

# The Bible and Fiction

*Collected from the writings of Ellen G. White*

## The Bible Neglected

### **Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 139:**

Both old and young neglect the Bible. They do not make it their study, the rule of their life. Especially are the young guilty of this neglect. Most of them find time to read other books, but the book that points out the way to eternal life is not daily studied. Idle stories are attentively read, while the Bible is neglected.

This book is our guide to a higher, holier life. The youth would pronounce it the most interesting book they ever read had not their imagination been perverted by the reading of fictitious stories.

### **Counsels for the Church, p. 170-171:**

The nature of one's religious experience is revealed by the character of the books one chooses to read in one's leisure moments. In order to have a healthy tone of mind and sound religious principles, the youth must live in communion with God through His word. Pointing out the way of salvation through Christ, the Bible is our guide to a higher, better life. It contains the most interesting and the most instructive history and biography that were ever written. Those whose imagination has not become perverted by the reading of fiction will find the Bible the most interesting of books.

The Bible is the Book of books. If you love the Word of God, searching it as you have opportunity, that you may come into possession of its rich treasures, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, then you may be assured that Jesus is drawing you to Himself. But to read the Scriptures in a casual way, without seeking to comprehend Christ's lesson that you may comply with His requirements, is not enough. There are treasures in the word of God that can be discovered only by sinking the shaft deep into the mine of truth.

The carnal mind rejects the truth; but the soul that is converted undergoes a marvelous change. The book that before was unattractive because it revealed truths which testified against

the sinner, now becomes the food of the soul, the joy and consolation of the life. The Sun of righteousness illuminates the sacred pages, and the Holy Spirit speaks through them to the soul.

Let all who have cultivated a love for light reading, now turn their attention to the sure word of prophecy. Take your Bibles, and begin to study with fresh interest the sacred records of the Old and New Testaments. The oftener and more diligently you study the Bible, the more beautiful will it appear, and the less relish you will have for light reading. Bind this precious volume to your hearts. It will be to you a friend and guide.

## High-Class Fiction

### **Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 383:**

There are works of fiction that were written for the purpose of teaching truth or exposing some great evil. Some of these works have accomplished good. Yet they have also wrought untold harm. They contain statements and highly wrought pen pictures that excite the imagination and give rise to a train of thought which is full of danger, especially to the youth. The scenes described are lived over and over again in their thoughts. Such reading unfits the mind for usefulness and disqualifies it for spiritual exercise. It destroys interest in the Bible. Heavenly things find little place in the thoughts. As the mind dwells upon the scenes of impurity portrayed, passion is aroused, and the end is sin.

Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading, merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny.

By fostering a love for mere amusement, the reading of fiction creates a distaste for life's practical duties. Through its exciting, intoxicating power it is not infrequently a cause of both mental and physical disease. Many a miserable, neglected home, many a lifelong invalid, many an inmate of the insane asylum, has become such through the habit of novel reading.

**The Ministry of Healing, p. 445-446:**

It is often urged that in order to win the youth from sensational or worthless literature, we should supply them with a better class of fiction. This is like trying to cure a drunkard by giving him, in the place of whiskey or brandy, the milder intoxicants, such as wine, beer, or cider. The use of these would continually foster the appetite for stronger stimulants. The only safety for the inebriate, and the only safeguard for the temperate man, is total abstinence. For the lover of fiction the same rule holds true. Total abstinence is his only safety.

**Myths and Fairy Tales****Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 384-385:**

In the education of children and youth, fairy tales, myths, and fictitious stories are now given a large place. Books of this character are used in schools, and they are to be found in many homes. How can Christian parents permit their children to use books so filled with falsehood? When the children ask the meaning of stories so contrary to the teaching of their parents, the answer is that the stories are not true; but this does not do away with the evil results of their use. The ideas presented in these books mislead the children. They impart false views of life and beget and foster a desire for the unreal.

The widespread use of such books at this time is one of the cunning devices of Satan. He is seeking to divert the minds of old and young from the great work of character building. He means that our children and youth shall be swept away by the soul-destroying deceptions with which he is filling the world. Therefore he seeks to divert their minds from the word of God and thus prevent them from obtaining a knowledge of those truths that would be their safeguard.

