

Lesson 55 - The Character of Being Virtuous

1. What has been given to us to become virtuous? **2 Peter 1:3**

EGW: What privileges and blessings are granted to those who have obtained like precious faith with the disciples of Christ! Nothing is withheld from them. The apostle says, "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." The standard is lifted up, and yet we are to reach it individually. We may attain unto glory and virtue, though weak, sinful mortals, by learning daily lessons in the school of Christ, by becoming conformed to the divine image, by manifesting his excellence of character, by adding grace to grace, by climbing round by round the ladder heavenward, by becoming complete in the Beloved. As we shall work upon the plan of addition, by faith adding grace to grace, God will work upon the plan of multiplication, and multiply grace and peace unto us. We are to be diligent students in the school of Christ, having a knowledge of his will, and becoming active laborers in his vineyard. {YI, October 31, 1895 par. 1}

2. What are men to seek for? **Proverbs 31:10**

EGW: (no comment)

3. Why is this important for the husband to find? **Proverbs 31:11**

EGW: Under such guidance let a young woman accept as a life companion only one who possesses pure, manly traits of character, one who is diligent, aspiring, and honest, one who loves and fears God. Let a young man seek one to stand by his side who is fitted to bear her share of life's burdens, one whose influence will ennoble and refine him, and who will make him happy in her love. {MH 359.3}

"A prudent wife is from the Lord." "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. . . . She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her," saying, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." He who gains such a wife "findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord." Proverbs 19:14; 31:11, 12, 26-29; 18:22. {MH 359.4}

However carefully and wisely marriage may have been entered into, few couples are completely

united when the marriage ceremony is performed. The real union of the two in wedlock is the work of the after years. {MH 359.5}

4. Who is the husband, and Who is already virtuous and therefore does not need to be told to be so? **2 Corinthians 11:2** [This question is asked because it appears then, that men do not have to be virtuous since it is about a husband finding a woman only to be virtuous, but the Bible is not written literally but spiritually.]

EGW: In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and his church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined his people to himself by a solemn covenant, he promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be his, and his alone. He declares, "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." [Hosea 2:19.] And again, "I am married unto you." [Jeremiah 3:14.] And Paul employs the same figure in the New Testament, when he says, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." [2 Corinthians 11:2.] {GC88 381.1}

5. What is equated with being virtuous? **End of 2 Corinthians 11:2**

EGW: The close relation of the church to Christ is represented under the figure of marriage. The Lord had joined his people to himself by a solemn covenant, he promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be his, and his alone. Said Paul, addressing the church, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." [2 Corinthians 11:2.] But when her confidence and affection were turned away from him, and she sought after vanity, and allowed the love of worldly things to separate her from God, she forfeited the privileges included in this peculiar and sacred relation. By the apostle James those who assimilate to the world are addressed as "adulterers and adulteresses." [James 4:4.] {4SP 233.2}

6. What are the 144,000 described as being? **First half of Revelation 14:4**

EGW: "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These

were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" [Revelation 14:1-5]. {18MR 27.3}

This Scripture represents the character of the people of God for these last days. The everlasting gospel is to be preached, and it is to be practiced in true missionary work carried forward not after the wisdom that men may devise, but after the wisdom of God. All who walk in safe paths are to understand that the third angel's message is of consequence to the whole world, and must be carried to the world in clear, straight lines, and in its distinctive features, as Christ revealed it to John. {18MR 28.1}

7. Again, what is the kingdom of God likened unto? **Matthew 25:1**

EGW: The parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25, also illustrates the experience of the Adventist people. In Matthew 24, in answer to the question of his disciples concerning the sign of his coming and of the end of the world, Christ had pointed out some of the most important events in the history of the world and of the church from his first to his second advent; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulation of the church under the pagan and papal persecutions, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars. After this he spoke of his coming in his kingdom, and related the parable describing the two classes of servants who look for his appearing. Chapter 25 opens with the words, "Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins." Here is brought to view the church living in the last days, the same that is pointed out in the close of chapter 24. In this parable their experience is illustrated by the incidents of an Eastern marriage. {GC88 393.1}

In the parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25, the experience of Adventists is illustrated by the incidents of an Eastern marriage. "Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The wide-spread movement under the proclamation of the first message, answered to the going forth of the virgins, while the passing of the time of expectation, the disappointment, and the delay, were represented by the tarrying of the bridegroom. After the definite time had passed, the true believers were still united in the belief that the end of all things was at hand; but it soon became evident that they were losing, to some extent, their zeal and devotion, and were falling into the state denoted in the parable by the slumbering of the virgins during the tarrying time. {4SP 242.3}

8. So, with Christ trying to find a virtuous woman or church, what is her price? **Proverbs 31:10**

EGW: In Revelation 17, Babylon is represented as a woman, a figure which is used in the Scriptures as the symbol of a church. A virtuous woman represents a pure church, a vile woman an apostate

church. Babylon is said to be a harlot; and the prophet beheld her drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs. The Babylon thus described represents Rome, that apostate church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. But Babylon the harlot is the mother of daughters who follow her example of corruption. Thus are represented those churches that cling to the doctrines and traditions of Rome and follow her worldly practices, and whose fall is announced in the second angel's message. {4SP 233.1}

9. What is the price of a human (man) being completely converted to God, which is more than the value mentioned in Proverbs 31:10? **Isaiah 13:12**

EGW: Jesus refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of men had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life. The Father ratified the covenant made with Christ, that He would receive repentant and obedient men, and would love them even as He loves His Son. Christ was to complete His work, and fulfill His pledge to "make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Isaiah 13:12. All power in heaven and on earth was given to the Prince of Life, and He returned to His followers in a world of sin, that He might impart to them of His power and glory. {DA 790.3}

10. What is a virtuous church to her husband, Jesus? **First half of Proverbs 12:4**

EGW: (no comment)

11. What is a church in apostasy considered towards her husband? **Last half of Proverbs 12:4**

EGW: (no comment)

12. What type of woman was Ruth considered representing symbolically in the actual story, the church? **Ruth 3:11**

EGW: Of Christ's relation to His people, there is a beautiful illustration in the laws given to Israel. When through poverty a Hebrew had been forced to part with his patrimony, and to sell himself as a bondservant, the duty of redeeming him and his inheritance fell to the one who was nearest of kin.

