

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Living Wisely – 19-25 August 2023

Christ “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24) is the only means by which, if He “dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17), you can truly live wisely. It is in that context we read the memory text: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15-17). The Lord has given the rule for Bible study in the words, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Timothy 2:7). This does not say we are to consider what somebody may say that the Lord says. Here is where very many go astray. It is what the Lord says that we are to consider. Go to the fountain head direct. We are not to consider what we may think He means, nor what someone else says He means. The Lord means what He says, and He tells us that the way to get an understanding of what He means is to consider what He says. The understanding comes from the Lord, and the Lord teaches the understanding of the truth by putting the truth into the life of the learner. The Psalmist prayed, “Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts,” and in thanking the Lord for answering the prayer he tells us how it was done: “I will never forget Thy precepts; for with them Thou hast quickened me” [or made me to live] (Psalm 119:27, 98). It is the promise of the new covenant, “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). But if the Lord is to teach by living the word in the learner, the life must be yielded to Him. It is why men are sometimes so slow to understand even the plainest precepts – they are not ready for the Lord to bring what He says into their experience. But it is a blessed experience, as everyone knows who has tried it. Every precept becomes a promise, and every word a treasure house of good things.

Sunday: “Instead Let There Be Thanksgiving” – Jokes are off limits for Christians; but what do you say to professed Christians who say jokes are a way of enjoying life and what would life be if we must live it all through with a long face? “Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...but fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient [unsuitable]; but rather [let there be] giving of thanks” (Ephesians 5:1-4). Many know that jokes are not for Christians, yet make jokes, for they have a form of godliness without the power (2 Timothy 3:5). “No man can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24). No human heart can contain at the same time the spirit of jesting and the Spirit of Christ. If we have the spirit of jesting, we have not the Spirit of Christ; and the Word says, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Romans 8:9). “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27). “As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport?” (Proverbs 26:18-19). Jokes are nothing else but lies, and the one who indulges in them proclaims himself a fool. Many think jokes are innocence sport. But if a madman should come into a crowded assembly and begin to scatter bullets, it would not be called innocent sport; but Solomon says he is just like one who deceives his neighbour, and says, “Am not I in sport?” (Prov 26:19). “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25).

Monday: Walking as Children of Light – The Lesson writer asks: What are some of the “empty words” that in our day and age we need to be wary of? ‘Climate Change’ is in our time one of the ‘empty word’ people speak. Bible Prophecy helps us understand climate change as the precursor to Sunday law. “And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights” (Luke 21:11). That climate crisis will lead to Sunday law, was predicted: “Men in responsible positions ... will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, ... they will point to calamities on land and sea – to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire – as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed” {ST January 17, 1884, par. 12). Sunday advocates are using climate change to bolster up an institution which has no foundation in truth. They know that Sunday was never observed by our Lord or by holy men in the Bible. “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:6).

Tuesday: “Awake, O Sleeper!” – The Lesson writer asks: how do you live the kind of lifestyle that can expose works of darkness for what they are? We expose the works of darkness by holding forth the light. “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:20). In the light sin is its own condemnation, and as Christ “was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9), every man in sin knows the condemnation. So, the Christian is to be simply a light, a reflection of the glory of the life of Christ, and the light will reprove sin, and work with persuasive force to lead the sinner to yield. The difficulty is this: the light is life. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). But many Adventists do not have the life of Christ, for they do not believe in the literal Son of God who only has life. God has given us life, but this life resides only in His Son (1 John 5:11). Only as we have the life of Christ can we have the light. The life of Christ lived in us is the constant reprover of sin, even though no words are spoken. This is the way the Lord treated us. Dead in trespasses and sins He called to us, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee” (Eph 5:14). In the brightness of His glory our sins were purged. And we who “were once darkness,” became “light in the Lord,” and rejoiced in the life which He gave.

Wednesday: Snapping Up the Bargains – Did you ever wish you might have a chance to do something very good and great in your life? The three Hebrew captives boldly refused to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel went into the lion’s den rather than conceal the fact that he prayed to God. Peter and John answered without fear when the Jewish rulers commanded them to stop their preaching. Paul preached before Felix, the Governor, Herod the King, and Nero, the great Emperor of Rome. Since that time men like Wycliffe, Luther, and others, about whom we have read, have had the same boldness to be true to God, when almost all the world were against them. ‘But no such chance will ever come to me,’ I hear someone say. Do not be too sure of that. The opportunity to be true to God comes every day to everyone. What we must learn is to make use of it. “Redeeming the time,” is what we are told to be doing in Ephesians 5:16 – a better rendering of the Greek is “buying up the opportunity.” Those whom we have just mentioned, and the scores of others whose names will be thought of by everyone who reads the Bible stories, simply bought up the opportunities that came to them. Sometimes the most difficult things are not the facing of lions, or imprisonment. One of the greatest things that can be done is to keep one’s temper when angry words have been spoken. Or it is to tell the exact truth when tempted to tell a lie. Solomon says, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32). Opportunities are presented every day for every one of us to do mighty deeds. The longing to do some great thing – such as the world calls great – has kept many from doing the really great things. And it is good of the Lord, too, that He has made it so that the great things in His sight are such as even the youngest can do.

Thursday: Spirit-Filled Worship – The Lesson writer asks: How can you use music to enhance your own worship experience? “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20). How has music become a snare in Adventism? Satanic music was used at the closing ceremony of the third Indonesian Pathfinder Camporee 2023, which was held from 26 June to 2 July 2023, organised jointly by the Adventist churches in the West Indonesia Union Mission (WIUM) and the East Indonesia Union Mission (EIUC). This event that was themed “NISCALA,” which means “calm” and “firm,” ended up to be anything but clam! It fulfilled to the letter the prophecy of Ellen White that “just before the close of probation” there will be in Adventism “shouting, with drums, music and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit” {15LtMs, Lt 132, 1900, par. 22} – spirit-filled worship? “A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which, if conducted aright, might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit’s working” {15LtMs, Lt 132, 1900, par. 23}. This event, featuring rap music, animism, tribal dancing, nakedness, secular and worldly entertainment, was attended by over 4,500 young people, with live coverage on Hope Channel Indonesia.