Never should books containing a perversion of truth be placed in the hands of children or youth. Let not our children, in the very process of obtaining an education, receive ideas that will prove to be seeds of sin. If those with mature minds had nothing to do with such books, they would themselves be far safer, and their example and influence on the right side would make it far less difficult to guard the youth from temptation.

**Education, p. 226-228:**

What are the works on which, throughout the most susceptible years of life, the minds of the youth are led to dwell? In the study of language and literature, from what fountains are the youth taught to drink? From the wells of paganism; from springs fed by the corruptions of ancient heathendom. They are bidden to study authors, of whom, without dispute, it is declared that they have no regard for the principles of morality.

And of how many modern authors also might the same be said! With how many are grace and beauty of language but a disguise for principles that in their real deformity would repel the reader!

Besides these there is a multitude of fiction writers, luring to pleasant dreams in palaces of ease. These writers may not be open to the charge of immorality, yet their work is no less really fraught with evil. It is robbing thousands upon thousands of the time and energy and self-discipline demanded by the stern problems of life.

In the study of science, as generally pursued, there are dangers equally great. Evolution and its kindred errors are taught in schools of every grade, from the kindergarten to the college. Thus the study of science, which should impart a knowledge of God, is so mingled with the speculations and theories of men that it tends to infidelity.

Even Bible study, as too often conducted in the schools, is robbing the world of the priceless treasure of the word of God. The work of "higher criticism," in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation; it is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.

As the youth go out into the world to encounter its allurements to sin,—the passion for money getting, for amusement and indulgence, for display, luxury, and extravagance, the overreaching, fraud, robbery, and ruin,—what are the teachings there to be met?

Spiritualism asserts that men are unfallen demigods; that "each mind will judge itself;" that "true knowledge places men

above all law;” that “all sins committed are innocent;” for “whatever is, is right,” and “God does not condemn.”

The basest of human beings it represents as in heaven, and highly exalted there. Thus it declares to all men, “It matters not what you do; live as you please, heaven is your home.” Multitudes are thus led to believe that desire is the highest law, that license is liberty, and that man is accountable only to himself.

With such teaching given at the very outset of life, when impulse is strongest, and the demand for self-restraint and purity is most urgent, where are the safeguards of virtue? what is to prevent the world from becoming a second Sodom?

At the same time anarchy is seeking to sweep away all law, not only divine, but human. The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the world-wide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France.

Such are the influences to be met by the youth of today. To stand amidst such upheavals they are now to lay the foundations of character.

In every generation and in every land the true foundation and pattern for character building have been the same. The divine law states:

### **Luke 10**

<sup>27</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart;...and your neighbor as yourself.

This great principle, made manifest in the character and life of our Saviour, is the only secure foundation and the only sure guide.

### **Isaiah 33 [Leeser’s translation]**

<sup>6</sup> The stability of your times and the strength of your happiness shall be wisdom and knowledge.

This wisdom and knowledge, God's word alone can impart. It is as true now as when the words were spoken to Israel of obedience to His commandments:

#### **Deuteronomy 4**

<sup>6</sup> This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations.

Here is the only safeguard for individual integrity, for the purity of the home, the well-being of society, or the stability of the nation. Amidst all life's perplexities and dangers and conflicting claims the one safe and sure rule is to do what God says.

#### **Psalm 19**

<sup>8</sup> The statutes of the Lord are right...

#### **Psalm 15**

<sup>5</sup> ...he that does these things shall never be moved.

#### **Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 92:**

Young friends, a knowledge of the Bible will help you to resist temptation. If you have been in the habit of reading storybooks, will you consider whether it is right to spend your time with these books, which merely occupy your time and amuse you, but give you no mental or moral strength? If you are reading them, and find that they create a morbid craving for exciting novels, if they lead you to dislike the Bible, and cast it aside, if they involve you in darkness and backsliding from God,—if this is the influence they have over you, stop right where you are. Do not pursue this course of reading until your imagination is fired, and you become unfitted for the study of the Bible, and the practical duties of real life.

Cheap works of fiction do not profit. They impart no real knowledge; they inspire no great and good purpose; they kindle in the heart no earnest desires for purity; they excite no soul hunger for righteousness. On the contrary, they take time which should be given to the practical duties of life and to the service of God,—time which should be devoted to prayer, to visiting the sick, caring for the needy, and educating yourself for a useful life. When you commence reading a storybook, how frequently the imagination is so excited that you are betrayed into sin. You dis-

obey your parents, and bring confusion into the domestic circle by neglecting the simple duties devolving upon you. And worse than this, prayer is forgotten, and the Bible is read with indifference or entirely neglected.

