

# **Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

## **2012 Camp Meeting**

**‘Train yourselves in godliness’ (1 Timothy 4.7)**

**Walking With God**

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## Our Hunger for God.

### Introduction

- What do these movies have in common? Star Wars / Highlander / Harry Potter / Lord of the Rings / The Witches of Eastwick / Ghost / Ghostbusters / The Poltergeist / Omen / The Village / The Haunting have in common? All seek to meet the innate human hunger for the supernatural, for a power out there that is manifest in my own life.
- Human hunger for God is intense and personal. Even if denied, it cries out from the depths of the human heart. Such hunger is not to know about God – it is to know God personally.
- There is an explosion of spirituality within western society in general and western Christianity in particular. In society, we have books / DVDs / self-help guides for personal spirituality, New Age spirituality, Eastern spirituality, Buddhism, Hinduism, spiritual gurus, spiritual guides, spiritual directors. Hollywood produces films full of angels, demons, departed loved ones, demons, spells, and every kind of supernatural occurrence imaginable.
- Amongst Christians, there is a huge upsurge in the number of courses available on personal spirituality, Biblical discipleship, devotional theology. Degrees, online courses, week-end seminars – all to meet the hunger for God in the hearts of professing Christians.

### Why is this hunger growing?

- Firstly, since the Enlightenment, we have traditionally defined religion as accepting certain ideas with the mind, e.g. the Westminster Confession, the Augsburg Confession, the 39 Articles, the Apostles' Creed. Such confessions are not personal statements of sin and the need for God, but are statements of doctrinal orthodoxy. We have grown used to religion as being primarily intellectual and cognitive.
- It is thus not surprising that many Christians feel a hunger for God, because their intellectual definition of religion cuts them off from the source of spiritual life – personal time and communion with God.
- Secondly, we used to have 3 major branches of theology. 1) Dogmatic or doctrinal theology – taught people what to believe; 2) moral theology – taught ethics and how to relate to other people; 3) devotional theology – focused on the spiritual life and guided people in their religious experience. Now we only major in the first area – doctrinal theology, systematic theology. We build beautiful cathedrals of thought...to be filled by dead people!
- Thirdly, in seminaries pastors are trained in systematic theology, exegesis, interpretation, church history. Yet, the #1 priority for members in their pastor is to have a spiritual pastor, not a church manager, religious social worker or dry and remote exponent of dry and remote theology.

### What are the results?

- Western Christianity has leaned too far towards a rational, intellectual, cognitive explanation of Christianity. We focus on Scripture and its interpretation. We value degrees of learning, not personal transformation or piety. When we appoint people to leadership positions, we expect terminal degrees, not personal transformation.
- Christianity is perceived by many as being dry / boring / lifeless / pointless. Many churches are like the cathedrals of old – beautiful on the outside, yet filled with the dead / soon to be dead on the inside.
- The fastest growing branch of Christianity is charismatic / pentecostal Christianity – believing God's Spirit is active in the world and believers' lives, and helping to meet the spiritual hunger of many.

### How does this relate to us?

- God has revealed truths about Himself and His will for us in Scripture – we call these truths 'doctrine', and they are important. Yet at a deeper level, the goal of the Christian faith is to restore us to face to face communion and friendship with God.
- God has revealed Himself to humanity in the Scriptures that we might find Him today, know Him today, walk with Him today. Therefore, we read Scripture not to prove a point, prepare a sermon, or point a finger at a wrongdoer, but to meet the living and loving God who is our Heavenly Father. This is the most exciting thing possible in life – this is the only way to satisfy the longing hunger of our souls.
- In so doing, we discover a double hunger: our hunger for God, our longing for His presence; and God's hunger for us, His longing to walk and talk with us in a relationship of love and trust.
- This week we will be looking at our worldview – how we view the world, and then at specific devotional habits we can practice here and now to allow us to sense God's presence, purpose and plan for us in a deeply meaningful way.

## Devotional Habits – The Devotional Reading of Scripture

- We can read Scripture for cognitive or devotional purposes. Cognitive is called ‘Bible study’, and the devotional is called ‘Bible reading.’ Most SDA materials is for ‘Bible study’, with very little for devotional reading.
- On a scale, 1 = information, 10 = relational, where is the SDA church? We are heavy on information, with little for relational or transformational reading, allowing us to come into God’s presence and be transformed. A whole generation of young people in their early twenties is leaving the SDA church because they don’t want information – they want to sense the presence of God, and to find God in their local church and community of faith.
- The cognitive approach involves reading and studying the Bible exegetically. We do thinking, evaluating, synthesizing data, reasoning and giving attention to language, symbols and context. SDA pastors are experts at this. They are trained in this, and find it hard to come to Scripture without exegeting it. We read Scripture cognitively to comprehend the meaning through developed study methods.....called ‘hermeneutics.’
- However, relationship is about communication, not knowledge. God communicates in every way, but His primary way is through His Word. Are we stopping our Heavenly Father from communicating with us because we are so focused on exegeting and pulling apart His Word?
- **Cognitive approach:** the focus is on the passage, the text, with the danger of making Scripture itself our god. The text has the all important focus – and God is somehow forgotten. ‘People of the Book.’
- **Devotional approach:** the focus is on God. A relationship between God and myself. ‘People of God.’

‘There is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the Bible through, and yet fail to see its beauty or to comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind, and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view, and no positive instruction gained. Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets, you may read a passage, and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind.’ Lift Him Up, p. 261. Steps to Christ, p. 90.

Our active desire in devotional reading is to prayerfully encounter God through attending to Scripture. Devotional reading of Scripture requires an attentive attitude, aimed at growing a relationship with God rather than merely gathering information, prayerfully dwelling on a passage of Scripture, not to master the text but to be mastered by it, staying with a text until God prompts movement to another, reading for depth not breadth, and reading reflectively.

### Devotional Reading – Step 1: Read.

1. Read not to analyze or study or outline the passage. Read to slowly absorb the words. Pause as the Holy Spirit brings your focus or awareness to an idea, thought, word or promise.
2. Be aware that God is present to bring His written Word to life for us. The Holy Spirit is indispensable for devotional reading. If you read merely for information, you don’t sense the need of the Holy Spirit.
3. Choose not to let yourself feel rushed. Slow down! This takes intentionality. Don’t feel pressured to achieve something. You are opening up to God changing you and communicating with you.
4. Simply seek to be fully present to what you are reading. This involves unplugging and slowing down.
5. You will find yourself drawn to a word or sentence which will become your focus before you sense God’s leading to move you on.

### Devotional Reading – Step 2: Reflect.

1. Reflect on what you have read. Ponder, reflect, ruminate, let it marinate.
2. Reflection question 1: what is God saying to me in this passage?
3. Reflection question 2: how does this passage touch my life?
4. Reflection question 3: what does the idea that stands out have to do with a circumstance in my life or in my relationship with God?
5. Reflection question 4: is there something I need to know about my life with God?
6. Reflection question 5: is there an invitation?

### Devotional Reading – Step 3: Pray.

1. Ask, is there something here for me?
2. Ask, is there something you want me to hear?
3. Ask, is there something you want me to say?
4. Thank God for....

## Devotional Habits – Practicing the Devotional Reading of Scripture

Walk to each text, in no particular order, and reflectively read each text. Seek out those texts that have fewest people by them. As you read each text in silence, reflect on its meaning. Think of how your surroundings in nature contribute to your response to the text and to God. Pray silently, if you wish. Do not interrupt another's reflection or prayer.

As you reflect, you may find the following questions helpful:

- What is God revealing to me about Himself in this passage?
- What is God revealing to me about myself in this passage?
- How is God touching my life in this passage?
- Is there an invitation or promise for me in the text?
- How is God asking me to change in response to His will for me as revealed in this passage?

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

My response:

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Text: \_\_\_\_\_

My response:

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Text: \_\_\_\_\_

My response:

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## Devotional Habits – Meditation.

The OT translates the Hebrew words *chagah* and *siyach* as ‘meditate.’ The most widely known passage containing *chagah* is God’s command to Joshua to ‘meditate on the Book of the Law day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it’ (Josh 1.18). *Chagah* means literally ‘to mutter, moan, ponder or to read in an undertone.’ We meditate on God’s word by quietly repeating or mulling it over and over, thus allowing God’s word to have a conscious presence in our mind and life. Scripture considers this a daily activity (Deut. 11.18-21).

