

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2026: *Growing in a Relationship With God*

Lesson 1 “Reality Check”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 3:14–22; Revelation 4:9–11; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:8–10; Jeremiah 31:3, 4; John 15:1–11; Romans 8:9–11.

Memory Text

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

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Our Condition
- III. Rebuke, Repent, and Reward
- IV. Everlasting Love
- V. Abide
- VI. The Sap
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. One’s relationship with God and the picture of God that one has impact everything in life; one’s marriage, one’s parenting, one’s friendships, one’s financial decisions, one’s choice of leisure activities, one’s aspirations, and, of course, one’s eternal destiny. For a change, this series of lessons is not written by a biblical or theological scholar, they are written by an educator and a mother who is best-known for writing religious curricula for the high school level. So these lessons are not technical Bible studies, as has often been the case in the past, but approach the topic experientially. (Introduction to Quarter)
2. The author suggests that our spiritual race is a marathon, not a sprint. What can we learn from this analogy? (Introduction to Quarter)
3. What are the things that need to happen in order to have a relationship with someone? How can you have a living relationship with God when you cannot see, hear, or touch Him? (Sabbath Afternoon)

4. Have you ever wondered what Jesus might say if He described your relationship with Him right now? The author suggests that Revelation 3:14-22 is pertinent to that question. There Jesus describes the church of Laodicea, which Adventists have understood to apply to them. Read Revelation 3:14-17. Is Jesus analysis here individual or institutional? What is the key issue in this passage? (Sunday)
5. What advice does Jesus give in Revelation 3:18-19? (Sunday)
6. Read Revelation 3:20. What is Jesus inviting the church to do and what implications does that have? How does one open the door spiritually? (Monday)
7. In spite of the wretched condition of Laodicea, she is offered that greatest of all the rewards for overcoming. Read Revelation 3:21. What do the following accounts tell us about how God relates to human beings (Gen 2:7; 3:8-10; 5:24; 6:13; 12:1-4; Exod 34:29)? What would you say are the biggest hindrances to a relationship with God? (Tuesday)
8. Read John 15:1-11. Who are the branches in this metaphor? How do John 20:29-31 and 17:20 help to clarify this point? What implications does the vine and branches metaphor have for our relationship with God? How can you have a living relationship with God when you cannot see, hear, or touch Him? (Wednesday and Thursday)
9. Can you identify life events that led to a lukewarm experience with God? How did it and what brought you out of that condition? (Friday)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Surely it's clear in the epistle to Rome that all that God asks of us is that we trust him, because if we trust him, without reservation, with no cheating, with a complete willingness to listen, he can heal and save and restore us. But if I'm forever violating that trust, that relationship with him, if sometimes I'll listen and sometimes I don't, sometimes I'm honest with him and sometimes I'm not, will he condemn me? Do you doctors condemn your patients who are foolish enough not to take their medicine and so become more and more seriously ill? Now you might correct them; that's for sure. You might show great concern. You might, if need be, sound very stern and severe. You might read them the medical equivalent of the third angel's message. "If you persist in this, you're going to die." You might well do that. But you wouldn't condemn them, would you? What good would it do to send them home, corrected to be sure, but condemned and humiliated?

Whenever we violate our relationship of trust in God, he can't trust us. Sometimes we're with him, sometimes we're not, it's a very irregular relationship. Sometimes we're so honest and sometimes we cheat, we're looking for alibis, we're always rationalizing. He cannot heal us, and we lose. This is a rebellious, untrusting, untrustworthy relationship. And that's why sin is so

dangerous. That's why sin results in death, not because our heavenly Father and physician will kill us, but the man who doesn't trust God, the man who's cheating will reap the consequences. He will die, for God cannot heal this person who doesn't trust him.

And I think this is such a correction to the definition so often used, sin is just breaking this or that rule, and you know what God does to sinners. This suggests that breaking our trusting relationship with God is the most dangerous thing we can do. The consequences are very disastrous both in this life and in the end, but not at the hands of our gracious God. If we persist in cheating, he will let us go and reap the consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. "Acquaint now thyself with Him" (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}

Through belief in Satan's misrepresentation of God, man's character and destiny were changed, but if men will believe in the Word of God, they will be transformed in mind and character, and fitted for eternal life. To believe that "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), will change the heart, and reproduce in man the image of God. {1SM 346.1}

The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God. {COL 98.3}

Faith is the medium through which truth or error finds a lodging place in the mind. It is by the same act of mind that truth or error is received, but it makes a decided difference whether we believe the Word of God or the sayings of men. When Christ revealed Himself to Paul, and he was convinced that he was persecuting Jesus in the person of His saints, he accepted the truth as it is in Jesus. A transforming power was manifested on mind and character, and he became a

new man in Christ Jesus. He received the truth so fully that neither earth nor hell could shake his faith. {1SM 346.3}

When the will is placed on the Lord's side, the Holy Spirit takes that will and makes it one with the divine will. {OHC 104.4}

The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper. {DA 490.5}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. Through influences seen and unseen, our Saviour is constantly at work to attract the minds of men from the unsatisfying pleasures of sin to the infinite blessings that may be theirs in Him. To all these souls, who are vainly seeking to drink from the broken cisterns of this world, the divine message is addressed, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. {SC 28.1}

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him. Although they have turned away from God, He does not leave them in their misery. He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe. {COL 198.1}

In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin. {COL 77.1}

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God's law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not

force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. {AA 241.2}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth (RH Feb. 11, 1902). {1BC 1081.3}

Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. {MB 127.1}

Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity. Today the hand that was pierced is reached forth to bless more abundantly His people that are in the world. "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast. {DA 480.5}

God would not have us remain pressed down by dumb sorrow, with sore and breaking hearts. He would have us look up and behold His dear face of love. The blessed Saviour stands by many whose eyes are so blinded by tears that they do not discern Him. He longs to clasp our hands, to have us look to Him in simple faith, permitting Him to guide us. His heart is open to our griefs, our sorrows, and our trials. He has loved us with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness compassed us about. We may keep the heart stayed upon Him and meditate upon His loving-kindness all the day. He will lift the soul above the daily sorrow and perplexity, into a realm of peace. {MB 12.2}

Jesus presented the Father as one to whom we could give our confidence and present our wants. When we are in terror of God, and overwhelmed with the thought of His glory and majesty, the Father points us to Christ as His representative. What you see revealed in Jesus, of tenderness, compassion, and love, is the reflection of the attributes of the Father. The cross of

Calvary reveals to man the love of God. Christ represents the Sovereign of the universe as a God of love. By the mouth of the prophet He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). {HP 18.3}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect. {1SM 395.1}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His saving grace. The men and women who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love. {AA 49.2}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. {DA 669.4}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. {8T 19.1}

The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." {DA 302.1}