

Lesson 47 - The Character of Understanding

1. What is understanding? **Proverbs 9:10**

EGW: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding." Proverbs 9:10. The great work of life is character building, and a knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education. To impart this knowledge and to mold the character in harmony with it should be the object of the teacher's work. The law of God is a reflection of His character. Hence the psalmist says, "All Thy commandments are righteousness;" and "through Thy precepts I get understanding." Psalm 119:172, 104. God has revealed Himself to us in His word and in the works of creation. Through the volume of inspiration and the book of nature we are to obtain a knowledge of God. {PP 596.1}

2. A person who has understanding has an excellent what? **Proverbs 17:27**

EGW: You have repeatedly said: "I can't keep my temper." "I have to speak." You lack a meek, humble spirit. Self is all alive, and you stand guard continually to preserve it from mortification or insult. Says the apostle: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Those who are dead to self will not feel so readily and will not be prepared to resist everything which may irritate. Dead men cannot feel. You are not dead. If you were, and your life were hid in Christ, a thousand things which you now notice, and which afflict you, would be passed by as unworthy of notice; you would then be grasping the eternal and would be above the petty trials of this life. {2T 425.1}

"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." Margin, "a cool spirit." {2T 426.1}

3. What type of understanding is most important? **Colossians 1:9**

EGW: Paul writes to his Colossian brethren: "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. [Not an unsanctified love of the smartness, ability, or oratory of the preacher, but a love born of the Spirit of

God, which His servant represented in his words and character.] For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." {4T 316.2}

4. With understanding, what shall we know? **1 John 5:20**

EGW: There is a great work to be done in the earth, and the Lord Jesus has taken men into co-partnership with himself, in order that heavenly agencies may co-operate with human agencies. Christ was in travail of soul for the redemption of the world, and those who are laborers together with God are representatives of Christ to our world, and will have compassion for the lost, and will travail in soul for the redemption of men. Unless the church awakes and attends to her post of duty, God will charge the loss of souls to her account. I have a deep interest that the work of God shall advance. Those who are the chosen of God are required to multiply churches wherever they may be successful in bringing souls to the knowledge of the truth. But the people of God are never to collect together into a large community as they have done in Battle Creek. Those who know what it is to have travail of soul will never do this, for they will feel the burden that Christ carried for the salvation of men. Every one who is chosen of God should improve his intellectual powers. Jesus came to represent the character of the Father, and he sent his disciples into the world to represent the character of Christ; he has given us his word to point out the way of life, and he has not left us simply to carry that word, but has also promised to give it efficiency by the power of the Holy Spirit. Is there need, then, that any one should walk in uncertainty, grieving that they do not know and experience the movings of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts? Are you hungering and thirsting for instruction in righteousness? Then you have the sure promise that you shall be filled. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, . . . even his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." The Lord would have us in possession of the Spirit of heavenly wisdom. Are we all being impressed to pray to the Lord humbly and earnestly as our necessities require, importuning him for the spirit of wisdom? Do we pray, saying, "Show me the secrets of wisdom, that which I know not teach thou me"? O for humble, earnest prayer to go forth from unfeigned lips praying for the counsel that is of God. He says, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom." {SpTA03 30.3}

5. Where is the source of our understanding? **2 Timothy 2:7, Psalms 119:169**

EGW: Those who strive lawfully will have complete victory at last, but there is too much striving that

is not done in the Spirit of Christ. We should strive to obtain the victory over every unholy passion of the soul, over every spiritual weakness, over every defect of character. We should seek to excel in the graces of the Spirit of God, in meekness, patience, goodness, love, peace, and joy. If we strive for this, it will be a worthy, lawful striving that will be rewarded of God. In contending for the faith, we must be careful to stand as did Christ before the people; we must have a spirit that will correspond to the purity and greatness of the doctrines we advocate. We must teach the truth as it is in Jesus. We must labor as does the husbandman, with diligence and patience, that we may be partakers of the fruits. We must do the will of God before we can receive the promise. "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." {ST, April 14, 1890 par. 5}