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 134-135:**

Readers of frivolous, exciting tales become unfitted for the duties of practical life. They live in an unreal world. I have watched children who have been allowed to make a practice of reading such stories. Whether at home or abroad, they were restless, dreamy, unable to converse except upon the most commonplace subjects. Religious thought and conversation was entirely foreign to their minds.

With the cultivation of an appetite for sensational stories, the mental taste is perverted, and the mind is not satisfied unless fed upon this unwholesome food. I can think of no more fitting name for those who indulge in such reading than mental inebriates. Intemperate habits of reading have an effect upon the brain similar to that which intemperate habits of eating and drinking have upon the body.

**Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, p. 591:**

You have indulged in novel and story reading until you live in an imaginary world. The influence of such reading is injurious to both the mind and the body; it weakens the intellect and brings a fearful tax upon the physical strength. At times your mind is scarcely sane because the imagination has been overexcited and diseased by reading fictitious stories. The mind should be so disciplined that all its powers will be symmetrically developed....

If the imagination is constantly overfed and stimulated by fictitious literature, it soon becomes a tyrant, controlling all the other faculties of the mind and causing the taste to become fitful and the tendencies perverse.

**Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 162-163:**

I am personally acquainted with some who have lost the healthy tone of the mind through wrong habits of reading. They go through life with a diseased imagination, magnifying every little grievance. Things which a sound, sensible mind would not

notice become to them unendurable trials and insurmountable obstacles. To them life is in constant shadow.

**The Publishing Ministry, p. 380:**

Between an uncultivated field and an untrained mind there is a striking similarity. In the minds of children and youth the enemy sows tares, and unless parents keep watchful guard, these will spring up to bear their evil fruit. Unceasing care is needed in cultivating the soil of the mind and sowing it with the precious seed of Bible truth.

Children should be taught to reject trashy, exciting tales and to turn to sensible reading, which will lead the mind to take an interest in Bible story, history, and argument. Reading that will throw light upon the Sacred Volume and quicken the desire to study it is not dangerous, but beneficial.

As I see the danger that threatens the youth from improper reading, I cannot forbear to present still further the warnings given me in regard to this great evil.

The harm that results to the workers from handling matter of an objectionable character is too little realized. Their attention is arrested and their interest aroused by the subject matter with which they are dealing. Sentences are imprinted in the memory. Thoughts are suggested. Almost unconsciously the reader is influenced by the spirit of the writer, and mind and character receive an impress for evil. There are some who have little faith and little power of self-control, and it is difficult for them to banish the thoughts suggested by such literature.

Oh, that the young would reflect upon the influence which exciting stories have upon the mind! Can you, after such reading, open the Word of God and read the words of life with interest? Do you not find the book of God uninteresting? The charm of that love story is upon the mind, destroying its healthy tone and making it impossible for you to fix your mind upon the important, solemn truths which concern your eternal interest. You sin against your parents in devoting to such a poor purpose the time which belongs to them, and you sin against God in thus using the time which should be spent in devotion to Him.



**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 581:**

The glory of God is displayed in His handiwork. Here are mysteries that the mind will become strong in searching out. Minds that have been amused and abused by reading fiction may in nature have an open book, and read truth in the works of God around them. All may find themes for study in the simple leaf of the forest tree, the spires of grass covering the earth with their green velvet carpet, the plants and flowers, the stately trees of the forest, the lofty mountains, the granite rocks, the restless ocean, the precious gems of light studding the heavens to make the night beautiful, the exhaustless riches of the sunlight, the solemn glories of the moon, the winter's cold, the summer's heat, the changing, recurring seasons, in perfect order and harmony, controlled by infinite power; here are subjects which call for deep thought, for the stretch of the imagination.

If the frivolous and pleasure-seeking will allow their minds to dwell upon the real and true, the heart cannot but be filled with reverence, and they will adore the God of nature. The contemplation and study of God's character as revealed in His created works will open a field of thought that will draw the mind away from low, debasing, enervating amusements. The knowledge of God's works and ways we can only begin to obtain in this world; the study will be continued throughout eternity.