In the NT, Jesus had clearly meditated on Scripture, as He continually responded by saying ‘It is written.’ He called His followers to ‘consider the lilies of the field’ (Matt. 6.28), He calls His audience to ‘hear’ His words, i.e. to think over, digest, and apply His words in our lives (Matt. 7.24), in using parables, Jesus was inviting His hearers to meditate over the meaning of the parables to ‘discern the secret of the Kingdom of God’ (Mark 4.11), and He instructed us to celebrate the Lord’s Supper ‘in remembrance of me,’ i.e. participating in the Lord’s Supper triggers a memory of His death, a pondering of its significance, and a renewal of its meaning – all responses integral to meditation.

The Biblical definition of meditation is broad, but God calls all His people to practice meditation and the primary subjects of meditation are God’s acts, His law and His Word. So, why meditate?

1. Meditation is a key part of the study and application of God’s Word. First we read, then we memorize, then we meditate, chewing over His Word in our minds, allowing His Word to illuminate our lives.
2. Meditation is a vital component of prayer. By showing us our needs in the light of Scripture, meditation reveals our need of prayer and leads us to prayer.
3. Meditation allows us to be aware of God’s presence in our lives. Meditation slows us down from a superficial and speedy devotional life so that we might spend time with God and listening to God.
4. Meditation gives life and health to stressed out bodies and minds in a fast-paced world.

Eastern meditation is: presupposes an impersonal, pantheistic cosmic consciousness; avoids Scripture; focuses on slowing down the mind and conscious thought to enter ‘the silence’, the ‘sacred space’; seeks awareness of the inner divinity / arousing our intrinsic ‘Christ consciousness’; aims at pure awareness without thought, the experience of mystic consciousness within; uses mantras or breathing exercises to achieve an altered state of consciousness; opens up the practitioner to direct demonic influence and attack.

Christian meditation however focuses on the conscious reflection and turning over in the mind of the revealed Word of the Living God; presupposes a personal and loving God; begins with thought; does not use mantras or breathing exercises to achieve an altered state of consciousness but remains within a normal state of consciousness; wants to meet God within a personal relationship; and centers on His self-revelation in Scripture. How then do we meditate?

- Find a comfortable position in a quiet environment for a set period of time, e.g. 30 minutes (Ps. 63.6).
- Pray, asking God to illuminate your mind and change your heart and will to conform to His.
- Read a larger portion of Scripture, e.g. a psalm or a parable and then read a smaller portion within the larger portion (e.g. a verse) slowly, deliberately, reverently, repeatedly.
- Ask questions of the text: Who? What? Why? How? Purpose? Promise? Rebuke? If you are meditating on a parable or story, enter the scene with all of your 5 senses, slowly, deliberately and openly.
- Consider the text’s implications for your own life. Is God promising, rebuking, counseling, encouraging? What message is God sending you in the text?
- Reflect on your own preparedness to hear God in the text. Am I willing to listen, to obey, to trust? Am I willing to change a behavior, attitude, doctrine? What will it take for me to listen, obey and trust?
- Pray. Ask God for the grace to hear His will for you and to honor and obey His will for you.

## **Meditation in the Bible**

Because there is a wide diversity of opinion regarding meditation making any *a priori* definition problematic, we will firstly examine the Bible passages that include the words translated as 'meditation' within the King James Version (and some New Testament references), thereby enabling us to come to an understanding of the Biblical practice of meditation.

We will then address meditation within the Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA Church, including an identification of the rationale behind the inclusion of the practice of meditation within the Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA Church.

Having covered the above theological dimensions, we will then review the topic of meditation within the writings of Ellen G. White (EGW), before providing an overview of the personal devotional practices of EGW.

As stated above, this chapter will then conclude by providing a summary of the theological foundations for the practice of biblical meditation.

### **Meditation within Scripture.**

#### **Joshua 1.8.**

Following the death of Moses, the Angel of the LORD encourages Joshua with the following words, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

The focus of meditation is the law of God, and the purpose of such meditation is that Joshua may personally observe the law of God. Joshua is to engage in meditation night and day, indicating that meditation is not reserved for quiet moments, but may be practiced throughout daily life.

The use of *hgh* (Strong's 1897, translated as "meditate," also to murmur in pleasure or anger; by implication to ponder, imagine, meditate, mourn, roar, speak, study, talk or utter), and the textual parallelism between "meditate" and "not depart out of thy mouth" strongly suggest an oral dimension to the practice of meditation. Furthermore, the text indicates that to meditate on the law of God is the path to moving beyond a mere knowledge of the law of God to an understanding of how to personally apply the law of God, leading to the divine promise of prosperity and "good success."

#### **Psalm 1.2.**

Griswold (2010) perceptively notes that Psalm 1.1 'shows a specific preparation necessary for meditation.' "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The psalm indicates a progression of evil: one first walks in conformity to ungodly counsel; then one "standeth" or associates with sinners; and finally one "sitteth" with the ungodly, i.e. one personally joins and identifies with

the ungodly. The one seeking God's blessing does not participate in this progression to evil, but holds back from personal involvement in sin. Meditation on *torah* (the law of God) therefore requires a circumspect life, lived within spiritual boundaries.

Psalm 1.2 then indicates the emotional state of the one who meditates, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Griswold comments, "There is an eager desiring for truth. Biblical meditation engages the heart" (Griswold, 2010). Meditation thus engages both heart and mind, involves a circumspect life that is careful to avoid sin in order to engage with God, and is on the law of God.

The use of *hgh* indicates again an oral dimension to meditation. As in Joshua 1.8, meditation is for "day and night," and the divine promise of prosperity of Joshua 1.8 is repeated in Psalm 1.3.

### **Psalm 5.1.**

Psalm 5.1-3 reveals a new dimension of meditation. "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." The use of Strong's 1901, and the parallel use of "my cry" "I pray" "my voice" "my prayer" and "my meditation" indicates that meditation may be understood as a dialogue with God.

The NRSV version of Psalm 5.1 ("Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing") captures well both the oral and dialogical nature of meditation, indicating that in meditation one communes with a personal God, a personal One other than the one who meditates.

### **Psalm 19.14.**

Psalm 19.14 ("Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer") is a prayer that the inner thoughts and outer words be acceptable to God. The use of Strong's 1902 indicates meditation's oral dimension, and the focus is God's revelation of Himself in nature and through His Word.

V. 13 expresses, as in Ps. 1.1, the turning from sin and the turning to God for those who meditate, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." The one who meditates seeks to be "upright" (Strong's 8549). Meditation upon God's self-revelations in nature and Scripture is helpful for those seeking an upright life.

### **Psalm 49.3.**

Psalm 49.3 ("My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding") indicates through its parallelism and use of Strong's 1900, the close relationship between meditation and orality. The oral dimension to the verb *hgh*, is reflected in its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures where it is not translated as "meditate" in the KJV, i.e. Job 27.4, Psalm 37.30, Proverbs 8.7, 15.28, 24.2, Isaiah 31.4, 33.18, and Jeremiah 48.31).

### **Psalm 63.5-6.**

Commenting on Psalm 63.5-6 (“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches”), H.M.S. Richards argues that meditation requires a “quiet environment” and “a comfortable position.” Whilst one may meditate throughout the day and night, it is helpful to do so in a peaceful and relaxed environment.

The text indicates that God Himself and His help is the subject of meditation (v. 6), which results in conscious praise of God with “joyful lips” (v. 5). Griswold (2010) argues, “the type of Biblical meditation described in Psalm 63 can therefore be connected to singing reflectively on the characteristics of God.” In verses 7-8 the psalmist presents mental images of God’s deliverance, indicating the place for the sanctified use of one’s imagination within Biblical meditation.

### **Psalm 77.12.**

Psalm 77.12 (“And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings”) refers to meditation in the context of suffering. In v. 3, the psalmist records that, “I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” The verb used for “complained” is Strong’s 7878. In response to discouragement, the psalmist meditates not on the law of God but on all God’s deeds in the past, including God’s deeds in the life of the psalmist.

This concept is echoed in Psalm 143.4-7, in which the psalmist also meditates, “On all thy works” (v. 5) as part of a dialogue with God within the boundaries of *hesed* faithfulness in which the psalmist expects his / her meditations to be heard by God and answered.

### **Psalm 104.33-34.**

In Psalm 103.33-34 (“I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD”) we find Strong’s 7879 (derived from 7878) used for meditation. The psalmist parallels meditation with the concept of conscious rejoicing in the LORD. Meditation may be a joyous experience, paralleling the concept of singing praises to God for the entirety of one’s life. The subject of meditation and praise is God’s role as Creator, and His provision of life and sustenance for all His creation.

### **Psalm 119.**

The opening verse (“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD”) reiterates the message of Psalm 19.13-14 (above). Those whose lives are ordered around *torah* are considered upright i.e. entirely in accord with truth and fact, and are thus blessed by God.



