

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Third Quarter 2019: *“The Least of These”*: Ministering to Those in Need

#### Lesson 6 *“Worship the Creator”*

#### Read for this week’s study

Psalm 115:1–8; Deuteronomy 10:17–22; Psalm 101:1; Isaiah 1:10–17; Isaiah 58; Mark 12:38–40.

#### Memory Text

“ ‘Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?’ ” (Isaiah 58:6, 7, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Idolatry and Oppression
- III. A Reason to Worship
- IV. Religious Oppressors
- V. A Way to Worship
- VI. Mercy and Faithfulness
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Lesson 6 builds on Lesson 5. How would you summarize the main points of Lesson 5, which summarized the Old Testament prophets cry for justice? Lesson 6 focuses on worship. What is true worship in your experience? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Psalm 115:1-8. What crucial point is the author of this Psalm making? How would the author of this Psalm define worship? Why do you think the Israelites constantly fell into idolatry? How does the subject of idolatry relate to our picture of God? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Psalm 66:1-6; 78:5-8; 101:1; 146:5-10; and Isaiah 5:16. What are the motivations for worship and praising God that are given in these verses? What is the outcome of true worship in the lives of believers? If worship is grounded in recounting the mighty acts of God, what was God’s mightiest act in New Testament times? How does that act affect our lives today? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Isaiah 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-24 and Micah 6:6-8. What was the Lord telling these people about their worship rituals? If your local church shut down would your community even notice? If not, what is the point of doing church? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Isaiah 58. What has gone wrong in the relationship between God and His people as described in the early part of this chapter? How does the keeping of the Sabbath relate to this? If Jesus were on earth now and carrying out the instructions of this chapter in His daily life, what would that look like? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Mark 12:38-40. Does Jesus' comment about "devouring widows" houses seem out of place in this list, or is that the main point Jesus is trying to make? Why would these receive "greater condemnation"? What kind of religious practices today might leave us in similar danger today? Read Matthew 23:23 and Micah 6:6-8. What are the three most important things to God? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Read Micah 6:6-8 again. In what way are doing justice and loving mercy acts of worship? How might such an attitude affect the way you care for others? How might this change your approach to worship? (Friday's lesson)
8. Why is hypocrisy considered such a serious sin in the Bible? Isn't it better at least to try and look like we are doing good? (Friday's lesson)
9. How would we read or hear local news reports differently if we saw and heard them through the mindset of the Hebrew prophets? (Friday's lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But Hosea says that it is a law that we become like the object of our worship. His exact words are, "When Israel came to Mt. Peor, they began to worship Baal, and soon became as disgusting as the god they loved." That's the devastating consequence of worshipping a false picture of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Lou: But what difference does it make what kind of person I believe God to be? So long as I submit to his authority. If I just say, "God has said it; I believe it; that's it."

Graham: Well, I think of two illustrations that come quickly to mind since we've talked of Saul. The conception of God that Saul had led him to conduct his evangelism the way he did before the Damascus road. In God's name he imprisoned people and he had them stoned to death.

When he got the true picture of God on the Damascus road so dramatically (and by the way, it suggests it didn't have to take a lifetime), I think Saul proceeded from the foot of Sinai to the

mouth of the cave in a few minutes. He really grew up in a hurry there. Paul changed his picture of God and he changed his whole method of evangelism.

Lou: So you're saying that the picture inevitably affects everything.

Graham: Everything: the way we worship, the way we witness to others, the way we behave. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7 with Lou Venden, "The Question of Authority" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*  
<http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>

If you were ever asked to explain why you obey God (assuming that you do), what answer would you give? Would you say, "I do what I do as a believer, because God has told me to and he has the power to reward and destroy." Is that why you don't lie and murder? Nothing wrong in those things themselves, but it upsets God when you do that—and that is a dangerous thing to do.

This might be all right for a beginner or for a little child, but it makes God's laws seem so arbitrary. They have no sense in themselves. That kind of obedience does not speak well and truly about our God.

Would you rather say, "I do what I do as a believer, because God has told me to, and I love him and want to please him." Is that why you don't steal or commit adultery? It is not that you see anything wrong in these things in themselves; it's just that God doesn't like it when we do that. He has been so good to us, surely we owe it to him to do the things he has asked us to do, whether they make sense or not.

Again this does not speak well of God. It might be a little improvement from obeying out of fear or desire for reward. But it still smacks of arbitrariness. It still does not speak well of God, though that is often thought to be the antidote for the first one.

Could you say this? "I do what I do because more and more I am finding it to be right and sensible to do so. How I admire and revere the one who so advised me and even commanded me in the days of my ignorance and immaturity," hastening to add, "being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I am willing to listen to this God and to heed his commandments when he asks me to do something beyond my present understanding." That says that God is not arbitrary, but that everything he has asked us to do makes such good sense, we should want to do it anyway. If you can say that, then truly God's law is not a threat to your freedom, and you thank him for it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12, "God's Law Is No Threat To Our Freedom" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*  
<http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>

Now these inhabitants of Babel, did they believe in God? Did they believe in his power? Did they believe he had the power to drown the whole world in a flood? Did they believe his promise that he would never do it again? And so they built the tower. They didn't build the tower because they didn't believe in God, but because they did believe in God and it scared them that he has so much power. So perhaps we need not spend so much time discussing God's power, unless we don't believe that he has it. The great controversy is not over power, but over who is telling the truth. God has been accused of the abuse of power and of a failure to tell the truth. Such charges cannot be met by force. To resort to force would only worsen the matter, as if to suggest, "I don't have evidence, so now I must intimidate you with power." And so God chose the only way— the long and painful, and costly and apparently weak way as some regard it—of teaching, of explanation, of demonstration.