See Leviticus 25:25, 47-49; Ruth 2:20. So the work of redeeming us and our inheritance, lost through sin, fell upon Him who is "near of kin" unto us. It was to redeem us that He became our kinsman. Closer than father, mother, brother, friend, or lover is the Lord our Saviour. "Fear not," He says, "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." Isaiah 43:1, 4. {DA 327.3}

13. That would make who to be symbolically Jesus? **Ruth 3:7**

EGW: The Bible is a revelation of the divine will and purpose of God. Those who follow its teachings are doers of the words of Christ, and by this means they bring solid timbers into their character building. Let us heed the words of inspiration, which exhort us to "be pitiful, be courteous." Boaz represented the character of the Christian gentleman. Like Abraham, he commanded his household after him to keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. He showed courtesy to all his servants, and as he passed among his workmen in the field, he said unto the reapers, "The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee." Here is a lesson for both masters and servants, for employers and the employed. The servants are strengthened in their hearts to do righteously, to be faithful to masters who manifest respectful kindness and courtesy towards them. Christians should be the most courteous people in the world. {HM, December 1, 1894 par. 1}

14. At what time did Boaz, the bridegroom, Jesus, meet Ruth, the church? **Ruth 3:8**

EGW: (no comment)

15. What time does Jesus meet the church in the parable of the Ten Virgins? **Matthew 25:6**

EGW: Again its spiritual condition is described in the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and

said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." And we may all ask, Can it be that I shall be among the wise virgins? {ST, April 21, 1898 par. 4}

16. Although there are many churches that try to be virtuous, how many exceed them all? **Proverbs 31:29, John 10:16**

EGW: "A prudent wife is from the Lord." "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. . . . She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her," saying, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." He who gains such a wife "findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord." {AH 46.1}

Here are things which should be considered: Will the one you marry bring happiness to your home? Is [she] an economist, or will she, if married, not only use all her own earnings, but all of yours to gratify a vanity, a love of appearance? Are her principles correct in this direction? Has she anything now to depend upon? . . . I know that to the mind of a man infatuated with love and thoughts of marriage these questions will be brushed away as though they were of no consequence. But these things should be duly considered, for they have a bearing upon your future life. . . . {AH 46.2}

17. What does the church focus their minds upon? **Philippians 4:7-8 (eight items)**

EGW: The apostle says, "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." By beholding we become changed into the image of that upon which we dwell; then let us turn away our eyes from beholding the imperfections of those who are in the church, but who have not the likeness of Christ. We shall not be held responsible because those who make a high profession do not possess corresponding virtues. Let us thank God that it is our privilege to turn away our eyes from these defective Christians, and look upon those who are truly devoted, who are doers of the word, and who in life and character bear the image of the Divine. And above all things, thank God that it is your privilege to look upon Christ, the perfect pattern. We shall be without excuse if we do not study the word of God that we may understand how inseparable are Christian doctrine and Christian practice. {RH, August 8, 1893 par. 2}

18. When a little faith in God begins, what ought a person be wanting to have their life become by adding to that faith? **2 Peter 1:5**

EGW: Faith is the first round in the ladder of advancement. Without faith it is impossible to please God. But many stop on this round, and never ascend higher. They seem to think that when they have professed Christ, when their names are on the church record, their work is completed. Faith is essential; but the inspired word says, "Add to your faith, virtue." Those who are seeking for eternal life, and a home in the kingdom of God, must lay for their character building the foundation of virtue. Jesus must be the chief corner stone. The things that defile the soul must be banished from the mind and life. When temptations are presented, they must be resisted in the strength of Christ. The virtue of the spotless Lamb of God must be woven into the character till the soul can stand in its integrity. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you." {RH, February 21, 1888 par. 3}

19. To continue to grow as a Christian, what is added to that second item then implying that all of that which is obtained in the third item is all for naught if the second item is not desired? **2 Peter 1:5**

EGW: Everyone who would be perfect must mount this ladder of progress. Many have neglected to put their feet upon the first rounds of the ladder. They want to mount to the topmost rounds without the trouble of climbing, but the only sure way is to take the painstaking way of going up by gradual advance, round after round. Many of the youth of today are superficial in all their undertakings. At the very beginning a fatal mistake is made in their education. Their careless habits are passed over by indulgent parents who would criticise with severity the same mistakes in others. Thus many fail to lay the right foundation. Peter says, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge." A virtuous character must precede all other acquirements. All sowing of wild oats will be followed by a harvest of the same order. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." {ST, May 25, 1891 par. 3}

20. What type of church is Jesus trying to present unto Himself giving us a synonym for being virtuous? **Ephesians 5:26-27**

EGW: This work of individual purification of character can not be safely delayed. Let our brethren and sisters take hold diligently of this work, co-operating with him who "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." {RH, November 8, 1906 par. 12}