God has provided for man subjects of thought which will bring into activity every faculty of the mind. We may read the character of the Creator in the heavens above and the earth beneath, filling the heart with gratitude and thanksgiving. Every nerve and sense will respond to the expressions of God's love in His marvelous works.

Satan invents earthly allurements, that the carnal mind may be placed on those things which cannot elevate and refine and ennoble; its powers are thus dwarfed and crippled, and men and women who might attain to perfection of character become narrow, weak, and defective.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 516-520:**

Dear Brother E: I have just read the *Review and Herald* and have seen your article giving a list of good books for our youth. I was much surprised to read your recommendation of *Uncle*

*Tom's Cabin*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and such books. You are in danger of becoming somewhat careless in your writing. It would be well to give thought and careful study to whatever is to be immortalized in print.

I am really alarmed to see that your spiritual eyesight is not more clear in the matter of selecting and recommending reading for our youth. I know that the recommendation in our papers of such infatuating books as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will in many minds justify the reading of other books which are nothing but fiction....This recommendation will make taxing work for those who are laboring to persuade the youth to discard fictitious reading. I have repeatedly seen the evil of reading such books as you recommend, and have an article all prepared, cautioning our youth in this very matter.

Be sure, my brother, not to lead away from the searching of the Scriptures. It has been revealed to me that the purchase and sale by our brethren of storybooks such as are commonly circulated in Sunday schools is a snare to our people, especially to our children. It leads them to expend money for that class of reading which fevers the imagination and unfits them for the real duties of practical life. You may be assured that this recommendation of yours will be acted upon. The youth need no such sanction or liberty, for their taste and inclination are all in this direction. But I hope no more such recommendations will appear. You must be getting away from Jesus and His teachings and do not realize it.

It is Satan's work to present to our youth newspaper stories and storybooks that fascinate the senses and thus destroy their relish for the word of God. Do not, my dear brother, throw everything that comes into your mind into the *Review and Herald*, but write guardedly. If the Spirit of Christ moves you to write, then use your pen, feeling the burden of souls, weeping between the porch and the altar, crying:

"Spare your people, O Lord, and give not your heritage to reproach."

But if it is only your own feelings and active mind that prompt you to write, then refrain until the Lord's Spirit presses and moves you. Do not think that because you pursue a certain course and do certain things it is an evidence that they are right

and that you must present them to others as a rule or guide. It is not best for you to feel at liberty to speak your mind upon such matters as concern the welfare of our youth, recommending books which do not tend to spirituality or piety.

If you fancy that such reading will develop firm, unspotted principle you are mistaken. May the Lord help you to move cautiously and humbly, and not throw out misleading statements in the papers; for they will be considered as having been sanctioned by our people. You are putting a burden upon others to counteract the influence of these sentiments.

My brother, your safety is in walking humbly with God. I tremble when I read your many articles, giving counsel and rules for other ministers. It is hardly proper for you to have so much to say in this direction. If you become self-sufficient and self-confident, the Lord will certainly leave you to make some mistake. You need carefully to guard your own soul and to seek a daily, living experience in the things of God. You should keep self out of sight and let Jesus appear. Christ is your strength, your shield; you are a weak, erring man and need to be very cautious, lest you stumble. I entreat you to be on your guard that you do not in word or in deed mar the sacred work of God.

I have felt so thankful for you that you could act a part in this great work. Jesus loves you, and He will work with your efforts if you have a living connection with God. But you must live a life of watchfulness and prayer. Do not become careless. Do not separate from Jesus, but bring Him into your everyday life. Do not make work for yourself and others by careless admissions and counsels; but know that unless Christ is taken into your heart, unless your eye is single to the glory of God, pride will come into your heart, self-esteem will prevail, and you will, ere you are aware, be walking carelessly.

“Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.”

There are many of our youth whom God has endowed with superior capabilities. He has given them the very best of talents; but their powers have been enervated, their minds confused and enfeebled, and for years they have made no growth in grace and in a knowledge of the reasons of our faith, because they have

gratified a taste for story reading. They have as much difficulty to control the appetite for such superficial reading as the drunkard has to control his appetite for intoxicating drink.