The second section of the psalm (verses 9-16) provides a further reason for meditation. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word . . . thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee . . . I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.' In order for a young man to cleanse his lips, his heart, his way in life, and avoid sin, he meditates on the Scriptures. Meditation is therefore a personal response to the challenge of keeping one's heart pure.

Verse 11 adds another dimension to meditation, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart." The use of Strong's 6845, meaning to treasure or hide up implies memorization of Scripture as a dimension of meditation. Within an oral context, memorization (internalization) precedes vocalization (externalization). For the psalmist, memorization makes possible the continual meditation on Scripture through the day and night.

The third section of the psalm (verses 17-24) reveals in verse 17 the desire of the psalmist, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word." As in Joshua 1.8, the goal is personal obedience to the law of God. The subject in this section of the psalm for meditation is the word, law, commandments and testimonies of God, in order to know and live God's will. Verse 23 highlights another feature of meditation, "Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate on thy statutes." The psalmist did not respond to the words of earthly rulers, but in times of stress responded by meditating on God's word. The desire in meditation is to know and obey God rather than earthly rulers.

The sixth section of the psalm (verses 41-48) opens with a plea to God for His "mercies" (Strong's 2617) to come to the psalmist. The psalmist's desire to personally experience God's mercies leads the psalmist to meditate on God's statutes (v. 48), pleading with God in verse 43, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth." Biblical meditation therefore occurs within the context of a sought-after and realized covenant relationship with God, whilst in verses 46-48 we find that meditation on God's word also leads to boldness in personal witnessing before hostile earthly authorities.

In the tenth section of the psalm (verses 73-80) the psalmist pleads with the Creator God for understanding, "that I may learn thy commandments" (v. 73). In response to the perverse dealings of the proud, the psalmist turns to meditation on God's precepts (v. 78), viewing God's law as a delight (v. 77) and as a manifestation of God's "tender mercies" (v. 77). And as a result of meditation on God's word, as in Psalm 19.13-14 and Psalm 10.1, the psalmist's personal plea is for a heart that is sound, entirely in accord with God's ways.

The psalmist continues to extol the benefits of meditation on God's law in verses 97-99, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." Meditation on *torah* provides understanding that cannot be found amongst human teachers or through the wisdom of age, leading to obedience to God's law (v. 100) and a hatred of false ways (v. 104). Engaging in meditation on God's law is a sweet experience for the psalmist, "sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103).

In verses 145-152 the psalmist cries to God to be saved, and in response the psalmist will keep God's statutes (v. 145). Meditation on God's word (v. 148) is part of crying out to God, occurs during the three watches of the night, and before daybreak (verses 147-148) and is for the purpose of enabling the psalmist to personally keep and apply God's statutes.

### **1 Timothy 4.13-16.**

The New Testament has few explicit references to meditation. For the purposes of this paper, 1 Timothy 4.13-16 is perhaps the most salient text, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

In this passage, Paul is charging his protégé, Timothy, to be faithful in his role as a spiritual shepherd, despite his youth. To maintain his spiritual authority, Timothy is to meditate on the apostolic counsel from Paul and God's works in Timothy's life. The present imperative form used from the verb (Strong's 3191) implies that Timothy was to engage in ongoing meditation rather than engage in punctuated periods of meditation. In thus ordering his young life around and in harmony with God's revealed will, the young man could set older believers an example of a sanctified life, and as all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3.16), all Scripture is therefore worthy of meditation.

### **Philippians 4.8.**

In this prison epistle, Paul encourages believers to live with joy, regardless of life's circumstances. Believers are commanded, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4.4), and in addition to giving concerns to God in prayer, are commanded, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (verse 8).

The phrase "think on these things" is a translation of "*logizomai*" (Strong's 3049). The verb form used (2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural, middle, imperative, present) indicates the apostolic injunction is for Christian believers to continually think on those things which have been commended. Such thinking is to become the habit and way of life for the believer, and contributes to being able to live with joy through the vicissitudes of life.

This is paralleled in Colossians 3.2, in which Paul commands believers to, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Although the verb used is different to Philippians 4.8, the form of the verb used (imperative, present, active, 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) indicates that believers are to continually set their minds on heavenly themes.

In the NT, Jesus had clearly meditated on Scripture, as He continually responded by saying 'It is written.' He called His followers to 'consider the lilies of the field' (Matt. 6.28), He calls His audience to 'hear' His words, i.e. to think over, digest, and apply His words in our lives (Matt.

7.24), in using parables, Jesus was inviting His hearers to meditate over the meaning of the parables to 'discern the secret of the Kingdom of God' (Mark 4.11), and He instructed us to celebrate the Lord's Supper 'in remembrance of me,' i.e. participating in the Lord's Supper triggers a memory of His death, a pondering of its significance, and a renewal of its meaning – all responses integral to meditation.

In light of the above discussion, Groothuis (2004) provides a succinct definition of Biblical meditation, "In the Bible, meditation always means pondering God's revealed truths and reflecting on how they pertain to us."

With the above Biblical understanding of meditation in mind, we turn now to the topic of meditation within the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### **Meditation within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs.**

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Fundamental Beliefs define doctrinal belief, contribute to unity, and help communicate the gospel. They do not, however constitute a creed, but are a living document. Reflecting the Adventist concept of "present truth" (2 Peter 2.12), the preamble to the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs states: 'Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.'

### **Spiritual growth within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs.**

Oliver (2005), discussing spirituality within Adventism, stated, "Adventist Christians have shown special skill in defining and defending biblical doctrines and beliefs. But we haven't found it nearly so easy to describe our spiritual lives – experiences that by their very nature are intimate, personal and subjective." Oliver recognized that the Fundamental Beliefs focus more on theological truth than the believer's devotional experience, yet within the Fundamental Beliefs the need for spiritual growth is recognized.

Fundamental Belief 10, "The Experience of Salvation," reads as follows: "In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit, we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the Lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment" (p. 133).

Willsey (1991) correctly noted in his discussion of spiritual growth within the Fundamental Beliefs that the Adventist church, "takes a thoroughly evangelical position as it affirms the individual's lost condition and total dependence on Christ, the Substitute, for salvation" (p. 84). Through "abiding in Him" the Christian partakes of the "divine nature," but the Fundamental Belief does not address the elements of that growth.

The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of SDAs, in its publication outlining the Fundamental Beliefs, provides further discussion on "The Experience of Salvation." Discussing the inner change that the Holy Spirit works within a believer's heart, we read as follows: "We must place ourselves in the channel of the Spirit's working, which we can do by beholding Christ. As we meditate on Christ's life, the Holy Spirit restores the physical, mental and spiritual faculties" (p. 140). To partake of the "divine nature" is then defined further: "Whereas Christ became human, believers do not become divine. Rather, they become Godlike in character" (p. 141).

Fundamental Belief 5, "God the Holy Spirit" states, *inter alia*, that, "He [the Holy Spirit] draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond he renews and transforms into the image of God" (p. 69), and Fundamental Belief 22, "Christian Behavior", states, *inter alia*, that, "For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christ-like purity, health and joy in our lives" (p. 311). However, despite the recognized need for spiritual growth involving meditation, no practical advice is provided concerning how to meditate.

### **A new Fundamental Belief.**

The Ministerial Association presented an unpublished paper at the 2004 Spring Meeting of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in which it argued for the need for a new Fundamental Belief entitled "Growing in Christ."

Due to the rapid missionary expansion of the SDA Church into animist, Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist territories, a new Fundamental Belief was needed, because "We confront two main areas of great concern for us among non-Christian religions, namely transcendental meditation and the power of demons" (p. 2).

Thus: 'Transcendental meditation is a search for contact with spiritual powers in order to enrich the individual. In place of that spiritualistic practice we offer them contact with God through prayer, Bible study, service and meditation on the Word of God and His providential leadings. These subjects . . . are hardly addressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. (p. 2)

The proposed new Fundamental Belief had two main purposes, the first of which dealt with meditation, stating, "First, it explicitly addresses Christian growth in order to exclude eastern transcendental meditation as a spiritual exercise that is incompatible with the gospel of salvation through Christ" (p. 7). What was needed was a new Fundamental Belief with an emphasis on the believer's devotional life, "characterized by prayer, Bible study, meditation on God's Word and His providence in our lives, and participation in the gospel commission" (p. 9). In a specific rejection of transcendental meditation, the paper argued that "Instead of submission to demons

and transcendental meditation, the Bible offers prayer, Bible study and a meditation whose content is the Scripture and God's providential leadings in our lives" (p. 11).