6. When consecrated to God, what is another source of receiving understanding? **Jeremiah 3:15**

EGW: A pastor should have a correct understanding of the word and also of the human character. Our faith is unpopular. The people are unwilling to be convinced that they are so deeply in error; a great work is to be done, and at present there are but few to do it. One man usually performs the labor which should be shared by two; for the work of the evangelist is necessarily combined with that of the pastor, bringing a double burden upon the worker in the field. {GW92 70.2}

7. In contrast, what are the unconcentrated distracted by as they do not have understanding? **Isaiah 56:10-11**

EGW: God calls upon our pastors and teachers to be wide awake and not stand as blind watchmen. Let them obtain from Christ the eyesalve that will enable them to see all things clearly. Then let them examine the foundation timbers of our institutions. Not all pertaining to our work is being carried forward in an elevated, upright way. God wants his people to have a clear understanding of all the important transactions pertaining to his cause, that they may know that they are following a course he can approve. {SpM 298.1}

8. What are we to seek to understand most earnestly about? **Ephesians 5:17, Proverbs 4:7**

EGW: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Too often those claiming to be Christians allow the enemy to gain access to their minds. They readily receive his suggestions, and this causes a dearth of spiritual power, and a great and a lamentable

confusion. Mistakes are made, and precious golden moments are taken to remove the results of Satan's working. Shall we not confess the sins that have dishonored God, imperiled souls, and wasted the hours that ought to have been devoted to proclaiming present truth? {SW, July 9, 1903 par. 6}

9. What level of understanding are we to reach for? **1 Corinthians 14:20**

EGW: When I was a child," Paul said, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" [1 Corinthians 13:11]. How many men there are who have grown to man's estate, but have not outgrown their childhood, who bring the defects of their child-life into their religious experience. "Brethren be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding men" [1 Corinthians 14:20]. {1SAT 301.1}

10. Where is understanding supposed to be as opposed to just being head knowledge? **Acts 28:27**

EGW: There is a blindness upon human minds that is willful. Jesus said, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:15). The work of God for the salvation of men is the one work of supreme importance to be carried forward in our world; but many do not see this, because their interest is more with the ranks of the enemy than with the loyal soldiers of Christ. They do not see the necessity of the cooperation of the human with the divine agency. The Lord has bidden us: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13). This is the plan which God has revealed to us to guide us in all the plans and purposes of life. But while men pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10), many reject the very means by which God would establish His kingdom. {2SM 135.3}

11. What are we to test our understanding by to see if we have the right understanding? **John 8:43, Luke 24:45, Matthew 24:15, Matthew 13:23, Psalms 119:130**

EGW: Were Jesus personally upon earth, he would address a large number who claim to believe present truth, with the words he addressed to the Pharisees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." The most learned of the Jewish scribes did not discern the relation of Christ to the law; they did not comprehend the salvation which was offered. They could not discern the

moral excellency of the law at that day, and many today do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God. In the time of Christ the senses of his hearers were clouded by their own teachings and opinions. They mingled their own preconceived notions with the teachings of Christ, and thus were hindered from comprehending the elevated truths he presented. They were blinded to the correct interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, but he opened to his disciples their significance, revealing the spiritual and practical bearing of God's commands on life and character. He promised his disciples that after his ascension to his Father, he would send the Holy Spirit, who should bring all things to their remembrance. Jesus had left truths in their possession the value of which they did not comprehend. After his resurrection they were astonished at the words he uttered; but he said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." The disciples were slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures testified of Christ. {RH, February 4, 1890 par. 6}

12. What are we to do with our understanding? **Mark 12:32-33**

EGW: "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." Here was a Pharisee who had some idea of what constitutes true religion; that it is not in outward ceremonies and vain display, but in humble obedience and love to God, and unselfish regard for others. The readiness of the scribe to acknowledge the reasoning of Jesus as correct, the decided and prompt response to that reasoning which he made before the people, manifested an entirely different spirit from that shown by the priests and rulers in their questioning. {3SP 53.2}

13. When a person understands spiritual matters, what are they considered in God's eyes? **Hosea 14:9**

EGW: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein." Those who dishonor God by transgressing his law may talk sanctification, but it is of that value, and just as acceptable, as the

offering of Cain. Obedience to all the commandments of God is the only true sign of sanctification. Disobedience is the sign of disloyalty and apostasy. {HM, July 1, 1897 par. 14}

