

Reform

Habitat

Clothing

Cleanliness

Food

Thoughts

Steward-
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Time
management

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Partnership

Contact
with others

The Principles of Reform

Part 1



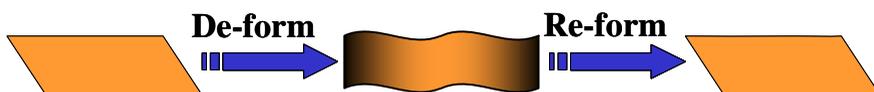
Reform – from where, and where to?

In the past, many people who wanted to be faithful to God have often seen the need to practice reform in their daily lives in order to prepare for heaven. Their goal was to bring their eating, drinking, clothing, contact with others, and so forth, into obedience to Christ. They viewed their task as a privilege and took up their work joyfully.

Unfortunately, reform has often been seen as a burden by professing Christians. And many people today feel that it is a limitation on their natural wishes and tendencies, an unnecessary burden of the law, and an unwelcome intruder.

But do we understand what reform really means? What is its purpose, and how does it apply to our lives? These questions need to be answered so that, as believers, we can render intelligent service to God.

To "re-form" means to form something new, to change its form, or to return something back into its original condition. What was the original form of humanity? It was the image of God, in which we were created. Sin has deformed this image, and the purpose of the gospel is to re-form us, or to form us anew.



The image of God - the original form - was lost. Humanity was deformed.

When the original form is restored, and the image of God is renewed in us, we are reformed.

The "image of God" refers not only to a copy of the dignity and grace of His outward appearance, but in particular to a reproduction of His character - His way of thinking, feeling, and acting; His whole Being. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them the ability to communicate with their Creator, to grasp His thoughts, to understand His purposes, and to carry out His will. Adam spoke with God and understood why He had created things

with a particular form, and he was therefore able to give a fitting name to every creature on earth. He was one with God in thought, feeling, and action. He trusted God, and knew what his place was in the world that the Creator had made. As he came forth from the Father's hand, his whole being was filled with harmony and peace.

But everything changed when Adam and Eve consented to sin. God had given our first parents the freedom to make their own decisions, and when they made the wrong decision, against their better judgment, they were brought into miserable captivity to sin. Then they could no longer understand God - His thoughts, feelings, and actions became a riddle for them.

In order to give His deceived children a second opportunity, God gave them a time of probation. During our probationary period He offers us the gospel - the only means to end this sad condition of confusion. To everyone who chooses to accept it, the power of God is able to bring the thoughts into right lines again - into harmony with the character of our loving Creator.



Reform is a part of this healing process. It relates to all the practical areas of life such as eating, drinking, clothing, hygiene, order, sexuality, social contact, the use of money and time, and so on. Reform does not play the leading role, but it does play an important part in the way of return - a part that God's children need to understand.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans 12:1.

Fear of Reform

Fear of Reform

Although reform is intended to bring us healing in all the different areas of our lives, it has often been the cause of fear and uncertainty. There are various reasons for this.

The first reason is the fear of the unknown. Human nature is naturally resistant to everything that seems foreign and uncomfortable. We are reluctant to change. Why should we learn new and difficult things when the accustomed ways have seemed to be so good? Every change in our habits is strenuous, and costs us an effort, and we usually recoil from such a step. Some will even quote the Bible as a justification for their unwillingness to change: "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on." *Matthew 6:25*. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking." *Romans 14:17*.

For those who are afraid of uncomfortable or inconvenient changes, and do not want to think about food, clothing, or the other necessities of life, these statements are understood to mean that it is not necessary to be concerned about such "earthly" things. But is this the correct interpretation? Can we really eat and drink whatever we want? Can we dress ourselves as we please, without asking what is right in the eyes of God?

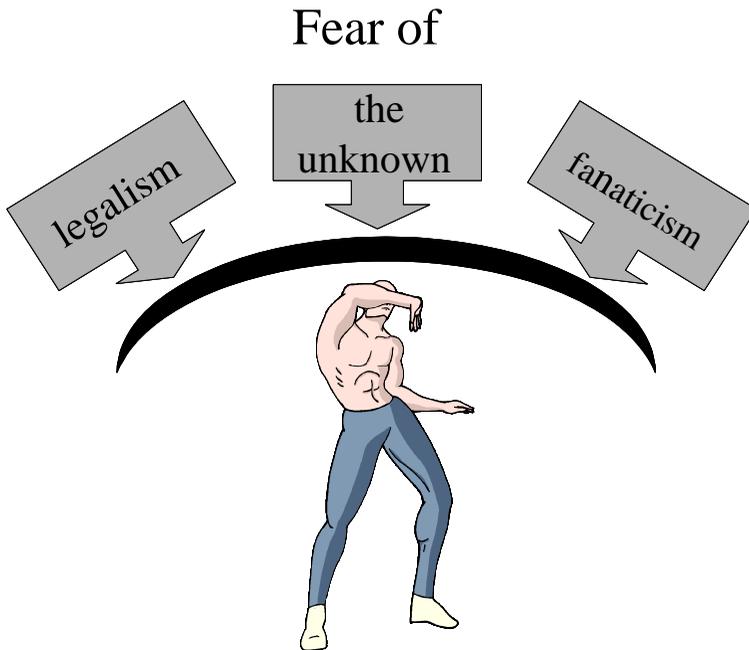
The Bible says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." *1 Corinthians 10:31*. We are to ask what God's will is in these matters, and keep our body in such a condition that it can serve as a temple for the Holy Spirit. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

Legalism

In the days of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees had so many dietary and hygiene laws that their lives were quite a struggle. Nothing was more important to them than the meticulous fulfillment of the canon of their own creation. Even today people train themselves with discipline and strictness in order to meet the supposed requirements of the law, although in the course of time, the emphasis is laid more and more on the training of others. This development results in self-righteousness, legalism, and formality. Such a spirit has always led to the destruction of faith and Christian fellowship, and it is appropriate that believers are afraid of it.



"The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their

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own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies."

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 123.1.

Extremism and Fanaticism

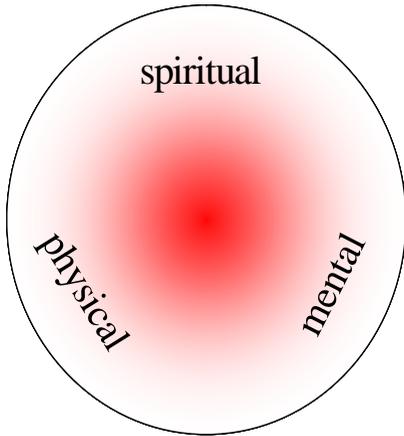
Another counterfeit of reform, which is similar and closely allied to the spirit of legalism, is extremism. That is when emphasis is laid on particular aspects of the reform without paying attention to the entire picture. Some people develop their own, favorite ideas and then stress that these are the only instruments of salvation that can make us holy. The result of this is fanaticism, or religious extremes.

Our present society is afraid of this evil, although very few people know what extremism really is. For instance, a person may be viewed as being fanatical for simply doing something differently from the majority, especially if it is done from conviction. But religious fanaticism is more than being zealous and different. Instead of gaining a healthy, balanced picture of the divine will, some religionists make a standard for themselves, and for others, from their own one-sided and narrow-minded opinions. In doing so they make a prison for themselves, which finally replaces everything else, including the gospel. Fanaticism substitutes its own concepts, regulations, and traditions for the simple word of God.

"But ministers who bear the last message of mercy to fallen men must utter no random works; they must not open doors whereby Satan shall find access to human minds. It is not our work to experiment, to study out something new and startling that will create excitement. Satan is watching his chance to take advantage of anything of this order that he may bring in his deceiving elements. The Holy Spirit's moving upon the human agents will keep the mind well balanced."

Selected Messages 2:60.1.

A Harmonious Whole



Each of us should be a harmonious whole, the spiritual, mental, and physical areas forming an inseparable unity.

Reform is, in fact, a balanced work that involves the whole being. Human beings not only possess reasoning powers, they also have feelings and a physical nature as well as a spiritual nature. Reform will only lose its threatening appearance when all these areas are in harmony with one another and counterbalance each other. Beauty then shines from this harmonious balance, which attracts others and can point them to Christ.

"Created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory."

Education, 20.2.

"He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness."

Selected Messages 1:338.2.

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Achieving a harmonious balance entails evaluating each area of life in relation to the whole picture of the human being. Let us see this principle illustrated in the example of food:

- Food should not only be healthy – that is, it should contain all the necessary nutrients and cover the needs of the physical area – but
- It should also be tasty and look appetizing, so that it can be eaten with pleasure.
- When the food is in harmony with the diet that our Creator has given, it can be adapted to the needs of people in different circumstances. The simplest food can be a witness to point others to the loving Provider of humanity.

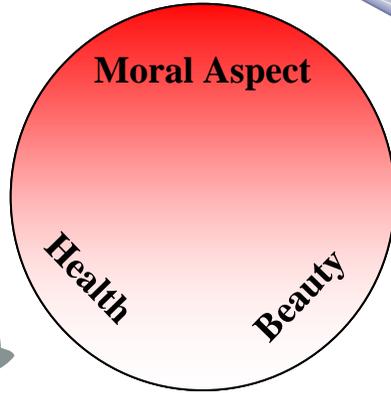
When people emphasize one single aspect at the cost of the whole picture, they are simply limiting themselves and they will surely reap adverse consequences.

The same applies to clothing. The clothes we wear should not just be healthy and comfortable, they should also fit well, look becoming, be appropriate for their purpose, and morally correct.

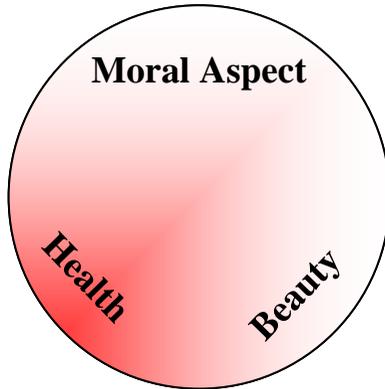
- If we were to consider only the moral aspect of clothing, our dress would look as if it came from a cloister, and we would build up a wall between ourselves and others.
- If we consider only comfort, then we would probably feel best in a sack-like dress that lacks form.
- If we think only of beauty and pleasing others, we would become prisoners of fashion and vanity.

An independent, balanced personality, which is also expressed in dress, can only be developed when the person's entire life is taken into account.

"To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin." *Education*, 99.2.

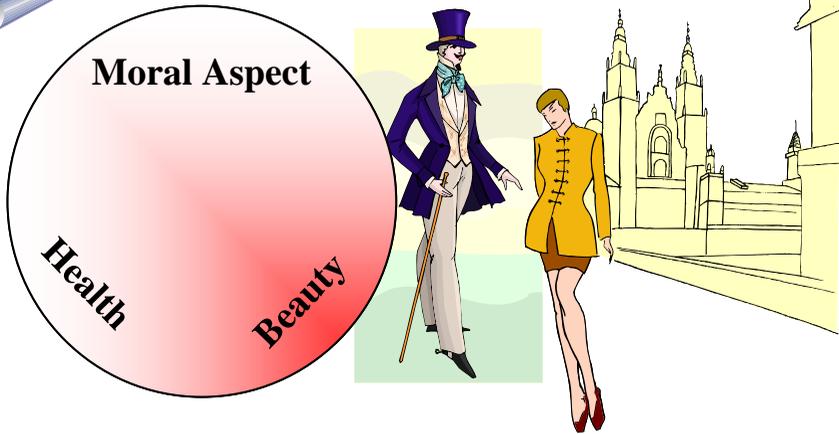


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The Daily School

These Bible verses lead us to the question: how are eating, dressing and all the other areas of human life connected with the work of redemption?

Before sin ruled over humanity, God told Adam and Eve what they could and could not eat. In the Garden of Eden there was a tree of whose fruit they were forbidden to partake. God Himself had created human be-

“We sometimes hear the questions:
Am I never to do as I please?
Am I never to have my own way?
Am I always to be restrained?
Can I never act in accordance with my inclinations?”
Messages to Young People, 68.1.

ings with the inherent need of food, and He used this very need to test them and to teach them essential lessons of obedience. The test they were given was not because the forbidden fruit was unhealthy or even poisonous. Nor was it a question of their not having enough to eat - they did not fall into sin because of hunger. It was more a test of whether Adam and Eve would exercise respect for what did not belong to them. And indeed, the knowledge of good and evil was an area that belonged only to God. They did not need such knowledge in order to be happy. God asked Adam and Eve to exercise trust and obedience in just this one area. He asked them to respect Him, His property and His word.

God's goal for humanity includes righteousness, peace, joy, and freedom.

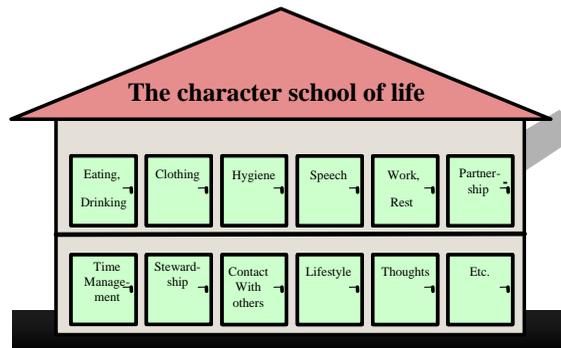
The entire Garden of Eden was a school for our first parents. But curiosity, conceit, and the desire for God's position, led Eve to relinquish her respect and intrude into the area of another. She began to serve herself. Adam also chose to go this way and, instead of accepting the loss of his wife and leaving the problem in God's hands, he too was unfaithful to the Lord.

