

Lesson 72 - Character of Proper Provoking

1. What should we provoke people to do? **Hebrews 10:24**

EGW: The Word of God warns us not to provoke one another to wrath. But there is one kind of provoking that is justifiable. Paul writes: . . . "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24).--Letter 38, March 2, 1903, to Edson and Emma White. {TDG 70.7}

2. What should we not do when God's truth is provoking us? **Psalms 95:8**

EGW: The religious service of the home should not be governed by circumstances. Prayer should not be offered occasionally, and, when a large day's work is to be done, neglected, as though it was of no especial consequence. Prayer means very much, and we should come to God offering up thanksgiving before him. "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. . . . O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." {ST, September 10, 1894 par. 2}

3. Who are we to provoke to copy us, to emulate us? **Romans 11:14**

EGW: Israel had stumbled and fallen, but this did not make it impossible for them to rise again. In answer to the question, "Have they stumbled that they should fall?" the apostle replies: "God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" {AA 375.3}

It was God's purpose that His grace should be revealed among the Gentiles as well as among the Israelites. This had been plainly outlined in Old Testament prophecies. The apostle uses some of these prophecies in his argument. "Hath not the potter power over the clay," he inquires, "of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath

fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He saith also in Osee, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." See Hosea 1:10. {AA 376.1}

4. What can children become if improperly provoked? **Colossians 3:21, Ephesians 6:4** (2 answers)

EGW: When children lose their self-control, and speak passionate words, the parents should for a time keep silent, neither reproofing nor condemning. At such times silence is golden, and will do more to bring repentance than any words that can be uttered. Satan is well pleased when parents irritate their children by speaking harsh, angry words. Paul has given a caution on this point: "Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." They may be very wrong, but you can not lead them to the right by losing patience with them. Let your calmness help to restore them to a proper frame of mind. {RH, January 24, 1907 par. 8}

5. If we have love, despite the irritations around us, when it comes to being provoked, how quickly should we react to it? **1 Corinthians 13:5**

EGW: Selfishness is written on the human heart in plain, unmistakable characters. Just as soon as the love of God takes its place, there is the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. His entire life amid a world filled with pride and selfishness was without an exception an embodiment of that charity that suffereth long, and is kind: that envieth not; that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Here is presented before us the fruits of the grace of God which every follower of Christ will manifest in his life and reveal in his character. If these manifestations are wanting, there must be most earnest seeking of God. By repentance and faith in Jesus Christ we may receive the spirit of Christ here specified, and then we may indeed be called children of God and not children of the wicked one. We must have greater faith; then we shall have more of Christ. {12MR 191.3}

6. What do people try to do that could end up provoking God to jealousy? **1 Corinthians 10:21-22, 2 Corinthians 11:1-2**

EGW: The great sin of ancient Israel was in turning from God to idols. This is also the great sin of modern Israel. The apostle Paul said to the Gentile churches that he had raised up, "Ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven." He could truly say to many of them, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." When he saw them becoming indifferent, the ardor of their faith chilled by backslidings, he exclaimed, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." He entreats them to be followers of God as dear children, and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Again, he exhorts them to walk in Christ Jesus, even as they had received him, that they might be rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith. He reminds them, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." To the Thessalonians he writes, "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us [the ministers of Christ] how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." {RH, June 3, 1880 par. 2}

7. What provokes God to anger like nothing else? **Ezekiel 16:26, James 4:4**

EGW: (no comment)

8. What activity is God provoked to wrath that may have been Christianized by the papacy? **Jeremiah 44:8, Jeremiah 11:17**

EGW: (no comment)

9. What is another Christianized item that provokes God to anger despite considered an act of worship to God? **Jeremiah 8:19**

EGW: (no comment)

10. Who do people honor that provokes God to anger, yet the papacy expects homage to be paid anyways? **Jeremiah 7:18**

EGW: (no comment)

11. By participating in Christianized paganism, who is actually worshipped, provoking God to anger? **1 Kings 22:53**

EGW: (no comment)

12. Who is a type of antichrist who provoked the Lord? **1 Kings 16:33**

EGW: Under the perverted rule of Ahab, Israel departed from God and corrupted their ways before Him. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." {3T 262.2}

13. What else provokes God to anger, as well as many parents? **Jeremiah 25:7, Psalms 78:56**

EGW: (no comment)

14. What ought we avoid before it provokes God? **2 Kings 21:15**

EGW: (no comment)

15. What two types of people should we avoid, that would provoke God if we continue to allow their influence upon us, maybe even stop being entertained by them? **2 Kings 21:6**

EGW: (no comment)