At the 2005 General Conference session of the SDA Church, a new Fundamental Belief was voted entitled "Growing in Christ." This included the following statement: 'In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church.' (p. 149)

The new Fundamental Belief explicitly rejects mysticism, stating, "Christian spirituality is thus not a flight into a world of fantasy and mysticism" (p. 156). The devotional life consists rather of a life of the Spirit, a life of love and unity, of study, of prayer, of fruit bearing, of spiritual warfare, of worship, of witness and of hope (pages 155–161).

Therefore, whilst eastern transcendental forms are explicitly rejected, meditation is recognized within the Fundamental Beliefs as being an intrinsic part of the daily devotional life. However, as stated above, no practical advice is provided for Adventists anywhere in the Fundamental Beliefs on actually how to meditate. We therefore turn to the writings of EGW on the topic of meditation.

### **Meditation within the writings of Ellen G. White.**

EGW's use of the concepts of "meditation" and "contemplation" seems to be reflect the definitions of the verbs "to meditate" and "to contemplate" in the dictionary she kept in her private office in her later years, the 1897 New Revised Encyclopaedic Dictionary, which defines these verbs almost synonymously.

On occasion, White (1894) uses these terms almost interchangeably, e.g. "We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger" (CE, p. 57).

However, the primary difference between these terms is the dictionary discussion on the verb "to contemplate," which states, "We contemplate what is present or before our eyes; we meditate on what is past or absent." Thus, one may meditate on the Scriptures, on God's revealed will or providence, and one may contemplate on nature, or on the life of Christ using one's imagination, seeing the scenes in one's mind (e.g. DA, p. 83). Meditation may therefore involve the use of the sanctified imagination under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or as EGW (1905) herself suggests: 'If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings . . . Instead of thinking of your discouragements, think of the power you can claim in Christ's name . . . Let your imagination take hold upon things unseen. Let your thoughts be directed to the evidences of the great love of God for you' (MH, p. 488).

### **Who should meditate?**

Concerning who should meditate, EGW delineates specific groups who are to meditate, including (amongst others): the young (1T, p. 503); ministers (2T, p. 512); young girls (2T, p.

564); those who attend worship services (DA, p. 83); students of Scripture (RH, Jan. 19, 1864); and those who seek to bring themselves “to a more perfect likeness of Christ” (ML, p. 49). However, EGW (1890) goes beyond such specific groups to indicate that all Christians should meditate, “All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character” (PP, p. 307).

### **The spiritual consequences of not meditating.**

Concerning the spiritual dangers of not meditating, EGW clearly indicates the spiritual declension that arises from not training the mind to focus on heavenly themes, stating (1868), “A neglect of meditation and prayer will surely result in a declension of religious interests” (2T, p. 505).

Furthermore, EGW (1898) states, “Many attend religious services, and are refreshed and comforted by the word of God: but through neglect of meditation, watchfulness and prayer, they lose the blessing” (DA, p. 83). Concerning God’s love, EGW (1988) states, “We are ever in danger of forgetting this great love, because we fail to meditate on it” (LHU, p. 238).

Youth fall into temptation because, “They do not study the word of God and meditate upon it as they should” (CC, p. 304), and Satan knows how important meditation and prayer are for Christians to resist his deceptions, so “He would divert the mind from these important exercises” (1T, p. 295).

Perhaps most importantly, not meditating upon Christ directly threatens the ultimate purpose of spirituality within EGW’s writings (i.e. the restoration within the individual of the image of God), for she states, “The less you meditate on Christ and his matchless love and the less you are assimilated to His image, the better you will appear in your own eyes, and the more self-confidence and self-complacency will you possess” (LHU, p. 213).

### **The benefits of meditation.**

Concerning the benefits of meditation, EGW links the practice of meditation with personal spiritual growth and character preparation for translation, stating, “In order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, it is essential that you meditate much upon the great themes of redemption” (LHU, p. 237). EGW (1900) goes on to state that: ‘Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth . . . By earnest attention and prayerful thought, he must learn the meaning of the words of truth . . . God . . . desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption’ (COL, pages 59-60).

For EGW, not only is meditation essential for spiritual growth, e.g. “Meditation and prayer are necessary to a growth in grace” (2T, p. 187), but in 1905 she wrote that meditation leads to joy and encouragement in the present: ‘Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the

power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible' (MH, p. 514).

Significantly, meditation upon Christ engenders personal transformation into the likeness of Christ. EGW (1892) states, "As we meditate upon the perfections of the Saviour, we shall desire to be wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity," (SC, p. 89), and elsewhere she states: 'As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is moulded after the divine similitude . . . We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts . . . By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ . . . We have become transformed in character; for heart, soul, mind, are irradiated by the reflection of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us' (FLB, p. 150).

### **Principles of meditation.**

Concerning principles of meditation, EGW does not provide a defined method, but we can identify key components within her writings. In contra-distinction to eastern meditation, meditation for EGW is not an escape into an inner sphere or an altered state of consciousness. EGW (1973) clearly links meditation with rational thought, stating "We should meditate upon the Scriptures, thinking soberly and candidly upon the things that pertain to our eternal salvation," (AG, p. 34). Kuhalampi (2010) affirms this theme, stating, "White sees meditation also as a conscious, dynamic effort to fill one's mind with thoughts tending to a positive impact".

For EGW, meditation is primarily upon Scripture, stating (1898): 'We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know "what saith the Lord' (DA, p. 390).

In this passage, EGW counsels Christians to concentrate their minds on a verse of Scripture, to dwell reflectively on the thoughts within the verse until the Word of God become the Christian's thoughts and the Christian knows God's will for them. As in Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 119:17, the goal is an understanding of God's will that is translated into personal obedience, but with a new motive - that of character preparation for translation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

EGW (1882) also suggests that in addition to the 10 Commandments, the "Testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually . . . when you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation," (EW, p. 58). Within Adventist thought, this suggests that her own writings are suitable material for meditation.

A rich variety of suitable topics for meditation is found in EGW's writings, but the general theme of her writings is that the subject for meditation be the Scriptures, the promises of God, the life of Christ (particularly the closing scenes), the character of the Redeemer, the plan of salvation, the sacrifice of Jesus, God's love and mercy, God's providence, the wonders of God's creation, and one's own spiritual shortcomings.

In EGW's writings, Christians should, "Cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion . . . to discipline the mind to dwell upon heavenly things will put life and earnestness into all our endeavors," (SD, p. 109). As the psalmist loved to meditate on the law of God (psalm 119:97), so EGW (1868) counsels Christians, to "Educate your mind to love the Bible, to love the prayer meeting, to love the hour of meditation, and, above all, the hour when the soul communes with God," (2T, p. 268).

EGW (1864) argues that one hour's meditation is to be preferred to hours and days spent studying human authors, stating, "You will receive more strength by spending one hour each day in meditation and mourning over your failings and heart corruptions . . . than you would by spending many hours and days in studying the most able authors," (RH, Jan. 19, 1864).

Meditation over Scripture is to be preceded by prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, "Pray . . . meditate on the Scriptures until the understanding, the gate to the door of the heart, is opened to comprehend its requirements and our dependence" (HP, p. 277).

EGW echoes the psalmist (psalm 1:1) who indicates that a life of meditation requires a circumspect life that deliberately turns from sin, stating, "The mind must be kept meditating upon pure and holy subjects. An impure suggestion must be dismissed at once" (HP, p. 197).

EGW (1923) echoes the dimension of memorization found above in the psalms, writing, "When you have an hour of leisure open the Bible and store the mind with its precious truths. When engaged in labor, guard the mind, keep it stayed upon God, talk less and meditate more," (CH, p. 415). In EGW's own experience, whilst seriously ill in Australia in 1891-1892, she illustrates the link between memorization and subsequent meditation: 'Many hours I have passed in wakefulness and pain, but I have had the precious promises of God brought so fresh and with reviving power to my mind. The dear Savior has been very near to me, and I love to meditate upon the love of Jesus. His tender compassion and the lessons which He gave to His disciples become clear and so full of meaning that they are the feeding of the soul upon heavenly manna . . . and when the Holy Spirit brings many things to my memory, precious beyond expression, I do not know what reason I have to complain' (HP, p. 121).

Through meditating on Scripture, the believer fixes the Word of God in the mind, enabling meditation whilst engaged in daily life, thus she stated (1893): 'But there is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures . . . Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets, you may read a passage, and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind' (CE, p. 58).