The test in Eden had nothing to do with the food itself, but with maintaining the image of God.

Training our capacity

As we learn:

- To be active
- To cooperate
- To make decisions



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look back at the history of God's people it becomes very apparent that God frequently used the school of eating and drinking in order to teach His people important lessons. In fact, all the practical aspects of life can be seen as subjects, or classrooms, in the great school of life. This school is concerned with learning and copying the character of God. Eating, drinking, clothing, hygiene, order, sexuality, social contact, the use of money and time, and so on, are all classrooms in which we are to learn what could not otherwise be taught us.

"Eating, drinking, and dressing all have a direct bearing upon our spiritual advancement."
Counsels on Diet and Foods, 57.2.

Some Examples of the Food Classroom

The tree of knowledge

Genesis 2:16, 17

Esau and the lentil stew

Genesis 25:29 ff

The manna and water

Numbers 11:1-6; 21:5

Food offerings

Leviticus 2:1 ff

Gideon's army

Judges 7:1 ff

Elijah at the Brook Cherith

1 Kings 17:3 ff

The widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17:9 ff

David and the showbread

*1 Samuel 21:7;
Matthew 12:3, 4*

Daniel and

Daniel 1:8 ff

his three friends

Matthew 3:4

John the Baptist's diet

Matthew 4:1 ff

The temptation of Christ

John 2:1 ff

The wedding at Cana

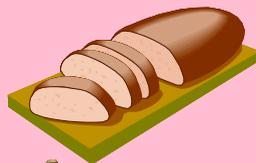
Matthew 14:13 ff

Feeding of the five thousand

Matthew 26:26;

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17 ff



Some Examples of the Dress Classroom

The coverings of fig leaves

Tunics of skin

Joseph's tunic of many colors

Take your sandals off your feet

The priest's clothing

The Israelites' clothing

Men and women's clothing

Achan and the Babylonian garment

Elijah's mantle

The prophet John's clothing

The wedding garment

Jesus' one-piece garment

The prodigal son's new garment

Jesus' graveclothes

Fine apparel

Laodicea

The harlot on the beast

Fine linen (righteousness)

Genesis 3:7

Genesis 3:21

Genesis 37:3

Exodus 3:5;

Joshua 5:15

Exodus 28:1 ff

Numbers 15:37 ff

Deuteronomy 22:5

Joshua 7

2 Kings 2:1 ff

Matthew 3:4

Matthew 22:1 ff

Matthew 27:35

Luke 15:22

John 20:6-8

James 2:1 ff

Revelation 3:17, 18

Revelation 17:4

Revelation 19:8



The Junics of Skin

Let us deepen our understanding that every need we have and every task we are faced with is a school which God has given us for our own benefit. To do this we will look at some more examples from Bible history.

As studied above, God began using the practical aspects of daily life to educate His children in the Garden of Eden. And even immediately after their fall, despite the changed circumstances, God continued with His teaching methods. After Adam and Eve's sin had separated them from God, they noticed that something was missing - their former robe of light. So they went to work to make a fitting covering for their nakedness. God had made them rulers of nature and they knew how to handle the gifts of nature skillfully, so they made themselves suitable clothes from fig leaves. We can be sure that these were not some kind of primitive aprons, as often depicted in children's Bible books, but instead they would have been well thought out, practical articles of clothing covering their outward nakedness. Nevertheless, their efforts were insufficient. When their Creator visited them as usual in the evening, they hid themselves because they were ashamed.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." *Genesis 3:7, 8.*

Why were they ashamed, and why did they hide themselves although they had covered their nakedness? They still were naked and they knew it!

"So he [Adam] said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'" *Genesis 3:10.*

Adam and Eve felt their separation from God. They no longer fully comprehended Him, and could not communicate with Him properly any more. When God called them they finally responded, but they accused one another, and above all, God.

The fig-leaves did not solve the problem. Because of His great love for them, God gave Adam and Eve other garments that did provide a solution. A lamb had to die so that they could wear these clothes (see *Genesis 3:21*). God used their need of clothing to show them that sin made the death of

His Son necessary. Only through the cross is it possible for humanity to come into harmony with God again. Only when we give up our own solutions and accept God's solution can we find righteousness, peace and joy again. This was the lesson God wanted to teach the first couple in the classroom of clothing.



"The white robe of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in perfect conformity to the will of God. All the strength of their affections was given to their heavenly Father. A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair. This robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God it would ever have continued to enshroud them. But when sin entered, they severed their connection with God, and the light that had encircled them departed. Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering.

"This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God.

"But this they can never do. Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. 'I counsel thee,' He says, 'to buy of Me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' Rev. 3:18."

Christ's Object Lessons, 310.4–311.3.

In the Wilderness

When God freed His people from Egypt He led them through the Red Sea "to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai." *Exodus* 16:1. On the way God made the bitter waters sweet so that the Israelites would learn to sweeten their wandering through the exercise of trust and thankfulness. See *Exodus* 15:22–25. Then they murmured again, this time because they were afraid their food would not last, and God gave them manna to eat. See *Exodus* 16:2 ff. He also gave them directions about how to gather the manna, and left them to prepare it. But some of the people thought they knew better and saved some manna for the following day. Their unholy ambition was, however, not rewarded. In the final analysis, each person had the same amount of manna, and those who had tried to save some for the next day were bitterly disappointed - their provision went rotten and became a health risk for the entire camp. But each Friday, when God preserved the provision of manna for the Sabbath, it did not turn bad.

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.'"

Exodus 16:4.

God provided His people with manna for forty long years of wandering. It was an invaluable gift that demonstrated God's dependability, love, and dedication to His people. The provision of manna was also a test of God's people, and a means of instructing them in patience, gratefulness, trust, obedience, and faithfulness. The daily provision of food, and the continual supply of water from the Rock, taught them to trust God in temporal as well as eternal matters. These practical lessons for Israel also contain precious instruction for God's children today.

"The history of the wilderness life of Israel was chronicled for the benefit of the Israel of God to the close of time. The record of God's dealings with the wanderers of the desert in all their marchings to and fro, in their exposure to hunger, thirst, and weariness, and in the striking manifestations of His power for their relief, is fraught with warning and instruction for His

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people in all ages. The varied experience of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan. God would have His people in these days review with a humble heart and teachable spirit the trials through which ancient Israel passed, that they may be instructed in their preparation for the heavenly Canaan." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 293.1.

"Many look back to the Israelites, and marvel at their unbelief and murmuring, feeling that they themselves would not have been so ungrateful; but when their faith is tested, even by little trials, they manifest no more faith or patience than did ancient Israel. When brought into strait places, they murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them. Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future, and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty shall come upon them, and their children shall be left to suffer. Some are always anticipating evil or magnifying the difficulties that really exist, so that their eyes are blinded to the many blessings which demand their gratitude. The obstacles they encounter, instead of leading them to seek help from God, the only Source of strength, separate them from Him, because they awaken unrest and repining." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 293.2.

The Sanctuary Service

In the Old Testament there are many other people whose lives illustrate God's methods of teaching these truths embodied in reform. For example, Elijah who was brought food by the ravens; the widow of Zarephath whose life was saved by her spirit of sacrifice; Daniel who refused to bow to the

"In the building of the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, Moses was directed to make all things according to the pattern of things in the heavens. God called him into the mount, and revealed to him the heavenly things, and in their similitude the tabernacle, with all that pertained to it, was fashioned.

"So to Israel, whom He desired to make His dwelling place, He revealed His glorious ideal of character."

Education, 35.2, 3.



God revealed His glorious ideal of character to the people of Israel through the sanctuary

Babylonian philosophy even at the table; Elisha who received a double portion of Elijah's spirit and took up his mantle; Achan who had to die because of his desire for a Babylonian garment; the prophets of God whose faithfulness was also expressed in their clothing; and many more. But apart from all these examples we also find a clear illustration of reform principles in the sanctuary, both in its original form as a portable tent, and later as a stone building.

God gave the believers of those times a special field of activity in the building of the sanctuary, as well as in its services. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 321–325.)

In this school, the people were required to exercise their skills and their organization. The work had to be planned and coordinated - wood and metalwork had to be done, cloth had to be woven, skins had to be tanned, dyes had to be used, and so on. In all this activity, they were not to work just as their imaginations suggested - they had to build according to the pattern that was shown to Moses in the mount, which he in turn faithfully passed on to them. Their skills were to be coupled with obedience and consecration.

Similarly, when the temple was built later on, the people were not to

"The Jewish temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains; and every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested before it was brought to Jerusalem. And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of ax or hammer. This building represents God's spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned."

Testimonies for the Church 9:180.2.

work in any way they pleased, nor where they pleased. Everything had to be prepared so that the work on the sanctuary could be carried out without a single stroke of the hammer. They were to be deeply impressed with the realization that their part of the work was not the most important. The presence of God among them was the main goal, and this could be fulfilled only through their respect for Him. Furthermore it pointed to the fact that we are hewn out of the quarry of this earth and shaped, so that we will be finished stones ready to be used in the heavenly building when we are translated.

The daily sacrifices that pointed to Christ lay at the heart of the sanctuary service. In the exercise of these services God attached great importance to the priest's clothing, a certain form of washing, the cleanliness of the articles, eating regulations, and a particular form of communication between the sinner, the priest, and Himself.

All these are areas of our daily sphere of activity. Through the sanctuary service God gave the day-to-day food, clothing, hygiene, and work, a special meaning. He revealed that He has given us these daily tasks in order to draw us nearer to Himself. In all these classrooms, which all belong to the school of character formation, we are to learn of God and become one with Him. We are not to please ourselves, but through the principles of reform we are to gain the blessings God has designed for us in all these areas of daily life.

To be continued ...

Uta Dura



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The Principles of Reform

Part 2

An Example from the New Testament - The Lord's Supper

In the New Testament, as well as in the Old, God used the school of practical life in order to impart valuable lessons to His people. One example is the Lord's Supper, of which Paul writes: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." *1 Corinthians* 11:26.

The Lord's supper consists of the preparatory service and the following communal meal. In the preparatory service the believers wash each other's feet as Jesus washed the disciple's feet (see *John* 13:15). As they do so, they search their own hearts (see *1 Corinthians* 11:28). In this simple act in the hygiene class, they express their respect for one another and also for God, whom we can truly serve only when we are "washed." The external washing simply points us to the cleansing of heart, which we receive through the ministry of Christ and His church. As such it is a practical exercise in humility and it also adds value to the daily school of cleanliness.

Both external and internal cleanliness has an effect on our sense of dignity. In the classroom of external cleanliness we learn the care and perseverance which we need in order to maintain the purity of the inner person. In order for our senses and thoughts to be acceptable to God they have to be repeatedly "washed." For this purpose we need the word of God (the water) and the service of our fellows. If we keep to ourselves, we are limited by our own viewpoint, but when we gather together with others we gain a broader perspective, our interest in others is awakened, and our pride is humbled.

The supper which follows the footwashing consists of a piece of unleavened bread and the unfermented juice of the vine. The believers eat and drink these together to commemorate the broken body and spilt blood of Christ.

"Our Lord has said, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' *John* 6:53-55. This is true of our physical nature. To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we

eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament." *The Desire of Ages*, 660.3.

The simple bread and grape juice teach us that it is only through the sacrifice of Jesus that we can eat and drink every day. This knowledge imparts a mental attitude that we need for the church service just as much as for the family board. We really need to learn this spirit and have it deeply embedded in our lives. Every day we sit at the table and live by the merits of the death of Christ. Are we aware that our eating and drinking habits are reflecting either the image of Christ or the image of the enemy of souls?

There is hardly a better place where we can manifest the spirit of God than at the dining room table. Thankfulness, contentment, joyfulness, patience, care and consideration for others, self-forgetfulness, willingness to serve, self-control, and temperance can all be learned in this school of life. Human beings, from infancy, can practice all these qualities if we accept the classroom of diet as an instrument which our divine Teacher uses to educate and form us. A person who, through the flesh and blood of Christ, has learned to be content will also be able to withstand the difficulties and trials of life.



"The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament." *The Desire of Ages*, 660.3.

The Temptation

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was an extremely difficult test. As a child and youth He had learned to trust God and feel grateful in every situation. Just think of the circumstances before and after His birth. Mary, His first teacher, did not impart anxiety or unrest to her unborn baby. Although she had reason enough to be concerned, for example when Joseph was unable to find more than a stable for her, or when they had to flee to Egypt, her faith held firmly and restfully in God's care.

When, at the age of thirty, Jesus finally heard the call to public ministry, He faithfully obeyed, just as He had learned in His school of life. After His baptism, He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit so that He could prepare Himself for His coming ministry. But this time of prayer was connected with a test. The devil was permitted to tempt Him there, as we read in *Matthew* 4:1–11 and *Luke* 4:1–13.