16. What saint eventually got so provoked that he unadvisedly spoke his own feelings? **Psalms 106:32-33**

EGW: The most grievous sin of God's people is unbelief; and yet it is wide-spread; and almost universal. It is this sin that has led to backsliding and apostasy in every age. Those for whom God has wrought, limit the Holy One of Israel, and dishonor God daily by their distrust, their doubts, and positive unbelief. Moses died on mount Nebo, and Aaron on mount Hor, by the decree of God, not because they had committed a great crime, as men view the matter, but for a sin of common occurrence. The psalmist describes their error in these words: "They angered God also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Retribution will surely follow the transgressor. Men may have lived and labored for God, they may have manifested self-denial, and self-sacrifice, God may have marked their lives with special favors, he may have given great foresight, and wisdom; and yet, the one whose life was so marked with rectitude may, through lack of watchfulness, and prayer, be overcome. The very uncommonness of the wrong, the usual purity and nobility of the character, make the departure from rectitude more noticeable, and Satan's triumph more complete. {ST, October 7, 1880 par. 11}

The sins of impatience and unbelief, are as offensive in the sight of God today, as in the days of ancient Israel. All who profess godliness are under the most sacred obligation to guard their own spirit, and to exercise self-control under the greatest provocation. The burdens placed upon Moses were very great; few men will ever be so severely tried as he; yet his sin is not passed over because of this. God has made ample provisions for his people, that if they come to him, and rely upon his strength, they will never become the sport of circumstances. Men of high or low degree have no excuse for sin. The light given of Heaven, the power from Jesus Christ, can be obtained by all who ask for it in faith. Under every provocation there is a present help that will never fail. We are to learn to take God at his word, walking by simple faith, continually feeling our own weakness, and trusting in the Mighty One of Israel. {ST, October 7, 1880 par. 12}

17. Who is the ultimate provoker to evil? **1 Chronicles 21:1**

EGW: Intercourse with heathen peoples led to a desire to follow their national customs and kindled ambition for worldly greatness. As the people of Jehovah, Israel was to be honored; but as pride and self-confidence increased, the Israelites were not content with this pre-eminence. They cared rather

for their standing among other nations. This spirit could not fail to invite temptation. With a view to extending his conquests among foreign nations, David determined to increase his army by requiring military service from all who were of proper age. To effect this, it became necessary to take a census of the population. It was pride and ambition that prompted this action of the king. The numbering of the people would show the contrast between the weakness of the kingdom when David ascended the throne and its strength and prosperity under his rule. This would tend still further to foster the already too great self-confidence of both king and people. The Scripture says, "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." The prosperity of Israel under David had been due to the blessing of God rather than to the ability of her king or the strength of her armies. But the increasing of the military resources of the kingdom would give the impression to surrounding nations that Israel's trust was in her armies, and not in the power of Jehovah. {PP 746.3}

18. Where do those that provoke the Lord end up ultimately? **Numbers 16:30, Isaiah 14:15**

EGW: God controls all these elements; they are his instruments to do his will; he calls them into action to serve his purpose. These fiery issues have been, and will be, his agents to blot out from the earth very wicked cities. Like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, they go down alive into the pit. These are evidences of God's power. Those who have beheld these burning mountains pouring forth fire, and flame, and a vast amount of melted ore, drying up rivers and causing them to disappear, have been struck with terror at the grandeur of the scene. They have been filled with awe as though they were beholding the infinite power of God. {1SP 82.2}

These manifestations bear the special marks of God's power, and are designed to cause the people of the earth to tremble before him, and to silence those who, like Pharaoh, would proudly say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Isaiah refers to these exhibitions of God's power where he exclaims, "Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." Isaiah 64:1-3. {1SP 83.1}

19. What will those that provoke the Lord not see? **Numbers 14:23**

EGW: "And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;), and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all people as one man, then the nations that have heard

the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which ye sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." {RH, October 3, 1893 par. 11}

Mark the whole tenor of this chapter, and learn the lesson it conveys to modern Israel. These things are written for our ensamples upon whom the ends of the world are come. We see the unbelief, and the stout resistance of some who have had great light, and although evidence has been piled upon evidence, they have kept themselves in stubborn resistance. The Lord has sent messages of warning and entreaty, messages of reproof and rebuke, and they have not been in vain. But we have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church. We have never had the prophecy concerning Babylon applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or been informed that the "loud cry" consisted in calling God's people to come out of her; for this is not God's plan concerning Israel. {RH, October 3, 1893 par. 12}

20. If we do not provoke the Lord, what will happen to our transgressions? **Exodus 23:21**

EGW: "Our Christ was the Saviour of the ancient worthies as much as he is our Saviour. They looked forward by faith, to a Saviour to come. Adam was saved by the gospel as virtually as we are saved today. Abraham was saved by faith in Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Moses was saved by the merits of Christ, who was the angel that led the armies of Israel in all their travels through the wilderness. God commanded, 'Provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him,' All who have died in faith, from righteous Abel unto our day are saved by the merits of Jesus Christ. {ST, July 18, 1878 par. 11}