14. In the last days, what two groups will exist based upon having understanding or not? **Daniel 12:10, Proverbs 28:5**

EGW: God requires of his people a zeal according to knowledge. He desires them to be doers of the word. The outer appearance testifies of the inward working of the heart. The truth received into the heart accomplishes the transformation of the mind and heart and character. To Daniel the Lord revealed the condition of the inhabitants of the earth in these last days. "Many shall be purified," he said, "and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." {RH, March 7, 1899 par. 8}

15. What does a lack of understanding lead influential people to do? **Proverbs 28:16**

EGW: All who profess Christ are accountable for the talents committed to their trust. Christians must stand on that elevated ground which the truth has for ages been preparing for them. To meet the mind of the Spirit of God, we must exhibit to the world, in character and works, that union with Christ which is in accordance with the light of sacred truth now shining upon us. It is not the lack of knowledge and understanding that at the last day will condemn Seventh-day Adventists, and banish them from the presence of the Lord; but it is the truth that has reached the understanding, the light that has illuminated the soul, which will witness against us, if we turn away and refuse to be led by it. If we were blind, we would have no sin; but the Lord has given us great light, sacred truth has been unfolded to our understanding; yet we have not been wise unto salvation, we have not advanced in knowledge and true holiness according to the light and truth which has been bestowed upon us. {ST, September 27, 1883 par. 9}

16. What does understanding help a person with? **Proverbs 2:11, Romans 2:26**

EGW: Those who keep in a prayerful frame of mind, will be able to speak a word in season to those who are brought within the sphere of their influence; for God will give wisdom whereby they may serve the Lord Jesus. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." You will open your mouth with wisdom, and in your tongue will be the law of kindness. If those who claim to be Christians will heed the words of Christ, all who come in contact with them will acknowledge that they have been with

Jesus and have learned of him. They will represent Christ, and eternal things will be the theme of thought and conversation. The realities of eternity will be brought near. They will watch for souls as they that must give an account. To watch for souls means more than many seem to think; it means to go out and search for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. {RH, July 14, 1891 par. 10}

17. In applying the "house" to our bodies, what does understanding do for it? **Proverbs 24:3**

EGW: (no comment)

18. What is the state of those that lack understanding making understanding an important need? **Proverbs 21:16**

EGW: (no comment)

19. If a person has understanding and is reproved, what does it lead to? **Proverbs 19:25**

EGW: (no comment)

20. What will a person of understanding find? **Proverbs 19:8**

EGW: (no comment)

21. What is before a person of understanding? **Proverbs 17:24, Proverbs 10:23**

EGW: (no comment)

22. What would a person of understanding lead a person to do? **Proverbs 15:21**

EGW: (no comment)

23. What would a person of understanding be slow to do? **Proverbs 14:29**

EGW: This spirit of contention is opposed to all the principles of heaven. In Christ's Sermon on the Mount He says: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." You will have trouble wherever you go, unless you learn the lesson God designs you to learn. You should be less confident and forward in your own opinion, and possess a teachable spirit, that of a learner. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." Says James: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." {2T 163.2}

24. What does understanding help a person to learn? **Psalms 119:34, Psalms 119:73**

EGW: When the truth is enshrined in the heart, it will be manifested in the daily life. The truth of the psalmist's words will be realized: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." The home will be sweetened by its influence, and the business transactions will be entered upon as if in full view of the heavenly universe. {RH, November 17, 1896 par. 14}

To the obedient child of God the commandments are a delight. David declares, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word. Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. . . . I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies." {RH, May 7, 1901 par. 13}

25. What shall a person of understanding copy from God? **Psalms 107:43**

EGW: God speaks to us through his providential workings, and through the influence of his Spirit upon the heart. In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them. The psalmist, tracing the work of God's providence, says, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." [Psalm 33:5; 107:43.] {CE 56.1}

26. What would people of understanding do? **Job 28:28**

EGW: How was Joseph enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom?--In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator's will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28. {PP 222.2}