Finally he sent his Son. And the way he treated people, the things he taught about his Father, and most particularly, the unique and awful way that he died was the clearest demonstration of the truth about God and his government that the universe will ever see or ever need. Sadly though, religion often fails to use God's methods. Thus it is often religion that most seriously misrepresents our God. Religion through the centuries has resorted instead to claims and pronouncements, and force, even persecution, and a great deal of pomp and power—methods God does not use. How dare we mortals try! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

But there was a third question that needed to be answered. Why is it so important that we understand that God does not execute his sinful children? This had to be answered, too. And so an angel came to strengthen Jesus to go out to Calvary. And there, once again, he answered the first two questions. But he was also this time tortured and crucified. By whom? By the Father? Or by most devout group of Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known? They even said he had a devil before they tortured him to death. You see, they obeyed God from fear. Because, as the prophet had said so many times before, they did not really know God.

Look at John 19:31:

Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy. (GNB)

You see, they nailed their Savior to the cross and then rushed home to keep that Sabbath especially holy. To prove they were God's true people. That's the awful result of serving God from fear because you do not know the truth about God. The three questions were answered. Does sin result in death? Indeed, it does! But is it torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God? Indeed, it is not! But what's so dangerous about misunderstanding this and serving God from fear? The service of fear produces the character of a rebel. And can even turn people who are dedicated to obedience into harsh rebels, and God's worst enemies! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

He died that awful second death. It is the death of being given up. Once again they saw him dying. And he died so quickly! He didn't die of crucifixion. The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. They thrust the spear in for confirmation. He was dead!

You don't die that quickly. That's why they come and break legs. They didn't need to break his. He was already dead. And the universe watched him go through it twice. Once again he was given up by the Father. And he knew he was. What did he cry as he died? "Why are you torturing me to death?" No, "Why have you given me up?" "Why have you forsaken me?" And he died of a broken heart, apparently separated from his Father.

But he also was tortured. Who tortured him to death? The most devout group of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known. They did not know God. Remember Amos, and Hosea, and Micah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah? They all talked about this, obeying God without knowing him can actually turn us into his enemies. And it had to be underscored that they were absolutely dedicated to obedience. Jesus kept commenting on it. "You tithe mint, anise, and cumin. You strain out gnats from your goat's milk. You search the scriptures," He kept telling them.

And then, after they had tortured him to death, what was their next concern? To get home in time for sundown worship! For you see, it was the Sabbath, and we are God's true people! And what's the mark that we are God's true people?—the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. But they kept it as an arbitrary requirement. And I would warn us, that if we keep the Sabbath just because we're told to, just as a sign, instead of protecting us in the time of trouble, it could leave us vulnerable because it says the wrong thing about God. And our very Sabbath keeping, if it's for the wrong reason, could leave us open to the deceptions of the adversary, and we could prefer the wrong Christ when he comes. Merely to keep the seventh day does not mean we'll accept Christ when he comes, because the folk who rejected him were the most devout

Sabbath-keepers you ever saw. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from audio series, "Picture of God in All 66", Luke recorded April 1982, Riverside CA}

### Further Study with Ellen White

Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. Those who are truly Christians are bound with the chain of love which links earth to heaven, which binds finite man to the infinite God. The light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ shines in the hearts of His followers, to the glory of God. {1SM 337.2}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. {PP 91.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

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}

Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores. {AA 559.1}

Our God is a tender, merciful Father. His service should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work. God would not have His children, for whom so great salvation has been provided, act as if He were a hard, exacting taskmaster. He is their best friend; and when they worship Him, He expects to be with them, to bless and comfort them, filling their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. He desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love, that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things. {SC 103.2}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, “and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, “God with us.” {DA 26.3}

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}

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 person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. {FLB 98.3}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. . . . He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {FLB 98.6}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair. Satan may come to you with the cruel suggestion, "Yours is a hopeless case. You are irredeemable." But there is hope for you in Christ. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free. {MH 249.2}

The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness. A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God and the longing heart can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:5. {MB 19.3}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}



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}

Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

The work of beneficence is twice blessed. While he that gives to the needy blesses others, he himself is blessed in a still greater degree. The grace of Christ in the soul is developing traits of character that are the opposite of selfishness,—traits that will refine, ennoble, and enrich the life. Acts of kindness performed in secret will bind hearts together, and will draw them closer to the heart of Him from whom every generous impulse springs. The little attentions, the small acts of love and self-sacrifice, that flow out from the life as quietly as the fragrance from a flower—these constitute no small share of the blessings and happiness of life. And it will be found at last that the denial of self for the good and happiness of others, however humble and uncommended here, is recognized in heaven as the token of our union with Him, the King of glory, who was rich, yet for our sake became poor. {MB 82.2}

Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. {Ed 154.3}

It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in

demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—"this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 54:17. {Ed 154.4}

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. . . . To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient one, with the whole strength and mind and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored. {RC 51.2}

Like the first is the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. . . . {RC 51.3}

In this last meeting with His disciples, the great desire which Christ expressed for them was that they might love one another as He had loved them. Again and again He spoke of this. "These things I command you," He said repeatedly, "that ye love one another." His very first injunction when alone with them in the upper chamber was, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." To the disciples this commandment was new; for they had not loved one another as Christ had loved them. He saw that new ideas and impulses must control them; that new principles must be practiced by them; through His life and death they were to receive a new conception of love. The command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of His self-sacrifice. The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort. During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another. {DA 677.2}

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}

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. {COL 311.4}