but unhealthful.

Most of us understand that we must fully cover up in cold weather in order to properly regulate our body temperature, using long sleeves, coats, boots, hats, scarves, and gloves (remember that exposed skin can become chilled in air conditioning, as well). But what about in hot weather? Is the answer just to wear less clothing? Not necessarily. The idea that the warmer it is the less we wear is not based on a correct understanding of physiology.

A light and even covering over the whole body is best even for hotter weather. Consequently, a knowledge of various fabrics and their effect on heat and cold can prove quite valuable. For instance, natural fibers such as linen and cotton tend to be more cooling on the skin in summer, while wool, silk, and cashmere are warming, and would generally be healthier choices in the winter time. Synthetic garments, such as polyester and rayon, are better options for layering rather than wearing directly against the skin. All of these principles should be considered for bedding, as well.

“Instead of struggling to meet the demands of fashion, have the courage to dress healthfully and simply” (Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 294.1).

2) Clothing should not be overly-tight. Tight clothes change more than our appearance. They can actually alter the way the body functions. Constricting garments, whether pants, belts, shirt collars, bras, or undergarments

can lead to respiratory impairment, chest pain, digestive issues, muscle pain, and even organ displacement. Clothes should be loose enough to allow for breathing freely and also for freedom of movement.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). The blood does three things that are essential for good health. It carries oxygen, water and nutrients to the organs, tissues and cells; it carries metabolic waste away from the organs, tissues and cells; and it maintains proper body temperature. When the body is evenly covered with properly-fitting clothes, the blood is then free to do its part to preserve and promote good health.

What about shoes? It is estimated that, in an average lifetime, we use our feet to walk the equivalent of five times the circumference of the earth. Collected data suggests that 80% of men and women wear shoes that are too tight, which can lead to such problems as corns, bunions, hammertoes, callouses, ingrown toenails, and neuropathy. Footwear should be chosen which furnishes adequate toe, heel, and arch support, is adjustable to your foot size, and provides protection and comfort. We should discard shoes which have become so worn that they have lost some of these basic functions.

Flip-flops, sandals, and ballet flats can be problematic, as they are often too thin and too open. These types of footwear should be avoided for prolonged walking as they offer very little to no arch support, heel cushioning, or shock absorption.

High-heeled shoes, in particular, while popular and fashionable, can lead to a variety of foot and spine ailments, including improper body posture, back and hip problems, and toe damage, as well as increasing the danger of tripping and falling. High heels tilt the body forward, placing an extra strain upon the ligaments of the ankle. This unnatural position of the feet can negatively affect the health of the whole body.

“In all respects the dress should be healthful. ‘Above all things,’ God desires us to ‘be in health’—health of body and of soul. And we are to be workers together with Him for the health of both soul and body. Both are promoted by healthful dress” (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 398.1).

GENDER DISTINCTION

“The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:5).

That's some strong language. But, how do we apply it in our day?

“God designed there should be a plain distinction between male and female dress, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion” (Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 478.1).

But few of us are blind to the confusion that is rampant in our current society when it comes to any distinctions between men and women. The Bible is clear that God created us in His image, male and female. But Satan says no; there is no distinction between male and female. The Bible is equally clear that God created men and women with distinct gender roles before sin and after sin. But Satan says no; there is no distinction here either.

However, the verse from Deuteronomy quoted above tells us specifically that, to the mind of God, there are clothes that pertain exclusively to a man, and there are clothes that pertain exclusively to a woman. Violating this principle in our dress can actually bring our defilement, and even God's hatred against our clothing choices.

Many women in the Western world have been wearing traditionally-male garments for some time now. “There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 457.2). That statement was written in 1867. And while women's fashion has progressively become more masculine, men's fashion has correspondingly become steadily more feminine, in styles, patterns, colors, designs, and cuts. Skinny jeans, skinny suits, and tight shirts rule the day, leaving very little to the imagination.

