

1. Reality Check (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship With God)

Biblical material: Rev. 3:14–22; Rev. 4:9–11; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 3:8–10; Jer. 31:3, 4; John 15:1–11; Rom. 8:9–11.

Quotes

- Death ends a life, not a relationship. *Mitch Albom*
- All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us. *J.R.R. Tolkien*
- Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death that awaits me does not undo and destroy? *Leo Tolstoy*
- Our life is full of brokenness - broken relationships, broken promises, broken expectations. How can we live with that brokenness without becoming bitter and resentful except by returning again and again to God's faithful presence in our lives. *Henri Nouwen*
- Sin is not weakness, it is a disease; it is red-handed rebellion against God and the magnitude of that rebellion is expressed by Calvary's cross. *Oswald Chambers*
- Sin and death and suffering and war and poverty are not natural—they are the devastating results of our rebellion against God. We long for a return to Paradise—a perfect world, without the corruption of sin, where God walks with us and talks with us in the cool of the day. *Randy Alcorn*

Questions

Why is it essential for us to know who and what we are? How do we see God in our “reality check”? Even if we do know God, how do we avoid being “lukewarm”? How do we see the consequences of the Fall? How does God work to end our rebellion? If death is inevitable, what is our hope? How does the great controversy play into all of this?

Bible summary

Revelation 3:14–22 is the message to the lukewarm church of Laodicea. Revelation 4:9–11 is the praise to God from the living creatures; Genesis 2:7 describes how God created Adam. In Genesis 3:8–10 God speaks to Adam after the Fall. Jeremiah 31:3, 4 speaks of God everlasting love for his people. In John 15:1–11 Jesus speaks of being the vine and we are the branches. Romans 8:9–11 refers to the Spirit superseding our sinful nature.

Comment

We do need to realize our situation. We are estranged from God. We are the ones who are hostile to God, not the other way around. We are the ones who need to be convinced to come back to God, to gain a true picture of who he is and what he does.

So it's good to have a reality check. The Bible pulls no punches. It tells us that we are sinners and without God's healing we will die. We also need to recognize that the way in which he has often been portrayed has frequently been wrong. Satan has made it a major objective to misrepresent and defame God, using all kinds of lies and deceptions, and God can only respond by demonstration. The great controversy is all about God showing who he is in contrast to the Devil's slanders, and can only end when this is completely clarified.

While the Fall is described in a very limited way in Genesis, its impact on humanity and the world has been immense—more significant than we can imagine. The act of distrusting God broke the relationship, and placed us in the position of opposition to God. It was not that God responded by ending the lives of Adam and Eve, but that they brought the consequences of sin upon themselves. When God said “you will surely die,” he was not executing them, but letting them know that sin inevitably leads to death. As Paul wrote, “The wage sin pays is death.” Romans 6:23.

“The sinful human mind results in death, but having the mind led by the Spirit results in life and peace. The sinful human mind is hostile to God because it refuses to obey the law of God—in

fact it never can, and those who follow their sinful nature can never please God. But you're not following your sinful nature, but the Spirit—if it's true that the Spirit of God is living in you." Romans 8:6-9.

We see that our lives are not what we would want them to be, spiritually-speaking. We recognize that we are in need. We need to be "revived"—brought back to life! But how is this best achieved? While we can appreciate the desire by church administrators for "revival and reformation," in reality this is the work of the Spirit, and cannot be "programmatized."

As we consider the gospel commission that we are called to share, we ask, "Is this to be a feeble, fearful, and fragile witness?" Certainly not! Our outreach is to be "very bold," since it centers on the God-given hope we share. We are a community of hope, we have become heirs of the hope of eternal life. How can we keep such a hope to ourselves? We are compelled to share it!

During this quarter we'll see how our growing relationship with God inspires hope which we in turn share with others. Knowing Jesus and his soon return has always been a vibrant force for mission. As our hope in the trustworthiness of our loving God is brought back into focus, as it is placed at the forefront of our message to the world, then we can be sure that God will ensure that his promises are understood. "Come," invites the Lord. And when they come, we must be ready to share our hope, sincerely and warmly, so that the love of God may shine through us and be seen by those who so desperately need him.

As a faith community we may be "jars of clay," but we have the priceless treasure of faith and hope given to us. Not to keep and hoard, like some modern-day miser, but to give away to whoever will receive. We are encouraged to speak words of encouragement to all we meet.

Ellen White Comments

Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity, and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind. {MH 423}

What more important knowledge can be gained than that which outlines the fall of man, and the consequences of that sin which opened the floodgates of woe upon the world... {CT 427}

When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists naturally no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy. The apostate is never at rest, except as he obtains sympathy and support by inducing others to follow his example. For this reason fallen angels and wicked men unite in desperate companionship. Had not God specially interposed, Satan and man would have entered into an alliance against Heaven; and instead of cherishing enmity against Satan, the whole human family would have been united in opposition to God. {GC 505}

Selfishness is the essence of depravity, and because human beings have yielded to its power, the opposite of allegiance to God is seen in the world today. Nations, families, and individuals are filled with a desire to make self a center. Man longs to rule over his fellow men. Separating himself in his egotism from God and his fellow beings, he follows his unrestrained inclinations. He acts as if the good of others depended on their subjection to his supremacy. Selfishness has brought discord into the church, filling it with unholy ambition.... Selfishness destroys Christlikeness, filling man with self-love. It leads to continual departure from righteousness. {CS 24}

They do not understand what they must do to be saved. Many are sunken in sin. Many are in distress. They are pressed with suffering, want, unbelief, despondency. Disease of every type afflicts them, both in body and in soul. They long to find a solace for their troubles, and Satan tempts them to seek it in lusts and pleasures that lead to ruin and death. He is offering them the apples of Sodom, that will turn to ashes upon their lips. They are spending their money for that which is not bread and their labor for that which satisfieth not. {COL 232}