These might today be connected with our publishing houses and be efficient workers to keep books, prepare copy for the press, or to read proof; but their talents have been perverted until they are mental dyspeptics, and consequently are unfitted for a responsible position anywhere. The imagination is diseased. They live an unreal life. They are unfitted for the practical duties of life; and that which is the most sad and discouraging is that they have lost all relish for solid reading. They have become infatuated and charmed with just such food for the mind as the intensely exciting stories contained in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. That book did good in its day to those who needed an awakening in regard to their false ideas of slavery; but we are standing upon the very borders of the eternal world, where such stories are not needed in the preparation for eternal life.

The only safety for any of us is to be thoroughly converted and to be conversant with the truth as it is revealed in the word of God, that we may be able to give to every man that asks us, a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

The special effort of ministers and of workers all through our ranks for this time should be to turn away the attention of the youth from all exciting stories to the sure word of prophecy. The attention of every soul striving for eternal life should center upon the Bible.

It seems wonderfully strange to me, considering all I have written in regard to the reading of exciting stories, to see a recommendation from your pen to read *Robinson Crusoe*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Aesop's Fables*. My brother, you made a mistake in writing that article. If these books are among those which you have for sale, I beg of you never to offer them again to our youth. It is your duty to call their attention to the Bible; do not become their tempter by offering to them attractive story-books, which will divert their minds from the study of the Scriptures. We must ourselves be drinking of the water of life, else we will be constantly hewing out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water.

There are a thousand ways and plans that Satan has of creeping in to unsettle the minds of youth; and unless the soul is firmly and fully stayed upon God, and conscientiously guarded upon the very point of keeping the mind employed in searching the Scriptures and becoming grounded in our faith, they will surely be ensnared. We cannot be off guard for a moment. We cannot allow ourselves to move from impulse. We must set a guard about our minds and the minds of our children, that they may not be allured by Satan's temptations.

We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study. We should teach our children what the typical Day of Atonement signified and that it was a special season of great humiliation and confession of sins before God. The antitypical day of atonement is to be of the same character. Everyone who teaches the truth by precept and example will give the trumpet a certain sound.

You need ever to cultivate spirituality, because it is not natural for you to be heavenly-minded. The great work is before us of leading the people away from worldly customs and practices, up higher and higher, to spirituality, piety, and earnest work for God. It is your work to proclaim the message of the third angel, to sound the last note of warning to the world. May the Lord bless you with spiritual eyesight. I write this in love, seeing your danger. Please consider these things carefully and prayerfully.

### **The Review and Herald, Jan. 23, 1913:**

What shall our children read? This is a serious question, and one that demands a serious answer. It troubles me to see in Sabbath-keeping families periodicals and newspapers containing continued stories, which leave no impressions for good on the minds of children and youth. I have watched those whose taste for fiction was thus cultivated. They have had the privilege of listening to the truth, of becoming acquainted with the reasons of our faith; but they have grown to mature years destitute of true piety and practical godliness. They manifest no devotion, and reflect no heavenly light upon their associates to lead them to the Fount of all true knowledge.

It is during the first years of a child's life that his mind is most susceptible to impressions, either good or evil. During these years decided progress is made either in a right direction or in a wrong one. On one hand, much worthless information may be gained; on the other, much solid, valuable knowledge. The strength of intellect, the substantial knowledge gained, are possessions which the gold of Ophir could not buy. Their price is above gold or silver.

The kind of education that fits the youth for practical life, they naturally do not choose. They urge their desires, their likes and dislikes, their preferences and inclinations; but if parents have correct views of God, of the truth, and of the influences and associations that should surround their children, they will feel that upon them rests the God-given responsibility of carefully guiding the inexperienced youth.

Many youth are eager for books. They read anything that they can obtain. I appeal to the parents of such children to control their desire for reading. Do not permit upon your tables the magazines and newspapers in which are found love-stories. Supply their places with books that will help the youth to put into their character building the very best material,—the love and fear of God, the knowledge of Christ. Encourage your children to store the mind with valuable knowledge, to let that which is good occupy the soul and control its powers, leaving no place for low, debasing thoughts.

Restrict the desire for reading-matter that does not furnish good food for the mind. The money expended for story magazines may not seem much, but it is too much to spend for that which gives so much that is misleading and so little that is good in return. Those who are in God's service should spend neither time nor money in light reading.