To fast for forty days was certainly a trial in itself, but then Jesus was further challenged to use His own initiative to make Himself something to eat. The classroom of human needs took Jesus to His very limits. When Jesus was physically weak and mentally exhausted the tempter taunted Him with concealed mockery: "Help yourself! If you are the Son of God, then prove it, by using your own strength to create what you need to live!"

Although brought to the verge of death by hunger, Jesus rejected this suggestion. He would never distrust His Father's care, nor would He ever leave His role as a dependent Son. Jesus learned obedience through suffering (see *Hebrews* 5:8). In the classroom of food He showed that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (see *Matthew* 4:4). Jesus proved that submission to the will and word of God is more important than physical life.

"In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from

"With Christ, as with the holy pair in Eden, appetite was the ground of the first great temptation. Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin. As by the indulgence of appetite Adam fell, so by the denial of appetite Christ must overcome."

The Desire of Ages, 117.3.

the will of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 121.1.

"In order to impress upon man his obligations to obey the law of God, Christ began His work of redemption by reforming the physical habits of man. The declension in virtue and the degeneracy of the race are chiefly attributable to the indulgence of perverted appetite." *Testimonies for the Church* 3:486.2.

For us today, the classroom of diet is an important beginning for our character formation and our salvation. God instructed not only Jesus through these simple means, but also us. In this school we are to learn that all things have their special time and that everything must rest on two or three witnesses. In regard to food, we cannot rely on our subjective impressions alone. The word of God provides the most important witness, followed by the testimony or counsel of people of experience who bear their responsibility faithfully. Building on these witnesses, our own body shows us what is good for us. We are not to be led by our feelings and appetites.

This classroom helps teach us the important truth that we are not alone in this world. We are dependent on others, and others are dependent on us. This principle holds true even in our relationship to God. It is easy to understand that we, as needy human beings, are dependent on God. But God has also made Himself dependent on us to a certain extent, in that He needs our cooperation.

"In God's great plan for the redemption of a lost race, He has placed Himself under the necessity of using human agencies as His helping hand. He must have a helping hand, in order to reach humanity. He must have the cooperation of those who will be active, quick to see opportunities, quick to discern what must be done for their fellow men."

Selected Messages 1:99.5.

For further study:

Read the description of Jesus' first temptation in *The Desire of Ages*, 114.1 ff.

From Infancy

As we have already seen in the example of Jesus, character training through the school of life begins in the womb. The faith or unbelief of the mother, as well as all her feelings and personality, leave their stamp on the child even before it is born. When this passive phase ends with the birth of the baby, the active school begins.

Whereas we are fed passively in the womb, feeding becomes the first active classroom in the life of the infant. The very first efforts, struggles, privation, order, and well-being of an infant are all connected with food and cleanliness. Sometimes we even wonder why such a little creature has to struggle so much.

But God has so created humanity that we have to eat, and that we have to work in order to eat. God could have created us differently. He could, for example, have made us so that we could take in our food with the air we breathe. So why has God given us the school of food, which begins with the very first day we are born? Because He wants to educate us! He wants to teach us things that we could not learn in any other way. No explanation, however extensive, could replace the practical learning that we experience through our own bodies. We learn most effectively by experiencing things ourselves.

When the mother faithfully imparts God's purpose, the child can learn many valuable principles in the classroom of food. She is the source of food for the child, just as God is the Source of life for us. She is the one who can correctly evaluate the needs of the child and solve any problems that may arise. In a similar way, only God knows our real needs and can successfully solve all our problems. If the mother takes on the guidance of the child following divine principles, then the little one will experience peace and joy. In this way it learns to trust its heavenly Father as well as to find rest and security in His wisdom and power. In other words, the mother imparts the first and most impressive lessons of Sabbath Rest to the growing child.

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you ...”

Deuteronomy 8:3.

Unfortunately, what often happens is that the baby, through its crying, actually leads the mother. The little one is regularly bothered with discontent or discomfort. But instead of distinguishing its real needs from the imaginary needs, the mother continually tries to satisfy the child's feelings. But such a process only makes things worse. The little one feels, quite correctly, that its mother is unable to recognize and resolve the real problem, and sees no other alternative but to take matters into its own hands. However, this is completely beyond its abilities and therefore only increases its frustration. The result is still more unrestrained, inconsolable crying.

Worse still, the infant realizes that it can get its own way if only it cries for long enough. And later the child can strengthen its demands by stamping its feet, defiance, and sulking. As well as this it also learns that the food it is immediately given in reaction to its crying, brings a certain kind of satisfaction, which lays the foundation for innumerable problems. The child is soon convinced that all problems can be solved by satisfying the appetite, which is actually the beginning of many different kinds of addiction.

Little children cannot make intelligent decisions, as they know only their feelings, which quickly change. There is nothing wrong in this, for God made us in such a way that our understanding develops with time. The mother needs to cooperate with these laws in the right way, and in the beginning she will make the decisions for her child. She has to teach it, in a practical way, to submit its feelings to reason, and also how to make intelligent decisions. To do so she uses the natural trust that the child has, as well as the school of food.

Trust is engendered by obedience, while disobedience destroys trust. The mother decides when, how often, and how much, the child will eat or drink. She is guided in so doing by following God's spiritual and natural laws. She encourages her child to submit by submitting herself to God. And she requires the same obedience from the child that she herself ren-



The mother's obedience to the law of God strengthens her child's trust in her. Unbelief will only lead to the destruction of the child's trust.

ders to God. As a result, her actions and her words have authority. What she requires of her child she does herself, while remaining true to her role of mother. She thus accompanies her child until it reaches adulthood and has to make its own decisions in life.

To be submissive is a particular attitude to life. It is only when we ourselves have learnt to submit that we can pass it on to others. And it is only when we have the spirit of submission that we can be a part of God's kingdom. "Through humility and self-surrender we may become heirs with Him." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 17.2. "Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being. *The Desire of Ages*, 523.3.

The Marriage at Cana

Right at the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus worked a miracle in the area of eating and drinking. He had been strengthened by the angels after the temptation in the wilderness. Then He went back to the Jordan, where John was preaching, and chose the first of His disciples. "From the Jordan, Jesus had returned to Galilee. There was to be a marriage at Cana, a little town not far from Nazareth; the parties were relatives of Joseph and Mary; and Jesus, knowing of this family gathering, went to Cana, and with His disciples was invited to the feast." *The Desire of Ages*, 144.2.



When the grape juice that had been provided ran out before the feast was over, the hosts were in danger of falling into disgrace. But just at that moment, Jesus asked the servants to fill the stone jars with water. Then He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." *John* 2:8. When the master tasted it, he found it to be much better than the original juice and could not restrain his amazement. But when the attention of the people was drawn to Jesus, He had disappeared.

We all know the story of the marriage at Cana, as reported in *John 2*. At this marriage, Jesus' "power was put forth to add to the joy of a wedding feast. Thus He showed His sympathy with men, and His desire to minister to their happiness. In the wilderness of temptation He Himself had drunk the cup of woe. He came forth to give to men the cup of blessing, by His benediction to hallow the relations of human life." *The Desire of Ages*, 144.1.

When Jesus turned the water into wine He demonstrated various principles from the kingdom of God. (For a more detailed study read chapter 15 from *The Desire of Ages*.)

- God honors the trust of His children (in this case Mary) and strengthens their faith (in this case the disciples), in the physical and the spiritual sphere.
- He is happy when people are joyful, and does everything to achieve this.
- He does not recognize legalism, but He does help wherever there is a real need.
- His gifts renew life and enable the recipient to receive even more.

Jesus used the marriage feast to demonstrate his dedication to humanity,

- because He loves us and wants to take us home as His bride,
- because He wanted to give a symbol of His death - Jesus' baptism is represented by water, but His death on the cross is represented by wine, which is better and higher than anything that we can do,
- because He wanted to give His disciples the opportunity to tell others about their relationship to Him. Even though they did not yet fully understand Jesus' ways, they could still testify to how Jesus had impressed them.

How different our lives would be if we would recognize the Giver whenever we eat and in all the other areas of our lives, if we would use His gifts conscientiously and with appreciation, and give Him all the honor He is due! Then nothing could stand in the way of our peace and joy.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand



Another important event where Jesus worked a miracle in connection with food was the feeding of the five thousand. (See *John 6*.) "You give them something to eat!" Jesus commanded His disciples. But how could they do that? They clung to Jesus in their helplessness and He showed them the way.

We have all received specific gifts from God, just as the young boy had five loaves and two fish. When he consecrates them to the Lord, without considering his own needs, then Jesus can multiply these gifts so that they will be a blessing to others. When we learn to do our part in co-working faithfully with God, without becoming independent, then God can pour out rivers of blessing through us.

It was important that Jesus did not serve the people special delicacies, but that He instead multiplied the simple food that provided their daily sustenance. In this way the people were not distracted from what Jesus really wanted to communicate. "The simple food passed round by the hands of the disciples contained a whole treasure of lessons. It was humble fare that had been provided; the fishes and barley loaves were the daily food of the fisher folk about the Sea of Galilee. Christ could have spread before the people a rich repast, but food prepared merely for the gratification of appetite would have conveyed no lesson for their good." *The Desire of Ages*, 366.1.

It was also important that the people experienced the real value of the meal. "And never did people enjoy the luxurious feasts prepared for the gratification of perverted taste as this people enjoyed the rest and the simple food which Christ provided so far from human habitations." *The Desire of Ages*, 366.1. What was it that made this meal so valuable? The people learned to be content with what God provides. In so doing they

"He who taught the people the way to secure peace and happiness was just as thoughtful of their temporal necessities as of their spiritual need."
The Desire of Ages, 365.4.

found rest.

God not only wants to give us this rest in regard to diet, but also in all aspects of life. He wants to be our Guide through life. But before God can guide us, we have to entrust ourselves to His care and faithfully fulfill our duty, without taking over His responsibility. It is exactly this co-working that we find so difficult! We often swing between two extremes - either we do nothing, or we try to manage everything by ourselves. We often want to do the things that God has promised to do, but neglect those things that are our responsibility.

But God has clearly defined our position in this co-working, and it is only when we faithfully fill our place that the blessings can freely flow. "In feeding the five thousand, Jesus lifts the veil from the world of nature, and reveals the power that is constantly exercised for our good. In the production of earth's harvests God is working a miracle every day. Through natural agencies the same work is accomplished that was wrought in the feeding of the multitude." *The Desire of Ages*, 367.3.

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand was designed to draw the people's attention to the fact that God's working is of primary importance. By a single word God could easily do humanity's part, but instead He has called us to be co-workers with Him. "Men are called upon to cooperate with God in the care of the grain and the preparation of the loaf, and because of this they lose sight of the divine agency. They do not give God the glory due unto His holy name. The working of His power is ascribed to natural causes or to human instrumentality. Man is glorified in place of God, and His gracious gifts are perverted to selfish uses, and made a curse instead of a blessing." *The Desire of Ages*, 367.3.

The privilege we have of cooperating with God is the very thing that makes us proud and independent. That is hard to understand, but nonetheless true. We can see illustrations of it every day as, for example, in a self-willed child. The mother could do the work herself more quickly and efficiently if she were to do it alone. But she rejects the simpler and faster method in favor of giving her child the chance to learn. She wants to give her child the opportunity of co-working, so that it will be occupied productively and develop its abilities. She gives the child a place in her work, under her leadership. But the child does not want to be led. It imagines it knows everything better than the mother, and only wants to do the work that it likes, and in the way that it thinks best. Before long, the child

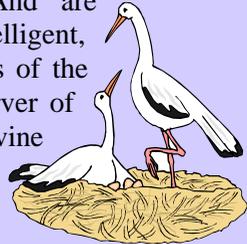
claims not to need the mother any more. "I can do this by myself, go away!" it says, disrespectfully. Does not this self-exaltation lead to a loss of joy and success right from the beginning? As far as our relationship to God is concerned, this is certainly the case. What He intended to be a blessing to us becomes a curse, when we use it selfishly.

Jesus invited the Jews to eat with Him for a number of reasons - to teach them to appreciate God's power; to show them the uselessness of their own works; to lead them in paths of orderliness and to teach them to gratefully cooperate with God; and in order for them to experience the reward of inner contentment. Through this meal Jesus revealed how dependent on God they were. And we can learn the same lesson at our own tables, when our meals are conscientiously dedicated to Jesus.

Martha's Busy Work

One day Jesus showed the difference between anxious care and working in faith. As we read in *Matthew 6*, God does not want us to worry about our food and clothes. Like the flowers and the birds, we are to gratefully accept from God's hand what He has provided for us. In making this comparison, Jesus did not mean that we should no longer sow, reap, toil, or spin, but that we should cheerfully and trustingly fulfill our part of the work, just as the birds and flowers do. As we carry out the tasks that God has given us, we should also manifest the same spirit of contentment that the flowers and birds reveal. Of course, our duties are very different from those of the birds and flowers because animals and plants cannot reason. We, on the other hand, are intelligent creatures and have the ability to make decisions and use our reason in co-working with our heavenly Father. But in matters of consistency and trust, we can learn from the birds. And the flowers can teach us modesty and a meek character.