As in Psalm 63 (above), EGW echoes the proper use of the sanctified imagination during meditation. Writing about the Sermon on the Mount (1896), she states: 'Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons' (MB, p. 1). This sanctified use of the imagination within meditation is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and involves the internal visualization of the scenes described in Scripture to more deeply appreciate the truths being revealed in Scripture.



Perhaps one of the most famous quotes from EGW's writings emphasizes this dimension of meditation (1898), "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones," (DA, p. 83). As stated above, EGW uses "meditation" and "contemplation" almost synonymously, and here counsels believers to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation / meditation. EGW is not recommending an academic or intellectual thought process, but a reflective meditation, because the desired response of such an hour's contemplation is "penitence and faith at the foot of the cross" (DA, p. 83).

The above discussion indicates that restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christ-likeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study and meditation. For EGW, meditation is an essential component and contributor to spiritual growth, the lack of which will directly impede spiritual growth, and although she uses the concepts of meditation and contemplation almost synonymously, meditation is primarily on God's revealed will and self-revelation in Scripture using rational thought or the sanctified imagination.

Before we conclude this edition of *Worldview*, we will briefly address EGW's personal devotional life.

### **EGW's Personal Devotional Practices.**

#### **EGW's personal diaries.**

EGW maintained a diary intermittently throughout her life. Whilst not published, her diaries are kept by the White Estate. A random sample taken of her diary entries covering the years 1859 (manuscripts 005, 006, 007 and 008) and 1873 (manuscripts 005, 005 and 006) provides insights into EGW's personal spiritual life.

The diary entries reveal a woman struggling with poverty, long separations from her husband and children, cold winters, and the incessant labor of pioneer living. The burden of her husband's illnesses and her own struggle with depression and spiritual exhaustion are regularly mentioned.

No mention is made of meditation within her diary entries, but her diaries do reveal a deep and meaningful prayer life. White records intercessory prayers for the sick and her children, daily early morning devotions which included Bible study and deep prayer, prayers for the encouragement and spiritual welfare of fellow Adventists, for relief from depression, for guidance in decisions and for forgiveness.

The most striking impression from her diaries is the centrality of prayer in EGW's life: it was a constant activity, whether on her own, with her family, or with others. At times, prayer is recorded for no purpose other than to commune with God, i.e. it was not merely a functional practice (to gain a specific answer), but prayer represented the ontological dimension of her relationship with God.

Thus, her definition of prayer in *Steps to Christ* (1892), "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend" (SC, p. 93) may be seen as a reflection of her own spiritual experience.

### **EGW's other writings.**

Whilst EGW's diaries give no evidence of meditation, there is evidence of meditation in her writings. Speaking later of her teenage years and vivid early spiritual experiences, she testifies of finding love and peace through meditation and prayer as she sought to keep Jesus and heaven "continually in mind" (1888): 'For six months not a shadow clouded my mind, nor did I neglect one known duty. My whole endeavor was to do the will of God, and keep Jesus and heaven continually in mind. I was surprised and enraptured with the clear views now presented to me of the atonement and the work of Christ. I will not attempt to further explain the exercises of my mind; suffice it to say that old things had passed away, all things had become new . . . My heart was so filled with love to God and the peace that passeth understanding, that I loved to meditate and pray' (LS88, p. 161).

Later in life, writing in 1892 to colleagues in the General Conference about her long illness in Australia, she states: 'I have felt that I could welcome suffering if this precious grace was to accompany it. I knew the Lord is good and gracious and full of mercy and compassion and tender, pitying love. In my helplessness and suffering, His praise has filled my soul and has been upon my lips. My meditation has been so comforting and so strengthening as I have thought how much worse condition I should be in without the sustaining grace of God. My eyesight is continued to me, my memory has been preserved, and my mind has never been more clear and active in seeing the beauty and preciousness of truth' (LS, p. 339).

EGW's Australian correspondence indicates that during her long illness, God brought to mind texts already memorized, her mind was clear and perceptive of truth, she was able to meditate on heavenly truths, find comfort, and respond with praise. This experience closely parallels that of the psalmist in Psalm 77.12 and 63.5-6, who in the midst of suffering meditates on God's revelation in Scripture and responds with praise and joy.

### **Conclusion.**

The purpose of this article was to seek to provide a theological foundation for the practice of biblical meditation within the SDA context.

When we consider the Biblical evidence, we come to certain conclusions about Biblical meditation: it involves conscious reflection upon God's revelation of Himself in Scripture, nature, salvation or personal history; it may include memorization and vocalization of Scripture; it may involve singing; it is to be a continual activity; it may require a comfortable or a quiet location; it may occur at all hours; the sanctified imagination may be used; the purpose is to go beyond merely knowing God's law to understanding how God's revealed will is to be applied in one's life; it involves a circumspect life that consciously turns from sin and evil to God; it occurs within a covenant relationship with God; it cleanses the heart, keeps one pure, brings vitality to witnessing, leads to obedience, nurtures a hatred of evil, provides a refuge in times of stress, and leads to God's blessings in the present and future life.

Within the Fundamental Beliefs, meditation is recognized as being an intrinsic part of the daily devotional life. Focussed on the life of Christ, the Word of God and His providence, the experience is rational rather than mystical, and eastern forms, including transcendental meditation, are explicitly rejected. Progressive sanctification includes Christian meditation, and the purpose is not to discover, as in some eastern forms of meditation, the inner divine, but for the believer to become more Godlike in character.

Within the writings of EGW, restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christ-likeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study and meditation. For EGW, meditation is an essential component and contributor to spiritual growth, the lack of which will directly impede spiritual growth, and although she uses the concepts of meditation and contemplation almost synonymously, meditation is primarily a reflection on God's revealed will and self-revelation in Scripture using rational thought or the sanctified imagination.

Within her personal spiritual life, we find evidence that EGW was not only a woman of prayer, but also engaged in meditation during both her teenage years of formative spiritual experience and her senior years during illness. Whilst EGW does not elaborate on her practice of meditation, the evidence suggests it involved reflection on memorized Scriptures under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

So, why meditate?

1. Meditation is a key part of the study and application of God's Word. First we read, then we memorize, then we meditate, chewing over His Word in our minds, allowing His Word to illuminate our lives.
2. Meditation is a vital component of prayer. By showing us our needs in the light of Scripture, meditation reveals our need of prayer and leads us to prayer.
3. Meditation allows us to be aware of God's presence in our lives. Meditation slows us down from a superficial and speedy devotional life so that we might spend time with God and listening to God.
4. Meditation gives life and health to stressed out bodies and minds in a fast-paced world.

Eastern meditation is: presupposes an impersonal, pantheistic cosmic consciousness; avoids Scripture; focuses on slowing down the mind and conscious thought to enter 'the silence', the 'sacred space'; seeks awareness of the inner divinity / arousing our intrinsic 'Christ consciousness'; aims at pure awareness without thought, the experience of mystic consciousness within; uses mantras or breathing exercises to achieve an altered state of consciousness; opens up the practitioner to direct demonic influence and attack.

Christian meditation however focuses on the conscious reflection and turning over in the mind of the revealed Word of the Living God; presupposes a personal and loving God; begins with thought; does not use mantras or breathing exercises to achieve an altered state of consciousness but remains within a normal state of consciousness; wants to meet God within a personal relationship; and centers on His self-revelation in Scripture.

With the above conclusions in mind, we recognize that whilst there is sufficient material within Scripture and the writings of EGW to provide a theological foundation for the practice of meditation within an Adventist context, there remains no formal model anywhere within Adventism for members on actually how to meditate.

## Devotional habits – Getting Alone with God.

Solitude is a rarely-practiced devotional habit, because it is so counter-cultural for our busy lives.

- ‘We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror’ (Bnhfr).
- Solitude requires patience and waiting, this seems so unproductive, so we fill solitude with noise.
- We break the solitude of travel with an iPod, of the evening with TV, of sleep with an alarm clock.
- Every part of our life is inundated with words: urgent, random, trivial, hurtful, religious words. In the midst of so many words, it is difficult to know which are important.
- We develop skills like skimming and scanning, we look for bullet points, bold print, summaries. We ask people to get to the point – and when we think they aren’t saying anything important, we block them out so we can....drown in our internal flow of words....words....and yet more words.
- In solitude, we notice things we prefer to avoid: anger; loneliness; impatience; fear; bitterness. We sense that we are wasting time – all of this is an invitation to prayer. Like a can opener, solitude before God opens our hearts, and the more we practice solitude with God, our capacity grows to open up.

A theme which is central to discipleship and Biblical spirituality is that of ‘getting alone with God’ (solitude).

