

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.’ ” John 15:9, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

“This week, let’s consider the current state of our relationship with God..., take an honest reality check of ourselves, and listen to the solution that Jesus describes.” Qtly, Sab, last par

1. God wants a *committed* relationship... (Sab-Fri)

- “If you want to overcome your enemy, take over his language.”
 - “Relationship-speak” has been the emphasis in the church for the 30+ years that I’ve been back in it to curtail the “rampant legalism” in Adventism and give people more assurance of salvation.
 - While it’s true that “a relationship with God changes everything – both here and into eternity” (Qtly, Sab, par 2), that change can be either good or bad, depending on the quality and kind of relationship.
- God wants a *committed* relationship with us.
 - In the modern church, God is often portrayed as the doting, lovelorn boyfriend. However, in the words of evangelist Paul Washer, “God is not a beggar with a tin cup.” He will only accept a committed relationship with His people, because anything less will result in our destruction.

2. ...We don’t (Tue)

- Jesus’ diagnosis of His last-day church’s relationship is not one of a lack of assurance, but a false assurance (see Rev. 3:14-17).
 - While He describes this church as “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (v. 17), the worst part is that they see themselves in a positive spiritual condition.
- His solution (v. 18) is in direct response to our condition –
 - Poor – gold
 - Blind – eyesalve
 - Naked – white garments
 - Unfortunately, the only ones who will take Him up on His offer are those who acknowledge that they need what He’s offering.

The great Redeemer represents Himself as a heavenly merchantman, laden with riches, calling from house to house, presenting His priceless goods, and saying, "I counsel thee to buy of Me..." FW 84.1

The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. COL 152.1

- The rebuke of Jesus to the church in Laodicea is not because He doesn't love them, but because He does! (see v. 19).
 - "It's precisely because He loves us so deeply that He rebukes us in our current state. He wants a much stronger, deeper relationship with us.... He tells us to repent. But we can't repent unless we realize that there's something wrong" Qtly, Mon, par 1, 2

3. We must choose to abide in Christ (Wed, Thu)

- In the Parable of the Vine and the Branches, Jesus not only demonstrates our vital need of Him, but the lasting solution to our Laodiceanism (Jn. 15:4-7).
 - To "abide" in Christ means to "remain united" to Him (v. 4, GNB), allowing Him to "prune" (v. 2) or "clean" us (v. 3) by His Word as we continually grow more like Him.

Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service.... As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character. DA 676.2 (Qtly, Fri, par 2)

- True spiritual life flows out of the Vine.
 - Without the "sap" of the Holy Spirit flowing through us, our religious experience will be lacking the proper motivation for truly serving God, potentially becoming nothing more than a burdensome adherence to a list of spiritual obligations.

When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within.... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. COL 97, 98

- While imparting spiritual life is Jesus' work, abiding in Him must be our continual choice (see Qtly, Thu, par 2, 4).

CONCLUSION

As the severed branch, leafless, and apparently lifeless, is ingrafted into the living stock, and, fiber by fiber, and vein by vein, drinks in the life and strength of the vine until it buds and blossoms and bears fruit, even so may the sinner, by repentance and faith, connect himself with Christ, become a partaker of the divine nature, and bring forth in words and deeds the fruit of a holy life. OHC 145.2