"The great Provider for man and beast opens His hand and supplies all His creatures. The birds of the air are not beneath His notice. He does not drop the food into their bills, but He makes provision for their needs. They must gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young. They go forth singing to their labor, for "your heavenly Father feedeth them." And "are ye not much better than they?" Are not you, as intelligent, spiritual worshipers, of more value than the birds of the air? Will not the Author of our being, the Preserver of our life, the One who formed us in His own divine image, provide for our necessities if we but trust in Him?" *Steps to Christ*, 123.1.



When Jesus visited the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary for the first time, this was the lesson that He taught them. He had come to bring the kingdom of God close to them. But while He was talking, Martha was busy with the duties of a host. In fact, she was so involved in her work that she did not notice to what extent she had distanced herself from her Guest until she asked Him, rather accusingly, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." *Luke* 10:40.

What was Martha's real problem? Was it wrong to prepare the food? Should she not have provided a meal for her hungry guests? Should she not have spoken to Jesus about her anxiety? She obviously did not have peace in her heart, nor was she in harmony with Jesus - but why not?

"Martha was anxious to provide for their comfort, and in her anxiety she forgot the courtesy due to her Guest." *The Desire of Ages*, 525.1. How is it possible that Martha dedicatedly cared for her Guest, but at the same time forgot the courtesy due to Him? Is that not a contradiction? Or was Martha's care for her Guest not quite as selfless as it appeared?

In her own mind, Martha had knowingly forfeited the pleasant conversation and taken up the tedious work so that her Guest would feel comfortable. But did that make Jesus feel comfortable? It was not wrong to work and serve the guests, but it was wrong to make the work the center of attention.

It was also wrong to try and involve Jesus in her own world. Martha's slight reproach showed that she did not understand Jesus' kingdom and that she wanted to establish her own kingdom, her own view of life. She really believed that she was in the right and that Jesus and her sister were in the wrong. Furthermore, the Saviour should use His authority in order to carry out her wishes. That was indeed discourteous!

"In her anxiety she forgot the courtesy due to her Guest."

How often have men and women seen their part of the work as being so important and have tried to bind others into their own ideas! How often has the spirit of submission and courtesy been lacking when some necessary work had to be done! How often have we gone forward in self-will, instead of faith, in order to fulfill our duties, or even to avoid them.

Jesus did not condemn Martha for her mistake, but He immediately went to the heart of the problem. He answered her in friendly, patient words, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." *Luke 10:41, 42.*

"The 'one thing' that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever." These words confirm that our daily duties have the purpose of forming our characters in God's image, because God's character is the only thing that endures forever.

"Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation. The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good." *The Desire of Ages, 525.2.*

We need to be aware of this lesson in the preparation of every meal, and in every other task that is necessary in order to maintain life. Our work can be a blessing to us and to others only when it is done in the right spirit and we put every effort into it. It is not a question of ourselves and

our wishes, our views and our goals, our appetites and our preferences, but of God's kingdom! "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." *Matthew 6:33*. It is at the table that it is manifest whom we serve.

Jesus' Graveclothes

Another practical classroom for our character training is our clothing. One event that serves as an example of this is at the resurrection of Christ. He had been dressed in graveclothes in the tomb, and when the angel called Him He folded the clothes with His own meticulous hand.

"Mary had not heard the good news. She went to Peter and John with the sorrowful message, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.' The disciples hurried to the tomb, and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John 'saw, and believed.' He did not yet understand the scripture that Christ must rise from the dead; but he now remembered the Saviour's words foretelling His resurrection.

"It was Christ Himself who had placed those graveclothes with such care. When the mighty angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another, who with his company had been keeping guard over the Lord's body. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb, and unbound the wrappings from the body of Jesus. But it was the Saviour's hand that folded each, and laid it in its place. In His sight who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant. Order and perfection are seen in all His work." *The Desire of Ages*, 789.2, 3.

The resurrection was an extremely important moment in the history of heaven and earth. Jesus, the Commander of the angels, had humbled Himself as a Man and permitted His crucifixion. He had made every effort and considered no sacrifice too great in order to reveal the loving character of God in contrast to the enmity of Satan. It had cost Him everything. But

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death could not hold Him captive forever because Christ, who had taken on sinful flesh, had also overcome sin in the flesh.

Therefore, God's righteousness was perfectly justified in Christ's deliverance from the grave. All heaven rejoiced, while the believers on earth did not yet understand what had happened.

In comparison to the significance of the resurrection, the graveclothes were totally unimportant. We could ask why Jesus even bothered with the graveclothes at such a historic moment. Did He not have more important things to do than taking care of "clothes" that had outlived their usefulness?

"In His sight who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant." What does that mean? Were the graveclothes just as important as the resurrection? No, of course not. But at the same time they still had an important work to do - they were a faithful witness to the resurrection of Christ.

"In His sight who guides
alike the star
and the atom,
there is nothing
unimportant."

The Desire of Ages, 789.3.

John saw how the graveclothes had been carefully folded, and through the working of the Holy Spirit he recognized the signature of his Master. He saw the Creator of the stars, whose character is also revealed in the smallest atom. God does not change. He is the same in great things as He is in small. His selfless love and infinite wisdom is

revealed in both spiritual and temporal matters. As the Son of man Jesus manifested the same care and dedication in His daily responsibilities as He did in His role as the Son of God in the government of heaven.

In handling the graveclothes in the way He did, Jesus gave the believers the message of the gospel. Whoever wanted to believe could do so. And those who did not want to believe would find enough reasons to doubt. And so it will always be on this sinful earth.

"Those who are careless and untidy in dress are seldom elevated in their conversation and possess but little refinement of feeling. They sometimes consider oddity and coarseness humility."

Child Guidance, 415.3.

The Outward Appearance is a Message Bearer

And still today, our outward appearance is the bearer of a silent message. From our head to our feet we express our values and goals. Therefore we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Does the message that we give through our outward appearance, our clothing, our hairstyle, our facial expression, etc. express a message of life, or not?
- Does our outward appearance point to Him who has made us to be content, firm personalities in Him, or do they point others to ourselves, to our unbelief, or to our own thoughts?
- Can others understand our message if they want to? In other words, do we speak to them in their own language or do we make it unnecessarily difficult for them?

There are several examples in the Bible which clearly show that we do give a message through our outward appearance. We have already mentioned the skin tunics that God made for Adam and Eve. The prophets also wore specific clothing which revealed their office to everyone. And concerning John the Baptist, Jesus said, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." *Luke 7:24-26*. "And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist." *Matthew 3:4*.

"John separated himself from friends and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel's hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed" *Testimonies for the Church 3:62.1*.

Elijah also had a distinctive outward appearance. "Then he [the king]

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said to them, 'What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?' So they answered him, 'A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.'" By this simple clothing the Lord's messenger was immediately recognized by the rebellious king. "And he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.'" *2Kings* 1:7, 8.

Samson, who was consecrated to God from birth, is another example. When his mother was informed of her coming pregnancy, she was told, "Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." *Judges* 13:4, 5. At that time, when a man wore his hair long it signified that he had consecrated himself to a special ministry for God. (See also *Judges* 16:17 and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 562.2.) Of course, in modern western society when a man has long hair it expresses something completely different.

Women also showed their standing, and their intentions, through their clothing. For example:

- Judas' daughter-in-law, Tamar. "So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face." *Genesis* 38:14, 15. (Read *Genesis* 38 for the context of this scripture.)
- Absalom's sister, Tamar. "Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel." *2 Samuel* 13:18. (Read the whole chapter for the context.)

Another form of order that God has given His people on earth determines that there be a distinct difference between men's and women's clothing. By this means any changing of roles was avoided. "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God." *Deuteronomy* 22:5. The message behind the women's clothing was,

"I am a woman." And the message behind the men's clothing was, "I am a man." This subject will be considered in more depth later.

To be continued...

Uta Dura

Things to think about:

Can you find any other examples in the word of God that confirm that the outward appearance conveys a message?

“And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.”

Zech. 13:4

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Matthew 7:15

"John separated himself from friends and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel's hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed" *Testimonies for the Church* 3:62.1.

For further study:

A leper was to show the danger from his disease by wearing torn clothes. "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" *Leviticus* 13:45.

Tearing clothes was a special act which expressed:

- Sorrow (*Leviticus* 10:6; *Joshua* 7:6; *2 Samuel* 1:11; *Esther* 4:1; *Job* 1:20)
- Repentance (*1 Kings* 21:27; *Ezra* 9:3; *Joel* 2:13)
- Abhorrence and shock, especially in cases of blasphemy (*Numbers* 14:16; *Jeremiah* 36:24; *Matthew* 26:65; *Acts* 14:14)

A specific message was also contained in the shaking out of clothes. "But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'" *Acts* 18:6.

The wedding garment was a robe given to the guests for the feast by the host himself. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless." *Matthew* 22:11, 12. (See also *Christ's Object Lessons*, 309.3.)

The dress customary for feasts was different to the common daily dress. (See *Genesis* 45:22; *Judges* 14:12; *2 Kings* 5:5.)

The dress used at events of public honor also played a special role. (See *Esther* 6:7-9; *Luke* 15:22.)



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Reform

Habitat

Clothing

Cleanliness

Food

Thoughts

Steward-
ship

Language

Work

Time
management

Exercise

Partnership

Contact
with others



The Principles of Reform

Part 3

Practical Applications

It has become evident, through many examples of both the Old and the New Testament, that in the education of His people God used the schools of both diet and clothing. Today, His ways are still the same. He still uses the practical areas of life to train human beings and give them firm personalities. The condition of success is that we wholeheartedly accept these schools.

Parents often ask how they can best train their children - which school, or even country, they should be sent to, so that they can receive a balanced development. The parents also pray a lot for the young minds, so that faith and loyalty will guide them in life. There is nothing wrong in this, but no amount of occupational training or prayers can replace what the parents can do for themselves and for their children by using the various areas of daily life as a classroom. "There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says." *The Ministry of Healing*, 469.1.

"What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do. God does not dispense with man's aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him." *The Desire of Ages*, 535.3.

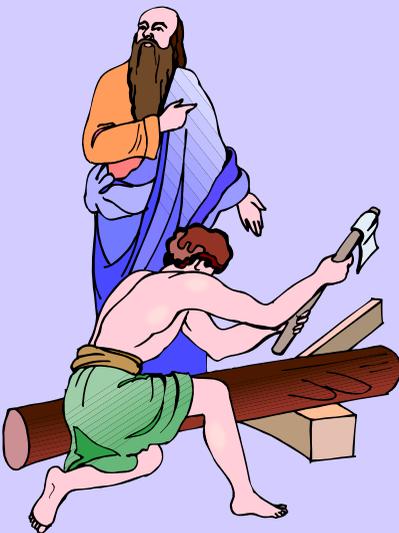
It is obvious that daily life does not consist only of worship, church services, and prayer, but also includes practical duties, responsibilities and tasks. God's purpose for us is that we will co-work with Him and demonstrate a consistent influence in the practical areas of life. He has especially given us the task of witnessing to His character in all that we say and do. He enables us to do this, but He never does for us what we must do for ourselves. God will not shape the influence of our lives without our diligent effort to do good. "Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil." *The Great Controversy*, 425.1.

God's purpose for us is that we will co-work with Him and demonstrate a consistent influence in the practical areas of life.

When Paul noticed that his ministry was drawing to an end, he wrote to his spiritual son, Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." *2 Timothy* 4:7. What does he mean by "the good fight"?

In Paul's first recorded letter to Timothy he encouraged him to "flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing." *1 Timothy* 6:11-14.

Therefore, we can see that the good fight means to keep the laws of God's kingdom by faith in the blood of Jesus. It means to reveal the character of God every day in our thoughts, feelings, and actions, and to separate everything from our lives which contradicts the eternal principles. Whether we are called to be preachers or listeners, parents or children, leaders or helpers, or even martyrs, we should all live out the word practi-



"Jesus is our example... He lived to please, honor, and glorify His Father in the common things of life. His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God's service just as much when laboring at the carpenter's bench as when working miracles for the multitude. And every youth who follows Christ's example of faithfulness and obedience in His lowly home may claim those words spoken of Him by the Father through the Holy Spirit, 'Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth.' Isa. 42:1."

The Desire of Ages, 74.4.

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cably - at the table as in the pulpit, in our outward appearance as well as in our contact with others, in our homes as much as in the church service, in our handling of time, money and all the other gifts that God has bestowed upon us. We all need to put effort into applying the principles of true religion in practical life.

"Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.3. Jesus was just as faithful in preaching the gospel at home as He was in His public ministry. It is true that there are different levels of preaching, but no matter which level a person carries out his service, the main thing is that the gospel, which is as unchangeable as God Himself, be preached.

Cooking

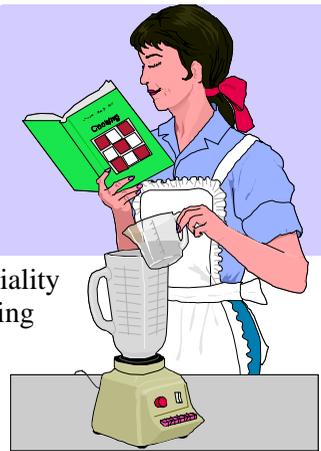
"It is a sacred duty for those who cook to learn how to prepare healthful food. Many souls are lost as the result of poor cookery. It takes thought and care to make good bread; but there is more religion in a loaf of good bread than many think. There are few really good cooks. Young women think that it is menial to cook and do other kinds of housework, and for this reason many girls who marry and have the care of families have little idea of the duties devolving upon a wife and mother.