The fashion industry, emboldened by the media and the entertainment industry, has succeeded in conditioning men and women to not only wear less, but to choose unisex, or genderless, clothing, more and more. Over the years, notable male entertainers have made a career of dressing in women's clothing as a way to get attention and cheap laughs, their example making feminine garments, make-up, and earrings commonplace for increasing numbers of men today. Indeed, men in our society have long been told to get in touch with a feminine side which they do not possess. Now, women are likewise being encouraged to embrace a masculine side which they do not naturally possess.

A genderless society is commonly known as an androgynous society. The term androgynous combines the two Greek words Andros (male) and gune (female), which describes an individual who integrates both male and female traits. As Christians, do we believe in the idea of an androgynous society? No. God created us male and female.

The driving force behind the unisex fashion is the feminist vision of a genderless society. Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes. As Christians, do we believe in the equality of the sexes? Yes and no. God says we're equal in value, equal in reflecting His image, but not equal in role. The fashions for both sexes becoming similar serves to further blur the traditional male and female roles in society. Because clothing contributes to our understanding of our gender roles.

A current online catalog lists certain women's clothing items as being "Menswear-Inspired" or "Borrowed-from-the-boys." The world system has come out of the closet, so to speak, about their unisex agenda in the fashion world. They can proudly proclaim that their fashions for women are actually just slightly modified men's clothes. Even Christian women have been wearing men's fashions for several decades now, so why bother to keep the unisex agenda secret any longer? Just how close to the line of abomination do we want to be when it comes to dress, or any other heavenly principle?

And this attack on gender distinction has become decidedly mainstream. Here are some actual titles to articles that are currently posted on the internet regarding unisex fashion: "How to Be a Feminine Guy: 10 Steps (with Pictures)"; "Diet Plan to Help Men Look More Feminine"; "How Men Can be More Feminine: 20 Ways to Feel More Girly"; "Finding Masculine Clothes for a Female Body"; "How to wear a masculine-feminine style."

"It is very evident that the Lord intended that His people should be distinguished from the world by their clothing. Women should not appear mannish in their wearing apparel or men effeminate. Many customs in modern dress are breaking down the distinguishing marks identifying the opposite sexes and are thus contributing to the modern laxity in moral standards." (Taylor Bunch, *Exodus and Advent Movements in Type and Antitype*, p. 75)

Honoring the principles of gender-distinct clothing involves putting careful thought into determining which types of clothing are historically distinct to each gender in our culture and then doing all we can to preserve that distinction. We should celebrate gender differences and teach our children to do the same, telling them, "God made you male or female, and designed you to reflect certain aspects of His image." We bring glory to God when we purposefully maintain gender-distinguishing features in our clothing according to His word.

IN CONCLUSION

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be ar-

rayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7, 8).

God has carefully selected the appropriate garments for his sons and daughters to wear. Those garments are fine, clean, and white. In a fallen world, our clothing has a purpose. Along with all of our other lifestyle choices, our wardrobe sends a clear message about who we are and Who we represent. Are we garbed in the righteousness of Christ, or in the filthy rags of the world?

Whether it be in the area of simplicity, modesty, health, or gender distinction, may we each endeavor daily to put on the principles of godly dress, as an expression of our Christianity, and to bring glory to the One who created us and redeemed us. The Bridegroom is coming for a bride clothed in pure and holy garments. Let the church be ready for that day, and even hasten it! (Matthew 25:6)

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18).

(Richard Cecere and his wife, Leslie, volunteer at Uchee Pines Institute in Seale, Alabama. He enjoys reading, teaching, and being married, not necessarily in that order.)



Perhaps no question has ever come up among us which has caused such development of character as has the dress reform. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 636.3)

Old Paths is a free monthly newsletter/study-paper published by Smyrna Gospel Ministries, 750 Smyrna Road, Welch, WV 24801-9606 USA. The paper is dedicated to the propagation and restoration of the principles of truth that God gave to the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. Duplication is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged. This issue, with other gospel literature we publish, can be found at our website. The url is: <http://www.smyrna.org>. Phone: 1-304-732-9204. Fax: 1-304-732-7322.

Editor Allen Stump—editor@smyrna.org
Associate Editor Onycha Holt—onycha@smyrna.org