- It allows us to **disengage** from the interrupting realities of life and prepare to **engage** with God.
- We are commanded to ‘**Be still** and know that I am God’ (Ps. 46.10). Add the words ‘then’ and ‘if’ to this verse. ‘Be still, and **then** know that I am God’ and ‘**if** you are still, then know that I am God.’
- Getting alone with God will allow us **life-transforming** concentration upon Him (Rom. 12.1-2).
- Being alone with God nurtures **depth**, allows us to mine the depths of the text, allows us to hear God speaking to us in ways we had not anticipated or experienced before.
- Getting alone with God allows Him to **meet our needs**. ‘In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed’ Mark 1.34.
- Getting alone with God brings us **strength**. It is God who tells us ‘In quietness and trust is your strength’ Isaiah 30.15. ‘But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint’ Isa. 40.31.
- Getting alone with God brings **balance** to our lives. We should not be unwise enough to think that we are serving God best by constant activity at the cost of headaches and broken rest. We are not God’s beasts of burden, but His beloved children (Mk. 1.35, Lam. 3.28).
- Getting alone with God teaches us to be **reflective**. Reflective in all areas of our lives.

How do we practice solitude?

- Unplug all electronic / electric devices. Find a place of privacy, away from interruption. Maybe during your shower, or a morning walk, or a quiet room in your home.
- If solitude is new for you, begin with 10 minutes. Set a timer to keep you from watching the clock, allowing you to forget the time. Intentionally become quiet. Relax your body. Breathe deeply.
- Hear the background noises – wind; traffic; birds; your beating heart; your racing thoughts.
- When distractions come to mind, let them go by imagining they are boats floating down a river – let the current carry them away, and don’t follow them.
- Reflectively read God’s Word for you in Scripture. Take your time. You are seeking depth, not quantity.
- Ask God 3 simple questions: What does God reveal about Himself in this text? What does God reveal about you in this text? What is God asking of you? Wait on God for Him to answer after each question.
- Give God dedicated time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise or stimulation.
- Include a time of solitude in your daily life, to be with God, to allow Him to change you and to bring fruit of inner peace and calmness. Stop being a ‘Human Doing’, and become again a ‘Human Being.’

## Devotional Habits – Fasting.

‘If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land’ (2 Chron. 7.14).

To ‘humble oneself’ before God is to fast. Fasting is not an end in itself – it is a means by which we worship God and submit ourselves in humility before Him. We can’t make God love us any more if we fast. We do not fast to manipulate God – we fast and pray for results, but the results are in God’s hands. In fasting, the results glorify God – in the person who fasts and the others for whom we fast and pray.

In Matt. 6.16-18, Jesus assumes His followers will fast as a normal part of their discipleship. We find the true fruit of fasting that God seeks in Isa. 58.6-8.

Verse in Isaiah 58.	Name of Fast.	Purpose of Fast.
V.6. ‘To loose the bands of wickedness.’	The Disciples Fast	To free ourselves and others from addictions to sin (Matt. 17.21).
V.6. ‘To undo the heavy burdens.’	The Ezra Fast.	To solve problems, inviting the Holy Spirit’s aid to lift loads and overcome barriers that impede our walk with God (Ezra 8.23).
V.6. ‘To let the oppressed go free.’	The Samuel Fast.	For revival and soul-winning, to identify with God’s people enslaved by sin and asking God to deliver them to His Kingdom (1 Sam. 7.6).
V.6. ‘To break every yoke.’	The Elijah Fast.	To conquer the emotional and mental problems that would control us, and return control to God (1 Kings 19.4,8).
V.7. ‘To share our bread with the hungry.’	The Widow’s Fast.	To care for the poor and meet the basic needs of others in their hour of need (1 Kings 17.16).
V.8. To allow God’s light ‘to break forth like the morning.’	The Apostle Paul Fast.	To bring clearer perspective and insight as we make decisions (Acts 9.9).
V.8. ‘Thine health shall spring forth.’	The Daniel Fast.	To gain a healthier life, a clearer mind, or for physical healing (Daniel 1.8).
V.8. ‘Your righteousness shall go before you.’	The John the Baptist Fast.	That our testimony and witness for Jesus will be enhanced before others, will shine brighter (Luke 1.15).
V.8. That ‘the glory of the Lord’ will protect us from the evil one.’	The Esther Fast.	That God will protect His people from the attacks of Satan, either directly or through human or other material agencies (Esther 4.16, 5.2).

Four kinds of fasting are found in the Scriptures:

- **Normal fast:** going without food for a definite period during which we only take fluids (water or juice). Such fasts last 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month or 40 days.
- **Absolute fast:** going without food or liquids for a definite period. Moses did this for 40 days, as did Jesus. This can be extremely dangerous without divine intervention. Not recommended!
- **Partial fast:** going without certain foods or on a limited diet for a set period of time, e.g. eating one meal per day, only eating fruit and vegetables for a given period, not eating certain foods e.g. meat for a given period of time (as in the case of Daniel, chapter 10).
- **Rotational fast:** eating or omitting certain families of foods for designated periods, e.g. grains may only be eaten every 4<sup>th</sup> day of the week.

Fasting brings certain benefits:

- We humble ourselves before God, open ourselves to His leading, and submit our will to His perfect will.
- We overcome food addictions.
- We give our digestive systems a rest.

- Fasting contributes to lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, relief from arthritis, loss of body mass and weight, and helps our bodies fight cancer.
- Fasting contributes to improved mental health, including providing a calming effect, helping us to focus on priorities, clearing our mind of impurities, elevating thought patterns, and providing an important component of the overall treatment of a variety of mental health disorders.

What to expect with fasting:

- Before you fast, for a couple of days eat only natural foods, as God created and intended for our use. Avoid processed foods, sodas, and foods high in fat or sugar.
- On the first day of a fast, drink only water or juice, with no sweeteners.
- If you feel hungry, then eat, and the next time you fast, try to extend your fast a little longer.
- When you start to fast, you will experience certain symptoms, e.g. a headache, weakness, irritability, bad breath, frequent urination, sleeplessness or a sensation of coolness.
- Try stretching the fast by eating lunch, and skipping supper. You will then be sleeping through the toughest times of the fast, and when you awake will be able to break your fast at breakfast.
- Depending on the type of fast you are engaged in, supplement your fast with freshly squeezed juices and broths.
- Fasting is not a competitive sport. It is a private way of humbling ourselves and opening ourselves up before God.
- As you fast, you will experience a heightened sense of awareness, a sharpness of thought that is normally absent when our minds are struggling with high blood sugar and blood fat levels.
- Covenant with God for how long you are going to fast, and what type of fast you intend to participate in. When you break your fast, spend some time in prayer, praising God for His faithfulness, and enjoy a limited meal of natural, non-processed foods. Do not binge after a fast!
- If you have any concerns about your physical health, diabetes, hypoglycemic symptoms or other issues, consult your physician before you engage in a fast.

## Devotional Habits – Praise

In times of barrenness, we can turn to God in praise. Praise brings us an awareness of the presence of God – it doesn't bring you into the presence of God, as He is always present. We always live in the presence of God. Our lack of awareness of His presence is our problem.

- If we lack a sense of His presence, His method as revealed in Scripture to become aware of His presence is to praise God. In Heb. 13.15, God tells us to bring God a sacrifice of praise.
- The purpose of praise is important. We often confuse praise and thanksgiving. Ps. 100.4 tells us to enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. The Holy Spirit is the vital presence of God, and if appreciated will call forth praise and thanksgiving. Praise and thanksgiving are not the same. In thanksgiving – I thank God for what He does. In praise, I praise God for who He is.
- To praise God means to release one's heart to God, to open our heart to God.
- The most common OT word for worship is the verb *sachah*, meaning 'to prostrate oneself, to bow down deeply, to do homage.' The NT equivalent is *proskuneo*, meaning 'to bow, to kiss toward.' The root meaning of worship is physical action: a mental awe of God with corresponding physical response.
- Scripture connects many physical actions directly with worship: singing; shouting; dancing; uplifted hands; lifting of the head; kneeling; standing; bowing; prostrating; clapping of hands; bringing offerings; playing instruments. Clearly, praise is not a spectator sport!

What praise is not:

- A classroom, where worship is viewed as learning. We evaluate by how much knowledge we acquire. Church becomes a lecture hall. Study is vital – but it is a *prelude* to worship, as knowledge of God leads to worship.
- An evangelistic tent, where religious services are primarily evangelistic. Evangelism is an integral part of Christianity, but it is not worship – it is the *result* of worship. Meeting God in worship should inspire and empower us to invite others into the joy of worship.
- A psychologist's couch, where the sermon is a kind of mass counseling and private devotions are Do-It-Yourself therapy. Whilst worship can and does heal emotional and other needs, these are neither the focus nor the purpose of our worship, which *leads to* emotional and other healing.
- A spectator sport, in which we watch professionals perform, and then evaluate them. We in the pew 'pay' them to 'do worship', and want a good performance. Biblically, God calls us all to participate in worship.