"Cooking is no mean science, and it is one of the most essential in practical life. It is a science that all women should learn, and it should be taught in a way to benefit the poorer classes. To make food appetizing and at the same time simple and nourishing, requires skill; but it can be done. Cooks should know how to prepare simple food in a simple and healthful manner, and so that it will be found more palatable, as well as more wholesome, because of its simplicity." *The Ministry of Healing*, 302.3, 4.

How many women, and men too, avoid making the effort and taking

the time to prepare tasty, healthy meals with plenty of variety? They think that every other duty is more important than this silent, continuous ministry. They always have some excuse as to why they have a "quick and simple" meal on the table. In doing so, they are unaware that "simple" does not mean easy. Simplicity does not exclude care and effort. Quite the opposite is the case, because true simplicity requires even more skill and effort. Unbalanced meals, or eating "simple" ready-made foods, which have been prepared without regard to the health principles, is not a satisfactory solution. A woman may have a lot of work to do, but if she forgets self and gives herself unreservedly to her duties, she will see that angels are by her side to help her in the fulfillment of all her work.

"The Lord is served as much, yes, more,
by the faithful home worker as by the
one who preaches the Word."
The Truth About Angels, 16.1.



Often a mother suffers under the superficiality and selfishness of her children, without realizing that she does her own work in the same superficial and egotistical manner. Because she feels too weak and lacking in moral power to meet these continual challenges, she will avoid the duties that seem difficult and unpleasant to her. Do we similarly avoid what we do not feel like doing? But no matter what we find difficult, we should ask ourselves how we relate to it. Do we take up unpleasant duties with joy, faith, and self-forgetfulness, or do we save ourselves the inconvenience by skillfully passing on the responsibility to someone else? Children learn more from what we are than from what we say. If our behavior is in harmony with what we say, then our words will have authority.

On the other hand there is danger of the meal preparation being given too much importance. It should be a completely natural duty, not a means of proving oneself or gaining a superior position in the family. When the

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woman tries to show her superiority in the preparation of meals, she is more concerned with her own reputation than the wellbeing of her family or her guests. Although she gives herself fully to the task of cooking, and is no doubt very skillful at it, she does not offer a selfless service out of love, even though she might not realize or admit it. Naturally, God cannot bless such conduct. He has a different goal for humanity. "In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 550.3.

True self-forgetfulness can be exercised in the daily challenges of life, and is especially seen in certain situations. Guests, for example, may provide such an opportunity. Is the woman afraid that she might make a fool of herself? Is she anxious or restless, worrying that what she has to offer is not good enough? Or is she uncaring, expecting her guests to be content with whatever she gives them?

God wants her to be sincerely happy because He has given her an opportunity to serve others and open her home to them. He wants her to accept the challenge in faith, and to create an atmosphere which would be worthy of the angels. "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." *Hebrews* 13:2.

We can test ourselves by the emotions of our heart, to see who we are really working for - ourselves or other. Are we working for our own glory or for the glory of God? Of course, this does not apply only to the task of cooking. If we want to grow, we cannot avoid the work of self-criticism. We must be honest with ourselves and give all our problems, fears, and needs to God. Then we can go forward in faith and accept the practical exercises that God has given us for our education. God can change us. He permits us to face challenges that are not too difficult for us, but hard enough so that we will become stronger. As in the physical sphere, our mental and spiritual muscles also grow only by use.

"So today, while the humble worker for God is following his employment, angels stand by his side, listening to his words, noting the manner in which he does his work.... If he trusts constantly in God, these angel watchers will not allow his work to deteriorate. They will

not permit it to be warped into lines that will imperil the cause of God. The Lord is looking upon the work that comes from the hands of His people. He will judge every piece of work, to see of what sort it is."

In Heavenly Places, 237.4.

Fating

The preparation of food is followed by fellowship at the table with Christ, the angels, and usually other people. A well-ordered, friendly atmosphere, filled with gratitude, will make the mealtime one of the most blessed family events of the day. If the meal is prepared according to the best of one's knowledge and ability, it will serve to advance the health and edification of all. This is the condition for heaven's blessing. Our efforts are not the blessing itself, but merely bring us to the place where we can receive God's blessing. Whatever we do can never be enough. Nevertheless, He accepts our sincere, dedicated efforts and grants us His blessing. If we intentionally avoid putting effort into our work God cannot bless us, because He would then be encouraging us to walk in wrong paths.



How often do families fall short of making the most of the family board? Children, young people, and adults often permit themselves to eat when and what they desire, and to satisfy their appetite in a way that is mindful of neither God and the angels nor others. Good manners, consideration and respect for oneself and others are lost sight of. Instead of honoring the cross of Christ in every loaf of bread, they accustom themselves to irregularity, lack of discipline, love of power, and covetousness. All

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this leads to a love of so-called "freedom", which is actually not true freedom at all, but is really nothing less than egotism.

"Faith is ours to exercise, but joyful feeling
and the blessing are God's to give."

Early Writings, 72.1.

"Many parents, to avoid the task of patiently educating their children to habits of self-denial, indulge them in eating and drinking whenever they please. The desire to satisfy the taste and to gratify inclination does not lessen with the increase of years; and these indulged youth, as they grow up, are governed by impulse, slaves to appetite. When they take their place in society, and begin life for themselves, they are powerless to resist temptation. In the glutton, the tobacco-devotee, the wine-bibber, and the inebriate, we see the evil results of erroneous education and of self-indulgence."

Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 76.1.

Cleanliness and Order

"The truth is refining and elevating, and believers must understand that even though they are poor, they need not be unclean in their persons or in their homes.... Teach them that those who serve God and keep His commandments must keep their souls pure and clean, and that this purity must extend to their dress, their homes, their cooking utensils, their floors, because the ministering angels from the courts of heaven must have every evidence that the precious truth which has been received into the heart has made a decided reformation in the life." *Testimonies to Southern Africa, 86.2.*

The essence of true cleanliness is to differentiate between the pure and

impure, and the purpose of cleanliness is to facilitate the presence of God and the angels. Of course, cleanliness is a blessing for everyone, but for the Christian it is also a condition of communion with heaven. Real cleanliness is a protection against disease, guards against feelings of inferiority, and is an exercise in self-discipline and single-mindedness, which in turn safeguards against licentiousness in every form. In fact, we do ourselves a great favor when we make cleanliness and order habitual.

The essence of true cleanliness is to differentiate between the pure and impure.

When we practice cleanliness we also serve others. It is considerably more pleasant to sit in a clean chair or sofa, to eat from a clean table, to sleep in a clean bed, to use a clean bath and dry oneself with a clean towel. Likewise, it is more pleasant to drive in a clean car, to come to a clean workplace, to meet a clean person, to talk with someone who has clean breath, and so on. The list could be made much longer, but these examples should suffice to make the point. Cleanliness is a real virtue which uplifts and ennobles men and women. Her twin sister is called order, and she has similar qualities.

But cleanliness and order also have spiritual goals. They are instrumental in drawing the atmosphere of heaven closer to us. "Before gathering at Mount Sinai to listen to the proclamation of the law by the voice of God, the people were required to wash both their persons and their clothing. This direction was enforced on pain of death. No impurity was to be tolerated in the presence of God." *The Ministry of Healing*, 279.1.

"He [God] is no less particular now than He was then. He is a God of order, and requires His people now upon the earth to observe habits of strict cleanliness. And those who worship God with unclean garments and

**Cleanliness and
order are twin
sisters**



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persons do not come before Him in an acceptable manner.

He is not pleased with their lack of reverence for Him, and He will not accept the service of filthy worshipers, for they insult their Maker. The Creator of the heavens and of the earth considered cleanliness of so much importance that He said, 'And let them wash their clothes.'" *The Story of Redemption*, 138.2.

"God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have his work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 376.1.

"To each student in the home I would say, Be true to home duties. Be faithful in the discharge of little responsibilities. Be a real living Christian in the home. Let Christian principles rule your heart and control your conduct. Heed every suggestion

made by the teacher, but do not make it a necessity always to be told what to do. Discern for yourself. Notice for yourself if all things in your own room are spotless and in order, that nothing there may be an offense to God, but that when holy angels shall pass through your room, they may be led to linger because attracted by the prevailing order and cleanliness. In doing your duties promptly, neatly, faithfully, you are missionaries. You are bearing witness for Christ. You are showing that the religion of Christ does not, in principle or in practice, make you untidy, coarse, disrespectful to your teachers, giving little heed to their counsel and instruction. Bible religion, practiced, will make you kind, thoughtful, faithful. You will not neglect the little things that should be done. Adopt as your motto the words of Christ: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.'" *Testimonies for the Church* 6:171.2.

"The minister has his line of work, and the mother has hers. She is to bring her children to Jesus for His blessing. She is to cherish the words of

"God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel."
Patriarchs and Prophets, 376.1.

Christ and teach them to her children. From their babyhood she is to discipline them to self-restraint and self-denial, to habits of neatness and order. The mother can bring up her children so that they will come with open, tender hearts to hear the words of God's servants. The Lord has need of mothers who in every line of the home life will improve their God-given talents and fit their children for the family of heaven.

"The Lord is served as much, yea, more, by faithful home work than by the one who teaches the word. As verily as do the teachers in the school, fathers and mothers are to feel that they are the educators of their children." *The Adventist Home*, 236.2.

Cleanliness and order have mental, spiritual, and health benefits, as the above quotations show. When we learn to separate the pure from the impure in external matters, we will also be able to do the same with our inward thoughts and feelings. The one has an influence on the other. God is the source of true purity. There is nothing impure in Him. It is sin that is impure. When sin stained heaven, God made clear rules of separation so that its influence could not spread out indefinitely.

Cleanliness and order have mental, spiritual, and health benefits.

Just as cleanliness and order cost heaven a lot of effort, sacrifice, and power, so they also cost us exertion, dedication, and zeal. And as with the food preparation, many people - including believers - evade the work. They think they can afford to be negligent. "Nobody sees it anyway. Apart from that, I do not have the time. There are other, more important things to do. Who is interested anyway, and even if they are it is not their business." These are the arguments that are often heard, but which are all "fig-leaves." The real reason is that I do not want to, it is too much effort for me, I am lazy, and I do not want anybody to take a closer look at my life.

We need to realize that such an attitude indicates that we are trying to avoid the school of life. However, this is not possible. We are all in a classroom and we are all learning every day, so it is our decision as to whether we learn the right or the wrong. If in the daily school of simple duties we fail to develop a character that will stand throughout eternity, then we are ignoring a God-given privilege. In doing so we reject the

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cross of Christ, which is given to us so that we may have another opportunity to choose the right course and be trained in His service.

"The neat, orderly and careful boy has an invariable rule; "A place for every thing, and every thing in its place." Go into his room at any hour, you will find everything in order. He can go in the dark and lay his hands upon anything that he wants, so that he never runs the risk of setting the house on fire by carrying a light into his bed-room. He never leaves a thing at random where he happens to be using it, but always puts it where it belongs. When he undresses, every article of his clothing is folded and laid together in the order that it will be wanted in the morning, so that he loses no time in hunting for it. He is equally careful of his person. He never considers himself dressed, till he has washed his hands and face, cleaned his teeth, and combed his hair; and he never thinks of setting down to the table with dirty hands. He learns to keep his clothes neat and clean. He never forgets to use the scraper at the door, to remove the mud from his feet, and he makes it an invariable rule never to pass a mat without wiping his shoes. He never says, like the sloven, "I didn't think," to excuse himself. He would consider it unpardonable in him not to think; for what is the ability of thinking worth, if it never comes when it is wanted. The neat, orderly boy makes himself agreeable to his mother, or guardian, and friends, who are always glad to see him coming home. And home is a delightful place to him, because he meets with smiles and pleasant words. But the sloven exposes himself to sour looks and chiding, by his dirty habits; and he finds home a disagreeable place, because he makes it so.'

"We want you, dear boys, to be patterns of neatness and order."

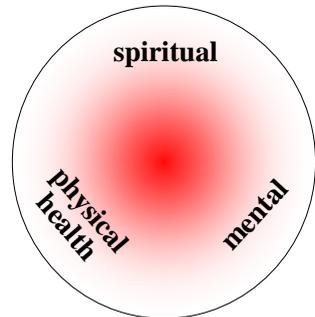
An Appeal to the Youth 72.3-73.1.

clothing

As already mentioned, cleanliness and order play a role in the clothing, and also in the whole outward appearance, which includes the shoes as well as the hairstyle, the face, the hands and the fingernails. But while it is important to be clean and orderly, that is not the whole picture. More is necessary to produce a good outward appearance, and the message that goes with it.

People often have their particular preferences in clothing. This is even true of small children. We may like one thing and not something else - but why? We often like a dress or a hairstyle today, but not two weeks later - why is this? Most people cannot answer why this is so. "Our likes and dislikes are a matter of feeling," they say, and continue to live with their vague, changeable attitude.