### **Worthless Reading**

The world is deluged with books that might better be consumed than circulated. Books on sensational topics, published and circulated as a money-making scheme, might better never be read by the youth. There is a satanic fascination in such books. The heart-sickening recital of crimes and atrocities has a bewitching power upon many, exciting them to see what they can

do to bring themselves into notice, even by the wickedest deeds. Even the enormities, the cruelties, the licentious practices portrayed in some of the strictly historical writings, have acted as leaven on many minds, leading to the commission of similar acts.

Books that delineate the satanic practices of human beings are giving publicity to evil. These horrible particulars need not be lived over, and none who believe the truth for this time should act a part in perpetuating the memory of them. When the intellect is fed and stimulated by this depraved food, the thoughts become impure and sensual.

There is another class of books—love-stories and frivolous, exciting tales—which are a curse to every one who reads them, even though the author may attach a good moral. Often religious statements are woven all through these books; but in most cases Satan is but clothed in angel robes, to deceive and allure the unsuspecting. The practice of story reading is one of the means employed by Satan to destroy souls. It produces a false, unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise. It weans the soul from prayer and the love of spiritual things.

Readers of frivolous, exciting tales become unfitted for the duties of practical life. They live in an unreal world. I have watched children who have been allowed to make a practice of reading such stories. Whether at home or abroad, they were restless, dreamy, unable to converse except upon the most commonplace subjects. Religious thought and conversation were entirely foreign to their minds. With the cultivation of an appetite for sensational stories, the mental taste is perverted, and the mind is not satisfied unless fed upon this unwholesome food. I can think of no more fitting name for those who indulge in such reading than mental inebriates. Intemperate habits of reading have an effect upon the brain similar to that which intemperate habits of eating and drinking have upon the body.

Those who indulge the habit of racing through an exciting story are simply crippling their mental strength, and disqualifying their minds for vigorous thought and research. Some youth, and even some of mature age, have been afflicted with paralysis from no other cause than excess in reading. The nerve power of

the brain was kept constantly excited, until the delicate machinery became worn, and refused to act. Some of its fine mechanism gave way, and paralysis was the result.

There are men and women now in the decline of life who have never recovered from the effects of intemperance in reading. The habit formed in early years grew with their growth and strengthened with their strength. Their determined efforts to overcome the sin of abusing the intellect were partially successful; but many have never recovered the vigor of mind that God bestowed upon them.

**Signs of the Times, Feb. 19, 1880:**

The indulgence of light reading and tales of fiction produces a false, unhealthy excitement of the mind, and unfits it for any spiritual exercise. It weans the soul from prayer, and love for spiritual things. Reading that will throw light upon the sacred volume, and increase one's desire to study it, is not dangerous, but beneficial. The oftener and more diligently the Scriptures are read, the more beautiful will they appear, and the less relish will one have for light reading. The daily study of the Scriptures will have a sanctifying influence upon the life. Then let us bind to our hearts this precious volume which will never fail to prove a friend and guide in perplexity.

How many have fixed their hopes on earthly objects, and how earnestly and perseveringly have they labored to obtain them, yet without realizing their anticipations. But there is an object before all worthy of a life-long effort. It is the salvation of our souls—everlasting life. And this demands self-denial, sacrifice and close study. If we gain eternal life, we must live for it and deny self; come out from the world and be separate. Our life must be marked with sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer. Angels are watching the development of character, and weighing moral worth. All our words and acts are passing in review before God.

It is a fearful, solemn time. The hope of eternal life should not be cherished upon slight grounds; it should be settled between God and our own souls. Some will lean upon the judgment and experience of others, rather than be at the trouble of a close examination of their own hearts; and thus pass along for months and years without any witness of the Spirit of God, or evidence



of their acceptance. Such are deceiving themselves. They suppose they have a hope, but lack the essential qualifications of a Christian.

God's people are peculiar. Their spirit cannot mingle with the spirit and influence of the world. None desire to meet Jesus with a profession only, and thus be disappointed of eternal life. Then let us examine the grounds of our hope thoroughly, and deal truly with our own soul. Let us decide now whether we will follow Christ at any sacrifice or any cost.