Benefits of praise:

- It makes me aware of God's presence in my life. It enralls the mind and allows God to capture my heart.
- Praise is not about God – He does not need positive strokes – it is about us fulfilling our purpose in creation.
- Praise lifts us above our situation. When we pray, we are still in the midst of our situation, but when we praise, we are lifted above our situation. The classic example in Scripture is Paul and Silas in Acts 16, praising God in jail. We praise God when we are in the midst of despair and dark circumstances, for this reassures us that there is someone bigger than us who is in control who loves us and who has all authority in heaven and earth.
- Praise helps us to focus on the giver, not just the gifts. Thanks, whilst important, focuses our attention on the gifts, but praise focuses us on the giver of the gifts.
- Praise reminds us how marvelous God is, the One whose presence we are in. Praise captivates our life.

How to praise:

- Reflect on, or seek a new experience, of the grace, love and awesomeness of God. All true praise springs from a sense of who God really is, which then reveals who we truly are.
- Take time to deliberately and personally praise God. kneel in adoration, sing a song, write a poem, thank Him for His goodness, stand in silent awe, lift your hands and offer Him all you are, voice out loud your praise, let your body and mind and heart work together as you fully respond to Him. Let your joy and emotions flow out in praise. Make praise a major part of your private devotional life.
- Let your private experience of praise transform your corporate experience of praise. Pause before entering church and thank God for a place where His name can be praised; participate fully in the singing, prayers and communal activities; enter with joy; thank God for your brothers and sisters; do not seek a blessing but seek to be a blessing to other worshippers. Worship renewal does not come through changing the order of service, but through a renewal of the worshippers' hearts and minds.



## **Devotional Habits – Walking With a Spiritual Companion.**

Anyone who wants to be intentional about spirituality needs to have a spiritual community where there are spiritual companions, walking alongside someone else.

The supreme gift that anyone can give another is to help them live life, more aware of the presence of God. Spiritual companions accompany people on a journey that is made spiritual, not by their presence, but by the presence of God.

Spiritual companions give encouragement as much as possible, advice (once in a mile), reproof only when absolutely necessary, and judgment / condemnation? Never! People grow in the soil of acceptance and affirmation, not in the weeds of condemnation. Spiritual companions help us to be aware of God's presence, and provide a climate of support and acceptance.

We come with the premise that God is already speaking into someone's life, and help people to find God's voice and His presence in their lives.

### **Guidelines for Spiritual Companions:**

- Attend – focused attention, pay attention to non-verbals such as body language (55%) and tone of voice (38%). Body language is to be congruent with the verbal message / content (7%) you are giving. Spiritual companions listen first and foremost.
- Listen – 'let every man be quick to hear, and a ready listener' (Jas. 1.19). When we are listening, we are not working on our response, we are concentrating on what is being said, without judgment of what is said or how it is said. This is similar to 'active listening' within marital counseling.
- Solution or understanding? People don't want first and foremost a solution, but someone to understand them, for their story to be heard, validated and affirmed.
- Don't assume.
- Rephrase or reflect to ensure you understand correctly and they know you have really heard them.
- Clarify feelings.
- Stay on their agenda.
- Talk and pray together on a regular basis, and pray for each other when not together.
- Maintain confidentiality.

### **Questions to ask your spiritual companion:**

- What do you think God has been trying to communicate to you recently?
- How has God been present for you in recent weeks?
- When did God seem to be absent?
- What devotional habits have been particularly meaningful to you recently?
- What devotional habits have been less meaningful to you recently?
- What do you seek from God at this point in your life?
- How is it for you in your reading of Scripture lately?
- How is your view of God changing since we last met?
- Do you sense any invitation from God?
- What do you see as the next steps in your spiritual journey?

## **Building a Conceptual Framework for Discipleship:**

This is where the rubber meets the road. We all want to be, and to help other people become followers of Jesus Christ.

We may understand being disciples of Jesus Christ as being a life that involves: devotion; intentionality; exchanged life; transformational; new perspective; relational; spirit-imbued.

### **Discipleship as Devotion.**

Disciples will make the love of God their supreme and unrivaled object in life. Such disciples do not exist for themselves. They exist for the Father, through the Son and by the Spirit. Disciples revel in the magnificent attributes of God: faithfulness; presence; goodness; justice; grace; compassion; holiness; knowledge; power; truthfulness; righteousness; holiness; beauty; mercy; immutability; self-existence; infinity; majesty; immeasurability. A disciple delights to worship God for who He is, not for just what He does (that is thanksgiving). Such a disciple will take time to ponder, to reflect on, to meditate on, and strength their vision of the wonder of God.

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Devotion.**

**1 Chronicles 16:29** 'Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come before him. Worship the LORD in holy splendor;'

**Psalms 95:6** 'O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!'

**Exodus 15:2** 'The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.'

**Psalms 80:18** 'Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.'

**EGW:** 'The church seems content to take only the first steps in conversion. They are more ready for active labor than for humble devotion – more ready to engage in outward religious service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show. Religion must begin with emptying and purifying the heart, and must be nurtured by daily prayer' (EGW, Vol. 4 Testimonies, p. 535).

### **Discipleship as Intentionality.**

A disciple who is purposeful; premeditated; deliberate; intended; focused; not by chance; not the default position of the human heart; intentionality is per se a gift from God; a conscious decision to follow Jesus; a conscious decision to obey and follow where He leads; a willingness to follow Jesus into the unknown; a willingness to give up the knowns of my life for the unknowns of His life.

An intentional disciple engages in planned devotion time with God, hungers for God's presence on a daily basis, wears spiritual phylacteries; departs from the conscious presence of God with deep reluctance; seeks divine rest for human restlessness. An intentional disciple prays regularly and organizes their life around their prayer life. A disciple's friends, colleagues and enemies can count on and plan around the disciple's intentionality.

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Intentionality.**

**Psalms 42:1-3** 'As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

**Matthew 6:33** 'But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'

**Romans 13:14** 'Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.'

**Romans 12:1-2** 'I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.'

**EGW, Steps to Christ:** 'Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him. {SC 47.1} Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians' {SC 47.2}

**EGW, Desire of Ages:** 'It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross' {DA 83.4}.

### **Discipleship as Exchanged Life.**

The up-swelling of gratitude and praise upon the hearing of God's justification of the unjustifiable; a disciple who lives the daily and sober joy of exchanging his death for the life of Jesus Christ; who delights to ponder the mysteries of the atonement; who rejoices in the mercy and love of God; who exults in the promise of salvation; whose faith in the substitutionary atonement leads to a life of overflowing gratitude and praise, whose life is an hymn of praise to the One who has redeemed him. The exchanged life involves peace with God rather than estrangement from God.

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Exchanged Life.**

**Romans 8:1** 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

**Revelation 5:9-10**, 'They sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

**John 3:5**, 'Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.'

**1 Peter 1:10-12**, 'Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, <sup>11</sup> inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look!'

**Romans 6:6-12**, 'We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.'

**Isaiah 53:4-5**, 'Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.'

**Psalms 32:1-5**, 'Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup> Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. <sup>3</sup> While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah <sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.'

**2 Corinthians 5:21**, 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'

**Ephesians 2:1-9**, 'You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved-- <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the

heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast.'

**EGW, Desire of Ages,** 'Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed." {DA 25.2}.

### **Discipleship as Transformational.**

A disciple who has exchanged the slavery of sin for the slavery of righteousness; who no longer anticipates with dread the wages of sin but rejoices in anticipating the gift of God – eternal life; who therefore can rejoice in all things, including suffering for the name of Jesus Christ; who leads an holy life in anticipation of the blessed hope, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus Christ; who seeks personal holiness through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and who opens himself daily to the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit;

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Transformational.**

**Malachi 3:2-3**, ‘But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; <sup>3</sup> he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness.’

**1 Peter 1:13-16**, ‘Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. <sup>14</sup> Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; <sup>16</sup> for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."’

**Romans 12:2**, ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.’

**Romans 6:4**, ‘Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.’

**Romans 6:17-23**, ‘But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, <sup>18</sup> and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

**Jeremiah 31:33-34**, ‘But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.’

**Philippians 1:9-11**, ‘And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup> to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup> having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.’

**Hebrews 10:14**, ‘For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.’

**1 Peter 2:4-5**, ‘Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup> like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’

**2 Peter 1:4**, 'Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.'

**Philippians 4:4-5**, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.'

**1 Peter 1:3-7**, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the genuineness of your faith-- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.'