In actual fact, our outward dress does have something to do with feeling comfortable, but that does not mean that there are no standards or laws that can guide us. As no other classroom can, clothing teaches us to make decisions from an intelligent standpoint, and to be consistent. In this context the three aspects of human nature also play a role.



The Health Aspect

From a health point of view, clothes and shoes should be practical as well as comfortable. They should not compress or misshape any part of the body so that it can no longer perform its function without difficulty. At the same time, they should provide strength and form wherever necessary. Movement, the breathing of the lungs and the skin, protection, warmth, and support are the needs of the body which clothing should sustain. We cannot expect the muscles, joints, and organs to perform their functions freely if we do not create the right conditions for them.

Healthy clothing also means suitable clothing. There are various kinds of work and each presents different demands on the body. This is where we need to apply our reason and choose the clothing that is most suitable

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for the different tasks. Apart from this there are also different weather conditions, climates, and seasons. We need to think about these things and learn how we can meet these demands in the healthiest way.

For example: on cold days it is not wise to concentrate all the insulation on the trunk, and leave the limbs less protected. Quite the opposite is the case, for when we clothe our arms, legs and feet better than the trunk it stimulates the blood circulation at the center of the body. The abdomen feels a little cold and the brain receives the signal to heat up the body. The heart pumps stronger and brings blood and warmth to the extremities. As these are well insulated they do not lose this warmth immediately.

Vigorous exercises achieve the same results, which is why a person who works physically hard needs less insulation on the extremities. But similar to the person who works at a desk, he also needs to take care that the trunk does not have too much clothing that would cause an accumulation of blood there, which in turn would lead to sickness. To dress healthily means to cover the body with equal layers of clothing.

The Mental Aspect

The health or physical aspect of dress must be complemented by the mental and spiritual aspects. The mental or intellectual area includes aesthetic considerations, a good fit, dignity, harmony of style and color, as well as practicability. Clothing which fulfils only the health requirements but is not pleasant or becoming conveys an impression of superficiality or legalism. A person who wears such clothes is avoiding the effort of reaching a higher standard and of pleasing others. If we behave this way in regard to our clothing, how much more will we do so in our work or in contact with others!

We will not provide fixed rules to determine what a good fit, and dignified, harmonious, practical clothing is. We each must decide for ourselves what is most fitting for the event or for the day's activities. But nobody needs to dress superficially or indifferently for any kind of work. For example, a worker who has to deal with dirt every day can still take care that his clothing is a good fit, is fresh each morning, and presents an orderly picture. His clothing may indeed become dirty while he is carrying out his work, but that is the reason he has work clothes. The question then arises as to how he should dress after work. Does he change his dirty

clothing or does he expect others to accept him just as he is.

The retort "They should try working themselves for once, and not look down on me!" sounds defensive and almost aggressive. It is a fact that many excuse their laziness by claiming that it is not possible to do otherwise. But if we want to grow in character we must first be honest with ourselves, and then we can be honest with others.

"I would advise those who prepare for themselves a short dress for working purposes to manifest taste and neatness in getting it up. Have it arranged in order, to fit the form nicely. Even if it is a working dress, it should be made becoming, and should be cut after a pattern. Sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn. It is more gratifying to their husbands and children to see them in a becoming, well-fitting attire than it can be to mere visitors or strangers. Some wives and mothers seem to think it is no matter how they look when about their work and when they are seen only by their husbands and children, but they are very particular to dress in taste for the eyes of those who have no special claims upon them. Is not the esteem and love of husband and children more to be prized than that of strangers or common friends? The happiness of husband and children should be more sacred to every wife and mother than that of all others. Christian sisters should not at any time dress extravagantly, but should at all times dress as neatly, modestly, and healthfully as their work will allow." *Testimonies for the Church* 1:464.2.

In this connection it should be emphasized that anyone who concentrates on only the mental aspect of their outward appearance, and forgets the health and spiritual aspects, will become vain. Such people become so involved with themselves and with the impression they wish to make on others, that they end up being dependent on the current fashion and recognition from others. Naturally, this makes them unsuitable for any kind of reasonable service.

Vanity is an evil that needs to overcome early in life. It is expressed in various ways, but self is always at the basis of it. Do I like myself? Will I be appreciated? Will I be respected? Have my wishes and goals been considered? Do I have enough financial and social freedom? Do I enjoy all

“Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil.”

Ecclesiastes 9:8.

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my rights? Am I understood? Am I loved? Vanity is a form of selfishness. Obviously, it has no place in heaven, and therefore no place in God's work on earth. When we really look to Jesus then our vanity will disappear.

"A minister who is negligent in his apparel often wounds those of good taste and refined sensibilities. Those who are faulty in this respect should correct their errors and be more circumspect. The loss of some souls at last will be traced to the untidiness of the minister.

The first appearance affected the people unfavorably because they could not in any way link his appearance with the truths he presented.

His dress was against him; and the impression given was that the people whom he represented were a careless set who cared nothing about their dress, and his hearers did not want anything to do with such a class of people.

"Here, according to the light that has been given me, there has been a manifest neglect among our people. Ministers sometimes stand in the desk with their hair in disorder, looking as if it had been untouched by comb and brush for a week. God is dishonored when those who engage in His sacred service are so neglectful of their appearance."

Testimonies for the Church 2:613.1, 2.



Hair

It is a fact that our attitude and personality are expressed in our outward appearance as well as in our behavior. Our external characteristics also have an influence on our inner self. Peter says to believing women: "Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." *1 Peter 3:3, 4.* And Paul wrote to Timothy: "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly

clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." *1 Timothy 2:9, 10.*

"Good works" and "a gentle and quiet spirit" are expressed in an appropriate appearance, which contrasts with indifference on the one hand, and braided hair, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing on the other. The latter is an expression of the pride and extravagance into which a woman can be misled. What does "braided hair" refer to today? We should ask ourselves this question so that we will not be led into one extreme or the other.

Naturally, we all have different hair structure and color. And the various countries have different customs and styles, which influence our feelings. Among the Hebrew women of Paul's day it was usual to braid the hair if they wanted to make a good impression. What do women do today in order to attract attention or to stand out from the crowd? They alter the structure of their hair and the color. They have special haircuts, or style their hair in an unnatural, often impractical, way, or else they do not brush their hair at all, simply letting it hang down. These examples are illustrations only and may not apply to every country, or all the various types of hairstyle.

In general, people realize that their hairstyle is a direct expression of personality. Young people, in the process of becoming adults who can be responsible for themselves, usually place great value on their hairstyles. In their choice of hairstyle they are strongly guided by their feelings. Hair and clothing can easily be changed, whereas the shape of the nose or the ears cannot. Young people can arrange their hair to create a certain personal style, in whatever direction they desire. "I will not let anyone touch my hair - because I do not want to be touched." "I let my hair hang in my face - because I do not want to be seen." "I have an aggressive hairstyle - because I do not want anybody to interfere with my life." Hairstyles can include strong or soft lines, hair may be loose or gathered together, and it may be arranged in natural or unnatural styles. There are so many possible variations of hairstyle that each of us must ask ourselves what we really want to express.

We can further express our personality through our face and fingernails, and even our toenails. Apart from the necessary care of these, people often think that they have to "improve" on their natural beauty with the use of color and shaping, nail varnish, rings, jewels and so on. They do not realize that God has already made everything so practical

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and beautiful! We just have to recognize this beauty. Eyes are beautiful when they radiate love and friendship. Lips and cheeks are beautiful when they are ennobled by a smile. The mouth is beautiful when it speaks God's praise. Hands are beautiful when they are quick to serve, courageous as well as gentle in ministry. The beauty of character



can be seen in the facial expression, in the gesticulation of hands and movement of feet. As surely as harvest follows sowing, so is our inner mind expressed in our outward appearance.

While it is understandable that young people are searching for their own identity, one would imagine that adults have already found their role and personality. But this is often not the case, especially in our contemporary, unthankful, and restless society. People are discontented with their circumstances - today they want a partner, the next day they want to be rid of him or her. Today they want to possess something, and tomorrow they are tired of it. Today they want to have



children, and tomorrow the work is too much for them. People desire comfort, recognition or reputation, and sometimes riches, a higher position, or less responsibility in life. Some fight against being an adult and are always looking for someone else to carry their burdens. There are several ways of expressing discontent, but one thing is common to them all - lack of submission to circumstances, duties, responsibilities, and to others. Such people strive for freedom to live according to own feelings. But they will eventually find to their surprise that this freedom is their greatest prison!



"The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago - a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished." *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.2. As believers, we should be aware that we are to be the salt of

the earth (*Matthew 5:13*). If we lose our flavor, what will become of all the needy people?

Each of us must search our own hearts if we really want to follow Christ. Everything that we do is an expression of what we are, and this in turn exercises an influence on us. As believing men and women, we should understand more than the people of this world, and give them a witness of our security that they so desperately need on the restless sea of their feelings. Even our hairstyles, silently and in the background, preach a message. Is this the message of the gospel which delivers us from self and enables us to serve, or is it the message of our own concepts, impressions, and fears?

To be continued...

Uta Dura

For further study:

Hair is mentioned in the Bible in several contexts:

- The Israelites were forbidden to have the same hairstyle as the peoples around them. "You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard." *Leviticus 19:27*. (Compare with *Jeremiah 9:25; 25:23*)
- Anyone who made a vow to God was not to be distracted from keeping it. This was expressed by the man letting his hair grow. "All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow." "Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering." *Numbers 6:5, 18*.
- When people's hair became gray they were not to be ashamed but instead willing to share their life experience with others. "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD." *Leviticus 19:32*. God Himself is pictured as having white hair (see *Daniel 7:9; Revelation 1:14*). "The glory of

young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head." *Proverbs 20:29*.

- People showed their deep repentance by shaving their heads. "And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, for baldness and for girding with sackcloth." *Isaiah 22:12*.
- In the New Testament Mary dried the feet of Jesus with her hair (see *John 12:3*).
- Paul wrote to the Corinthians that long hair and the covering of a woman's head was an expression of their submission to their husbands, which was an honor to them and which pleased God (see *1 Corinthians 11:6-15*).

Thus we can see that hair expressed a message of separation from sin, undivided consecration to God, life's experience, deep repentance, and submission. Is God referring to these things when He promises, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls."? *Luke 21:17-19*.



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with others

The Principles of Reform

Part 4



Dignity and Grace

The dignity of a human being is a fundamental right that God has given us. "And God said, Let us make man in our image..." *Genesis* 1:26. We are made in the image of God in that we are given the ability, right, and duty, to make decisions and bear responsibility. God wants us to see ourselves as intelligent beings, and He wants us to respect ourselves. If we do not respect ourselves, we will not respect God or anyone else either.

Dignity should not be confused with pride. God does not want us to think that our standard alone is sufficient. We are not the source, we are only dependent creatures. "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" *1 Corinthians* 4:7. We belong to God both by creation and by redemption, and therefore we should consider ourselves children of the Highest, and behave accordingly. Our Father is a King, and the king's children honor their Father by their outward appearance and their conduct. For, in God's kingdom external things are not just a trained pattern of behavior, but a natural expression of the heart's convictions.

"The most careful cultivation of the outward proprieties of life is not sufficient to shut out all fretfulness, harsh judgment, and unbecoming speech. True refinement will never be revealed so long as self is considered as the supreme object. Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren. Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. It illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the whole being."

The Ministry of Healing, 490.1.

Dignity means to be aware of the fact that we

- are individuals who can think for themselves
- have the duty to make decisions
- bear responsibility for ourselves before God and our fellows
- take up our place of duty in society

When Jesus lived on this earth people were often impressed by His dignity and natural grace. He lived what He taught, and He bore the responsibility for everything that He did and said. His obedience to God the Father was perfect, because He obeyed willingly as an independently thinking person. He bore the responsibility for His ministry to others. Even when He carried out requests from others, He still bore the responsibility for His own actions. In the workshop He filled His place as faithfully as He did in society, in healing, preaching, and on the cross. Aware of His dignity, He revealed the grace of a quiet, meek spirit.

Of His childhood we read, "He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child and not of a man, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. But at each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 82.3.

Grace is manifested in friendliness, frankness, and modesty. "One of the characteristics that should be especially cherished and cultivated in every child is that self-forgetfulness which imparts to the life such an unconscious grace. Of all excellences of character this is one of the most beautiful, and for every true lifework it is one of the qualifications most essential." *Education*, 237.2.

Grace and selfishness are opposing principles. "But instead of grace, meekness, lowliness of mind, kindness, gentleness, and love shining in his life, self, important self, appears everywhere." *Testimonies for the Church* 5:74.3. Those who are interested only in themselves stifle the tender plant of grace.

The essence of Jesus' teachings and life is selflessness. As a Man, Jesus revealed in His own character a grace that stood out distinctively from the background of gray everyday life. And He has the same goal for us. "As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness,

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that heaven's light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, 468.2.