## **What Shall We Read?**

### **Youth's Instructor, Oct. 9, 1902:**

Education is but a preparation of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers for the best performance of all the duties of life. The powers of endurance, and the strength and activity of the brain, are lessened or increased by the way in which they are employed. The mind should be so disciplined that all its powers will be symmetrically developed.

Many youth are eager for books. They desire to read everything that they can obtain. Let them take heed what they read as well as what they hear. I have been instructed that they are in the greatest danger of being corrupted by improper reading. Satan has a thousand ways of unsettling the minds of youth. They can not safely be off guard for a moment. They must set a watch upon their minds, that they may not be allured by the enemy's temptations.

Satan knows that to a great degree the mind is affected by that upon which it feeds. He is seeking to lead both the youth and those of mature age to read story-books, tales, and other literature. The readers of such literature become unfitted for the duties lying before them. They live an unreal life, and have no desire to search the Scriptures, to feed upon the heavenly manna. The mind that needs strengthening is enfeebled, and loses its power to study the great truths that relate to the mission and work of Christ,—truths that would fortify the mind, awaken the imagination, and kindle a strong, earnest desire to overcome as Christ overcame.

Could a large share of the books published be consumed, a plague would be stayed that is doing a fearful work upon mind and heart. Love stories, frivolous and exciting tales, and even that class of books called religious novels,—books in which the author attaches to his story a moral lesson,—are a curse to the readers. Religious sentiments may be woven all through a story book, but, in most cases, Satan is but clothed in angel-ropes, the more effectively to deceive and allure. None are so confirmed in right principles, none so secure from temptation, that they are safe in reading these stories.

The readers of fiction are indulging an evil that destroys spirituality, eclipsing the beauty of the sacred page. It creates an unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, weans the soul from prayer, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise.

God has endowed many of our youth with superior capabilities; but too often they have enervated their powers, confused and enfeebled their minds, so that for years they have made no growth in grace or in a knowledge of the reasons of our faith, because of their unwise choice of reading. Those who are looking for the Lord soon to come, looking for that wondrous change, when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption,” should in this probationary time be standing upon a higher plane of action.

My dear young friends, question your own experience as to the influence of exciting stories. Can you, after such reading, open the Bible and read with interest the words of life? Do you not find the Book of God uninteresting? The charm of that love story is upon the mind, destroying its healthy tone, and making it impossible for you to fix the attention upon the important, solemn truths that concern your eternal welfare.

The nature of one’s religious experience is revealed by the character of the books he chooses to read in his leisure moments. In order to have a healthy tone of mind and sound religious principles, the youth must live in communion with God through his word. Pointing out the way of salvation through Christ, the Bible is our guide to a higher, better life. It contains the most interesting and the most instructive history and biography that were ever written. Those whose imagination has not become perverted

by the reading of fiction will find the Bible the most interesting of books.

Resolutely discard all trashy reading. It will not strengthen your spirituality, but will introduce into the mind sentiments that pervert the imagination, causing you to think less of Jesus and to dwell less upon his precious lessons. Keep the mind free from everything that would lead it in a wrong direction. Do not encumber it with trashy stories, which impart no strength to the mental powers. The thoughts are of the same character as the food provided for the mind.

The Bible is the book of books. If you love the word of God, searching it as you have opportunity, that you may come into possession of its rich treasures, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, then you may be assured that Jesus is drawing you to himself. But to read the Scripture in a casual way, without seeking to comprehend Christ's lesson that you may comply with his requirements, is not enough. There are treasures in the word of God that can be discovered only by sinking the shaft deep into the mine of truth.

The carnal mind rejects the truth; but the soul that is converted undergoes a marvelous change. The book that before was unattractive because it revealed truths which testified against the sinner, now becomes the food of the soul, the joy and consolation of the life. The Sun of righteousness illuminates the sacred pages, and the Holy Spirit speaks through them to the soul. To those who love Christ the Bible is as the garden of God. Its promises are as grateful to the heart as the fragrance of flowers is to the senses.

Let all who have cultivated a love for light reading, now turn their attention to the sure word of prophecy. Take your Bibles, and begin to study with fresh interest the sacred records of the Old and New Testaments. The oftener and more diligently you study the Bible, the more beautiful will it appear, and the less relish you will have for light reading. Bind this precious volume to your hearts. It will be to you a friend and guide.