**Titus 2:11-13**, 'For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.'

**EGW, Desire of Ages**, 'But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience. All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us' {DA 668.2-3}.

**EGW, Gospel Workers**, 'True Christian growth tends upward to the full stature of men and women in Christ. True culture, real refinement of thought and manners, is better obtained by learning lessons in the school of Christ, than by the most labored, painstaking effort to observe forms and set rules, when the heart is not under the discipline of the Spirit of God. The follower of Jesus should be constantly improving in manners, in habits, in spirit, in labor. This is done by keeping the eye, not on mere outward, superficial attainments, but on Jesus. A transformation takes place in mind, in spirit, in character. The Christian is educated in the school of Christ to cherish the graces of His Spirit in all meekness and lowliness. He is fitting for the society of heavenly angels' {GW 283.2}.

### **Discipleship as New Perspective.**

Discipleship where the Kingdom of God is a present reality; the exchange of earthly loyalties to become citizens of heaven; with eyes lifted heavenward in anticipation of our coming Savior; where fellow humanity is loved and served as also being objects of God's loving care; where life is reinterpreted through a heavenly perspective and permeated with a heavenly love.

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as New Perspective.**

**Acts 26:17-18**, 'I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles-- to whom I am sending you <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

**2 Kings 6:15-17**, 'When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?" <sup>16</sup> He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them." <sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.'

**Romans 6:11**, 'So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.'

**Ephesians 6:11-13**, 'Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.'

**Colossians 3:1-2**, 'So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.'

**Hebrews 11:8-16**, 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-- and Sarah herself was barren-- because he considered him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." <sup>13</sup> All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, <sup>14</sup> for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.'

**Mark 8:34-38**, 'He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup> Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

**Mark 10:43-45**, 'But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'



**Philippians 3:20**, 'But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

**EGW, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing**, 'But before that coming, Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Matthew 24:14. His kingdom will not come until the good tidings of His grace have been carried to all the earth. Hence, as we give ourselves to God, and win other souls to Him, we hasten the coming of His kingdom. Only those who devote themselves to His service, saying, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8), to open blind eyes, to turn men "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified" (Acts 26:18)--they alone pray in sincerity, "Thy kingdom come." {MB 108.3}.

**EGW, Desire of Ages**, 'When we realize that we are workers together with God, His promises will not be spoken with indifference. They will burn in our hearts, and kindle upon our lips. To Moses, when called to minister to an ignorant, undisciplined, and rebellious people, God gave the promise, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And He said, "Certainly I will be with thee." Exodus 33:14; 3:12. This promise is to all who labor in Christ's stead for His afflicted and suffering ones. Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts' {DA 641.2-3}.

**EGW, Fundamentals of Christian Education**, 'God purposes to set in operation agencies in your own country to aid in this great work of enlightening the world. He designs to employ you and your children as soldiers to act a part in this aggressive warfare against the powers of darkness, and you surely will not ignore God's blessing, and regard lightly the privilege extended to you! He would have you engage in the conflict, striving together for His glory, not seeking for the supremacy, not striving to exalt self by depreciating others. He would endow you with the true missionary spirit, which elevates, purifies, and ennobles whatever it touches, making pure and good and noble all who voluntarily come under its influence; for every agent who co-operates with the heavenly intelligences will be endued with power from on high, and represent the character of Christ. The missionary spirit enables us to appreciate more fully the words of the Lord's prayer, when He directs us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The missionary spirit broadens our thoughts, and brings us into union with all who have a comprehension of the expanding influence of the Holy Spirit,' {FE 209.1}.

### **Discipleship as Relational.**

A joyous adoption into the family of God; joint heirs with Christ of salvation, with an eternal inheritance; exchanging condemnation for peace with God; manifest by the overflowing of God's love through me to brothers and sisters; a community characterized by the peace of God, in which hostilities are replaced through peace in Jesus Christ; a community of purposeful forgiveness that seeks reconciliation.

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Relational.**

**Romans 8:15-17**, 'For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ-- if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.'

**Ephesians 1:11-12**, 'In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.'

**Ephesians 1:17-19**, 'I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, <sup>18</sup> so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

**John 15:12-15**, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.'

**John 13:35**, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

**1 John 1:6-7**, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.'

**1 John 3:1**, 'See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.'

**1 John 3:17-18**, 'How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.'

**Ephesians 2:13-22**, 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. <sup>15</sup> He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. <sup>17</sup> So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.'

**John 14:27**, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.'

**Ephesians 5:1-2**, 'Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, <sup>2</sup> and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.'

**EGW, Acts of the Apostles**, 'The Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. The Infinite One revealed Himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages this influence had been held in restraint, and now Heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace. And under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. Words of thanksgiving and of prophecy were heard. All heaven bent low to behold and to adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love. Lost in wonder, the apostles exclaimed, "Herein is love." They grasped the imparted gift. And what followed? The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. Thousands were converted in a day,' {AA 38.1}.

**EGW, Steps to Christ**, 'When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life. Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care,' {SC 77.4}.

**EGW, God's Amazing Grace**, 'In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life, and sheds a refining influence on all around,' {AG 237.5}.

### **Discipleship as Spirit Imbued.**

Saturating the cloth of humanity in the dye of God's Spirit; shifting the focus from external performance to inner transformation; a transformation that is evident to unbelievers; expressed in spontaneous and joyous witness to all, including former foes; draws the believer in humility into a community of gifted believers; awakens within the believer a deep awareness of personal spiritual insufficiency and a seeking for the Spirit's work and gifts within others; exchanges the life of the flesh for the life of the Spirit; rejects the works of the flesh and hungers for the fruit of the Spirit; overflowing with God's love; experienced as a pervading joy in all circumstances; an experience no longer of being the receptacle for God's grace into a stagnating pool, but becoming a channel of living waters to others;

### **Key Texts for Discipleship as Spirit Imbued.**

**John 7:37-39**, 'On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me,"<sup>38</sup> and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"<sup>39</sup> Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'

**Galatians 5:16-26**, 'Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.'<sup>17</sup> For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.'<sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.'<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,<sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions,<sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.'<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.'<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.'<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.'<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.'

**Romans 12:4-8**, 'For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.'<sup>6</sup> We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;<sup>7</sup> ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;<sup>8</sup> the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.'

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**, 'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;<sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;<sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.'<sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'<sup>8</sup> To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,<sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.'<sup>11</sup> All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.'

**Acts 4:13**, 'Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.'

**EGW, Adventist Home**, 'Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action,' {AH 179.3}.

**EGW, Patriarchs and Prophets**, 'The Saviour made use of this symbolic service to direct the minds of the people to the blessings that He had come to bring them. "In the last day, that great day of the feast," His voice was heard in tones that rang through the temple courts, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "This," said

John, "spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." John 7:37-39. The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him,' {PP 412.2}.

**EGW, Ministry of Healing**, 'This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. No sooner does he come to know the Saviour than he desires to make others acquainted with Him. The saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life. In doing this work a greater blessing is received than if we work merely to benefit ourselves. It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour,' {MH 102.3}.

**EGW, Christ Triumphant**, 'Christ came to the world to bring back the character of God to humankind, and to retrace on the human soul the divine image. Through His entire life Christ sought by continuous, laborious efforts to call the world's attention to God and to His holy requirements in order that people might be imbued with the Spirit of God, might be actuated by love, and might reveal in life and character the divine attributes.,' {CTr 249.4}.

**EGW, Counsels on Health**, 'I am to say to all who claim to be converted, Are your hearts truly changed, and are you watching unto prayer, preserving a thoughtful, consistent course of action, that you may have not a semblance of religion, but the precious, genuine article? Ministers and physicians, when you accepted Christ did you experience a deep sense of spiritual need? How much it means to you who are to be ministers of righteousness, to accept the heavenly gift of light and love and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. You are to be imbued with such love for Christ that you will yield to Him your whole affections, surrendering your life to Him who gave His life for you. Imbued with the love of Christ, you are to be constrained to perform acts of unselfish service until such acts become your life practice. Daily growth into the life of Christ creates in the soul a heaven of peace; in such a life there is continual fruit bearing,' {CH 633.2}.

**EGW, Christ's Object Lessons**, 'Christ was continually receiving from the Father that He might communicate to us. "The word which ye hear," He said, "is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." John 14:24. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Matthew 20:28. Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others. His words were given Him fresh from the heavenly courts, words that He might speak in season to the weary and oppressed. "The Lord God hath given Me," He said, "the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." Isaiah 50:4,' {COL 139.1}.