Do we understand what grace really means? If we have grace we spread a certain atmosphere that is comely, decent, tactful, and proper. Grace also means charming, which implies beautiful, pleasant, and attractive. Grace is a sweetness of disposition which reveals a natural, meek nature. Children, for example, possess natural grace - a loving nature that uplifts and brings joy to others. Unfortunately, this characteristic is lost all too quickly as the result of unwise attention, flattery and praise. In the animal kingdom the word "grace" is often applied to animals such as the gazelle, deer, or giraffe, that impress us with their harmonious, easy movements, but which also possess a certain shyness. Grace is not anxiety, but reverence and respect. A young girl who quietly lets others have the first place appears pleasant and attractive to us.

Solomon said to his son, "And have joy of the wife of your youth, your lovely hind, your graceful doe. Her love will invigorate you

It is God's purpose that the dignity which He has given us be expressed in the grace of a meek and quiet spirit.



"We judge of a person's character by the style of dress worn. A modest, godly woman will dress modestly. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of a simple, appropriate attire.... How charming, how interesting, is simplicity in dress, which in comeliness [grace] can be compared with the flowers of the field."

Child Guidance, 413.5.

always, through her love you will flourish continually."
Proverbs 5:18, 19 (NAB).

Our grace is seen in our entire behavior and in our clothing, hairstyle, and face. Therefore it is written "It [clothing] should have the grace, the beauty, the appropriateness of natural simplicity. Christ has warned us against the pride of life, but not against its grace and natural beauty." *The Ministry of Healing*, 289.1.

"Of how little value are gold or pearls or costly array in comparison with the loveliness of Christ. Natural loveliness [grace] consists in symmetry, or the harmonious proportion of parts, each with the other; but spiritual loveliness [grace] consists in the harmony or likeness of our souls to Jesus." *Child Guidance*, 423.5.

In this text spiritual and physical grace are compared. Indeed, our spiritual life is reflected in our outward appearance more than we may realize or admit. Whatever is within us will be revealed. Therefore each of us should watch over our heart carefully so that it will be a pure spring from which the water of life spreads to others. (Compare with *John 4:14 ff.*) Our words, our glances, and our gestures are just as much vessels to preach the gospel as our outward appearance. But of course, we can only preach the treasure we ourselves have within. It is God's purpose that the dignity which He has given us be expressed in the grace of a meek and quiet spirit.

"Created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory." *Education*, 20.2.

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"I was informed that the inhabitants of earth had been degenerating, losing their strength and comeliness. Satan has the power of disease and death, and with every age the effects of the curse have been more visible, and the power of Satan more plainly seen. Those who lived in the days of Noah and Abraham resembled the angels in form, comeliness, and strength. But every succeeding generation have been growing weaker and more subject to disease, and their life has been of shorter duration. Satan has been learning how to annoy and enfeeble the race." *Early Writings*, 184.2.

"Teach the children that because of God's great love their natures may be changed and brought into harmony with His. Teach them that He would have their lives beautiful with the graces of the flowers. Teach them, as they gather the sweet blossoms, that He who made the flowers is more beautiful than they. Thus the tendrils of their hearts will be entwined about Him. He who is 'altogether lovely' will become to them as a daily companion and familiar friend, and their lives will be transformed into the image of His purity." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 98.1.



Men's and Woman's Clothing

As we have seen, God gave His followers on earth a special order in dress. He directed them to make a difference between men's and women's clothing. "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God." *Deuteronomy 22:5*. This text does not describe what men's and women's clothing comprises, it merely says that

they should be different from each other, and that a disregard of this command would rule out any fellowship with God.

We may wonder whether this command applied only to Biblical times and if it is not outdated in these modern times of emancipation. It is true that circumstances and relationships change, but God's thoughts and feelings do not change, and His actions are always the same. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." *James 1:17*. Therefore we really need to understand why God places so much value on a differentiation between men's and women's clothing.

When God created humanity He created both a man and a woman (see *Genesis 1:27*.) In doing so He had specific thoughts, goals, and purposes. Adam was created as the originator of the human race. His task was to rule the earth, the animal and plant world, and the following generations, in the same way that God is ruler of the universe and His creatures. In order to make the copy of the original complete, God gave him a helper, just as He had a Helper in the work of creation (see *Hebrews 1:2*). Eve was taken from Adam's body, and was therefore a part of him. At the same time she was an individual with rights and duties, abilities and responsibilities. She had an understanding which she was to use in judging and making decisions, just as Adam did. She was a copy of Adam (see *1 Corinthians 11:7*), but she had different tasks. She was created to help Adam in his lifework, to enrich him and the whole earth with her ministry, to spread joy, and to be an equal with Adam.

Adam and Eve were happy and fully contented in their different roles until sin found an entrance. Then pride and arrogance arose. Their unity was broken up, which resulted in distrust, fear, and strife.

Eve was created to

- help Adam in his lifework
- enrich him and all the earth with her existence
- spread joy
- be an equal with Adam

God had a solution ready to resolve this crisis - He created an order which was to restore the original picture. Woman was placed a little lower

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than man, so that it was clear whom God wanted to lead the family (see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58.3). This new order revealed the humiliation of Christ, who, because of sin, became a Man and humbled Himself even to death on the cross. "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." *Philippians* 2:6-8.

Woman, who had been created as a helper to her husband and who, unfortunately, "helped" him into sin, was happily given a new opportunity for service. What a privilege - to be able to represent the exalted ministry of Christ! God demonstrated His trust in her by providing the possibility of developing wisdom, self-denial, humility, and responsibility in her relationship to man! What an opportunity God gave her in molding the character of her husband's children in the image of God!

Woman was not degraded to the level of a mere automat, but in humility and modesty she was to complement man in order to enable him to fulfill his original task. Man had failed as a ruler of the earth and had given his sovereignty to Satan. He too was given a second opportunity to learn the divine art of rulership. He was to exercise patience in toil and work, exercise his office as shepherd with consideration and dedication, and learn to forget self completely in his ministry to others. He was to be the head of the wife just as Christ is Head of the church. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." *Ephesians* 5:23.

Both before and after sin, God had made the happiness of humanity dependent on their understanding and faithful fulfillment of their mutual service. Men were to learn to rule in the right way mindless of self. Adam fell because he neglected his responsibility, choosing his own advantage instead. He did not want to lose Eve, who had given him so much joy, but in clinging to her, he forgot his duty to his Creator. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56.2.) It is impossible to secure a blessing by holding on to it with all one's might.

For her part, Eve needed to learn to submit and to serve selflessly. She fell because she trusted more in her own wisdom than in the word of God and her husband through whom God would have protected her. (See *Pa-*

triarchs and Prophets, 53.5.) Woman is to reveal sincerity and faithfulness in a quiet, meek way. She can make her life an enrichment for all by obedience rather than by loud self-assertion.

	Adam	Eve
What did they have to learn?	As a husband he was to learn to rule in the right way and forget himself	Eve was to learn to submit and to serve with self-denial
Why did they have to learn this?	He had neglected his responsibility in favor of his own advantage	She had relied more on her own works than the Word and her husband

The different roles of male and female, both of whom point to Christ's character and work, should not be swapped. God has given each of us the ability to do our work, but not to do the work of another. If the roles are changed it will invariably lead to more discord and suffering. The truth of this can easily be seen in our society today.

Similarly, an abuse of the roles also leads to suffering, as the examples of slavery and the oppression of the Middle Ages show. In such instances men misuse their roles and degrade women by the use of force to become their powerless servants with no will of their own. In an effort to correct such misuse, our society has tried to place women in the same roles as men. But misuse of roles cannot be corrected by swapping the roles. Both of these evils bear bad fruit.

From God's perspective, men and women are already equal in terms of rights, duties, intelligence, and freedom of decision. Both men and women are independent personalities whose decisions, actions, words, and work are their own responsibility. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." *Galatians 3:28*. But equality in the sense of emancipation, which excludes any submission, and which rejects any dis-

The misuse of roles cannot be corrected by swapping the roles.

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tion in roles and responsibilities, eventually leads to a tragic loss of respect. As a result, every form of communication becomes more difficult and there is inevitably strife and fighting for the supremacy. And it is just such a spirit as this that excludes us from communion with God.

When God said, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God" (*Deuteronomy 22:5*), He was speaking about this harmful swapping of roles. He was not concerned so much with the external clothes, as with the principles that lay at the root of this problem, for the outward appearance of a person is only an expression of their inner attitude. When a woman strives to take the role of a man and gives up her own God-given role, as is often the case in today's society, it is not surprising that she chooses her clothing according to the style of a man's clothing.

"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 11:11.

"Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them."
Patriarchs and Prophets, 59.1.

"There is still another style of dress which will be adopted by a class of so-called dress reformers. They will imitate the opposite sex, as nearly as possible. They will wear the cap, pants, vest, coat, and boots, the last of

which is the most sensible part of the costume. Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress, are carrying the so-called dress reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result. Some who adopt this costume may be correct in their views in general upon the health question, and they could be instrumental in accomplishing vastly more good if they did not carry the matter of dress to such extremes.

"In this style of dress God's order has been reversed, and his special directions disregarded. *Deut. 22:5.* 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.' This style of dress, God would not have his people adopt. It is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble females who profess to be Christ's followers. God's prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who would advocate the doing away of the distinction of dress between males and females. The extreme positions taken by some dress-reformers upon this subject cripple their influence." *Selected Messages 2:477.7, 8.*

"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.' *1 Timothy 2:9.*" *Testimonies for the Church 1:457.2.*

"God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime. Were the apostle Paul alive, and should he behold women professing godliness with this style of dress, he would utter a rebuke. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.' The mass of professed Christians utterly disregard the teachings of the apostles, and wear gold, pearls, and costly array." *Testimonies for the Church 1:460.1.*

During Ellen White's time, dress reform was especially concerned with freeing women from the unhealthy and impractical dress of their day.

A woman who wears men's clothing is an abhorrence to the Lord because she preaches the enemy's message and declares God's order to be unimportant.

Instead, the aim of dress reform was to clothe women sensibly, even if this meant a change in the fashions of that time. Ellen White was a reformer who saw the importance of the health aspect and worked to create a new style that was suitable for the tasks of a woman. To this end she supported the development of a reform dress that countered the prevalent fashions. The health aspect was important, but this was not the only criterion. The dress should also be becoming, orderly, clean, fitting, practical, and respectable. These considerations brought dress reform into harmony with the moral and mental aspects.

Ellen White considered God's order and pointed to the moral aspect, which is important in our relationship to God and the opposite sex. Copying the clothing of the other sex causes confusion, and when the clear distinction between the sexes becomes vague it damages interpersonal relationships. And if we become so used to taking the place of someone else that we no longer know our role in our relationship to God, then the damage increases immeasurably.

A worker in a business does not dress like the boss, and so avoids unpleasant mistakes. At the court of a king, his dress makes it apparent that he is the ruler. No one else dresses or acts like the king. Daniel, for example, remained ever faithful in his role as prime minister to the king. And even when Nebuchadnezzar was too sick to fulfil his role, Daniel acted in his stead for seven years as though it were the king himself, while keeping the king's place free for his return. This spirit of selfless service in Daniel helped the proud ruler to understand God's role better and led him to humble himself and submit to God.

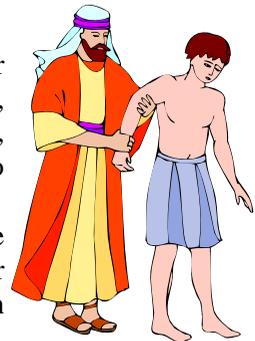
The Hebrews' Clothing

In order to gain a better understanding of the differences between men's and women's clothing, we will take a closer look at the clothes the Hebrews wore. A typical outfit consisted of an under garment, an outer garment, which in some cases was somewhat longer, shoes, a belt, and a cloak.

The Under Garment

Next to the body an under garment was worn - a kind of shirt made from wool or linen that reached to the knees. (See *Mark 14:51*; *Leviticus 13:47*.) In later times it was sometimes made of very fine linen. (See *Ezekiel 16:13*.) In the home, at work, and at other times, this was the only piece of clothing. Whoever wore only an under garment was referred to as "naked."

- "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea." *John 21:7*.
- "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, 'How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!' 2 *Samuel 6:20*.
- Prisoners were stripped of their outer garments and led "naked," that is, dressed only in their under garment, into prison. Jewish prisoners are so represented in Assyrian pictures.
- "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 58:7*.



The Outer Garment (Tunic)

Sometimes a second, longer garment was worn which reached down to the ankles. (See *1 Samuel* 2:19; 24:5.) Both garments, or else only the under garment, were fastened by a belt.

The Cloak

The cloak was made up of a strong, almost square piece of material. It was so large that it could also be used for carrying all kinds of things. (See *Exodus* 12:34; *2 Kings* 4:39.) The poor used it as a protection from the cold by day and by night. This was why it was not permitted to withhold the cloak as a pledge (see *Exodus* 22:25 ff). Jesus instructed His followers "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also." *Matthew* 5:40.

When a man went to work, or the cloak hindered him, he usually removed it.

- Jesus "rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself." *John* 13:4.
- "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes." *Matthew* 24:18.
- "They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul." *Acts* 7:58 (NAB).
- "Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him." *Acts* 12:8.
- "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." *Matthew* 21:8 (NIV).

Tassels were attached with a blue string to the corners of the cloak. These were to remind the wearer of God's commands (see *Numbers* 15:38, 39; *Deuteronomy* 22:12). The Pharisees liked to wear these especially long (see *Matthew* 23:5).



"They were unable to present Him with costly gifts, but they spread their outer garments as a carpet in His path, and they also strewed the leafy branches of the olive and the palm in the way." *The Desire of Ages*, 570.1

"Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined." *Numbers* 15:38, 39.

"In place of the one coarse garment which was their covering by day, and their blanket at night, they hoped that Christ would give them the rich and costly robes of their conquerors." *The Desire of Ages*, 299.2.

Hebrew Women's Clothing

The women's clothing was similar to the men's, but nonetheless had some unmistakable differences. It was longer and wider, and made of finer material. The outer garment had sleeves that reached to the wrist. Unlike the men, the women also wore their hair long, and under certain conditions they wore a veil or a headscarf, which was often very long. (See *Genesis* 24:65; *Jeremiah* 2:32; *Ezekiel* 16:10.) Even from a distance it was easy to identify whether a person coming towards one was a man or a woman.

Of course, it is not our purpose to adopt the Hebrew's mode of dress in our times. We are not interested in copying a certain style, but we do want to understand the underlying principles and apply them. Every age and each society has their own style as well as their distinctive features. As believers, we are not interested in being different without a reason. We do not want to be unpleasantly conspicuous, nor to stand out because of some unnecessary peculiarity. But when the society we live in, which we want to serve with all



our heart, makes demands of us that would damage both ourselves as well as them, then we cannot concur.

It is our duty to find a style of clothing that is appropriate today, but does not share in the sinfulness of our times. In other words, we need a vessel that will bring us as close as possible to others, but without sinning. (See *2 Corinthians 4:7*.) Only close communion with God that leads us to think and feel as He does can enable us to impart a message of life to our surroundings - especially through the difference between men's and women's clothing. Let us love our fellow men, and be true servants to them, for Christ has died for them as well as for us. "We love Him be-

Vain woman of the Past

In the question of clothing there is not only the problem of changing the roles but also of over-emphasis. While the Lord abhors men wearing women's clothing and vice versa, He is also not pleased when clothing is misused to arouse sexual excitement in others. He wants to protect us from impure thoughts and their evil results, and therefore He gives us counsel that will save us much suffering if we follow it.

Isaiah wrote about the professing female believers of his time who were immoral. "Next he will judge the haughty Jewish women, who mince along, noses in the air, tinkling bracelets on their ankles, with wanton eyes that rove among the crowds to catch the glances of the men. The Lord will send a plague of scabs to ornament their heads! He will expose their nakedness for all to see. No longer shall they tinkle with self-assurance as they walk. For the Lord will strip away their artful beauty and their ornaments, their necklaces and bracelets and veils of shimmering gauze. Gone shall be their scarves and ankle chains, headbands, earrings, and perfumes; their rings, jewels, party clothes, negligees, capes, ornate combs, and purses; their mirrors, lovely lingerie, beautiful dresses, and veils. Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they'll stink; for sashes they'll use ropes; their well-set hair will all fall out; they'll wear sacks instead of robes. All their beauty will be gone; all that will be left to them is

shame and disgrace. Their husbands shall die in battle; the women, ravaged, shall sit crying on the ground." *Isaiah 3:16-25 (The Living Bible)*.

In this scripture the prophet directs our attention to the connection between the decorated appearance of the women and the death of the men. We might ask why the men have to die when it is the women who are so vain. But God is not unrighteous. He has given the man the task of being the head, which means the man has to decide what he will permit and what he will forbid. Man is responsible for the leadership, whether he is passively or actively involved. Isaiah describes the fall of female dignity and the death of the men as a result of sins which both partook in. Obviously the men liked the provocative behavior of the women and enjoyed going along with the "game." Through their make-up and provocative conduct, these women aroused the attention and passions of the men. The whole situation became immoral and finally led not only to moral destruction but also physical ruin.

We need to draw parallels with the things in our day which awaken the attention and passions. Isaiah mentions scarves, rings and jewels on arms, hands, feet, and ears, perfume, shimmering veils and party clothes. The fashion designers of today are similarly interested in displaying the woman's body and her soft lines, either directly or by suggestion. It is not a question of healthy, well-fitting, beautiful, practical and morally correct clothing. Society craves excitement, new fashions, dreams, and ideas - which should be stimulated by a woman's outward appearance.

Men also appear in more and more provocative clothing. People try to dress in a way that places ever more emphasis on their feelings. They have lost all understanding of what morality and immorality really are. They have also lost all sense of true dignity. Society accepts that sexual partnerships should begin as early as possible and be changed as often as necessary. People often think it is necessary to gain "experience," but they do not notice that they are becoming increasingly primitive. Sexuality has slipped to a level below that of the animal kingdom. Modern society is not far from what was on the earth just before the flood (see *Matthew 24:37-39*), or at the time prior to the birth of Christ. "Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion." *The Desire of Ages*, 37.1.

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"The same sins that brought judgments upon the world in the days of Noah, exist in our day. Men and women now carry their eating and drinking so far that it ends in gluttony and drunkenness. This prevailing sin, the indulgence of perverted appetite, inflamed the passions of men in the days of Noah, and led to widespread corruption. Violence and sin reached to heaven. This moral pollution was finally swept from the earth by means of the Flood." *Temperance*, 227.1.

"Some men and women professing godliness debase their own bodies through the indulgence of the corrupt passions, which lowers them beneath the brute creation." *A Solemn Appeal*, 171.1.

In many of today's fashions, special care is taken to choose thin material and close cuts in women's clothing. This means that the woman reveals herself with every movement. Tops and skirts are cut so short that the naked body is visible when bending or stretching. Sleeveless tops are cut in such a way that the trunk and breasts can be seen from a side view. Short-sleeves, which cover the arms, are not popular. Necklines are cut to reveal the cleavage and the body beneath, and straps of the underclothes are often visible. Thin, close-fitting, stretchy tops accentuate the female form which, since it cannot be shown naked, is made to be as well-defined as possible. So-called "women's trousers" are also made to fit so tightly that the hips, buttocks, and pelvis are clearly delineated. And skirts are often transparent enough to show the form beneath, or so tight that the viewer can easily imagine the rest. Legs must be slim and long, so to emphasize this unhealthy high-heeled shoes are worn. The whole picture, from head to toe, is immoral, provocative, and undignified in every way. Any man knows what the message behind this kind of clothing is, whether the wearer is conscious of it or not. The woman who puts herself on display in this way thereby makes herself terribly guilty.

But the men who desire such a message are also responsible! They are really dishonoring themselves, just as the woman is, when they follow their desires and feelings instead of employing their reason and concentrating on the real duties of life. By so doing, they make themselves inca-

For further study:

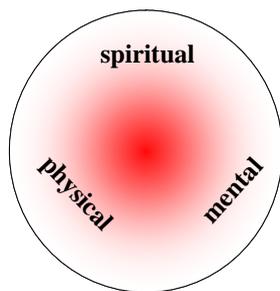
Study the whole story of Samson.

pable of leading and bearing responsibility. One example of this was Samson who, despite several proofs of his partner's deceitfulness, could not flee from her spell. "Day by day Delilah urged him, until 'his soul was vexed unto death;' yet a subtle power kept him by her side." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 566.1.

Such men are not capable of living their lives according to God's will, nor of guiding their families with consistent reason. Men like this act as if they are still children, and are puppets without self-control - a lack which is expressed in various ways. Many different addictions are the result.

Playing with desires, which are expressed by the clothing, has developed to such an extent that people can no longer bring them under control. Feelings and fashions have become people's gods, "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." *Romans* 1:24, 26, 27, 32. Such emphasis on passion is not found even in the animal world. There is no doubt that the forbidden fruit of sensuality leads to the death of man - the death of his dignity, his reason, and finally of the whole person.

Clothing has an immeasurable influence on the society in which we live. At the same time, it is also an expression of the prevailing philosophy of life. As believers, it is our duty, our privilege, our task, and our opportunity to give a witness of the high standard of morality that God has planned for humanity. One feature of Jesus' faithful followers is ministry for others. Jesus says, "I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." *Matthew* 25:36. This means more than just clothing a person outwardly. It means to clothe them in the right way so that they can understand the image of God. As



Trousers

The question as to whether it is right for a woman to wear trousers is one that is often posed, because trousers were intended for men. But perhaps we should ask the question another way:

- What style of clothing is acceptable today (although not necessarily high fashion) and best suited to express the difference between men and women?
- Which clothing is suited to show grace, modesty, submission, and love for God's principles?
- Which clothing is most appropriate for the various tasks that a woman may have to do, so that it is decent, practical, and advantageous, in terms of health, dignity, and morality?

Each of us has to use our own judgment in deciding the answers to these questions. In so doing we should consider the standard of God's church - that in her appearance and behavior a woman should not try to be a man, and vice versa. These questions will reveal the spirit the believer truly has within.

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." *1 Corinthians 6:12*. According to this rule a believing sister who has God's principles in her heart is free to dress as seems reasonable to her. But in choosing her dress, she needs to be careful that she does not lose her freedom by coming into the bondage of feelings, fashion, or superficiality.

For instance, if a believer is a female sports teacher, or maybe a physiotherapist who has to teach gymnastics to others every day, it would be very impractical, and even indecent, to wear a dress. Her occupation would therefore require her to wear pants or trousers. But she can choose whether the pants she wears are skin-tight pants or looser and becoming. Similarly, she can also decide whether the top she wears is cropped or whether it covers the hips. She should use her imagination to find work clothes that are practical, suitable, and decent. And God will certainly

bless such efforts. However, if she has the desire to be like the world but doesn't want to admit it, she will use her circumstances as an excuse to justify the wearing of immodest clothing.

Uta Dura

"All things are lawful for me,
but all things are not helpful.
All things are lawful for me,
but I will not be brought under the power of any."
1 Corinthians 6:12.

"There should be no carelessness in dress. Teach the young converts that dress is a talent. For Christ's sake, whose property we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance. In the tabernacle service, God specified every detail concerning the garments of those who ministered before Him. Thus we are taught that the Lord has a preference in regard to the dress of those who serve Him. Very particular were the directions given in regard to Aaron's robes, for his dress was symbolical. So the dress of Christ's followers should be symbolical. In all things we are to be representatives of Him. Good taste should be exercised in the selection of appropriate colors. Our dress should be tidy and well fitting. The hair should be carefully arranged. Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity. But the word of God gives us no sanction in making changes in our apparel merely for the sake of fashion, - that we may appear like the world. When the desire for display in dress absorbs the mind, vanity is manifested. All this must be put away." *Bible Training School*, May 1, 1908 par. 2.

"Will the followers of Christ seek to obtain the inward adorning, the meek and quiet spirit which God pronounces of great price, or will they squander the few short hours of probation in needless labor for display? The Lord would have woman seek constantly to improve both in mind and heart, gaining intellectual and moral

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strength that she may lead a useful and happy life, - a blessing to the world and an honor to her Creator." *Messages to Young People*, 356.1.

"Girls should be taught that the true charm of womanliness is not alone in beauty of form or feature, nor in the possession of accomplishments; but in a meek and quiet spirit, in patience, generosity, kindness, and a willingness to do and suffer for others. They should be taught to work, to study to some purpose, to live for some object, to trust in God and fear Him, and to respect their parents. Then as they advance in years, they will grow more pure-minded, self-reliant, and beloved. It will be impossible to degrade such a woman. She will escape the temptations and trials that have been the ruin of so many." *Child Guidance*, 140.1.

Submission

"Submitting to one another in the fear of God." *Ephesians* 5:21. Submission is a term that is often despised in our day. In general it is understood to imply a forced, rigid condition that reminds one of slavery rather than freedom.

But what does God mean when He speaks of submission, subjection, obedience, devotion, and so on? "Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, 523.3. Heaven is built on the principle of that submission which has its root in love. Every living being in God's kingdom is happy to submit. Even God submits to the principles of righteousness. In fact, He is the embodiment of this principle of submission.

In heaven it does not matter who has which task, or how many tasks anyone has - each has the duty and privilege of submitting to the other, and all carry out God's will as if it were their own. Submission in heaven is understood as a voluntary attitude which enables one to serve.

But on this earth, sin has dulled our understanding of submission. People imagine it means either a forced subservience to the commands of a

superior, as in slavery, or they see it as a necessary compromise in order to achieve a common goal. In the case of the latter though, those submitting know where the limits of this compromise are and how to protect their rights.

But in God's church on earth such an attitude is inappropriate. "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.'" *Mark 10:42-44.*

Submission means to serve God before we serve our fellows. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" *Acts 5:29.* Of course, this can only work when we appreciate the gifts of God, and love the Giver more than everything else. To obey God rather than men also means to obey God rather than myself, because I am a person too. The Holy Spirit speaks to us with a quiet, consistent voice, and it is up to us to decide whether we shall obey Him rather than our own wishes, preferences, fears, and doubts.

It is a fact that in the challenges of life, we will only know where we should obey God rather than other people when we have learnt to obey Him rather than self at our own personal level.

Uta Dura

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." *John 10:27-28.*



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