LESSON 13 *March 21–27

(page 100 of Standard Edition)

Standing *in* All *the* Will *of* God



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Col. 4:7–18; Eph. 6:21; Acts 15:36–40; 2 Tim. 4:10, 11; 2 Pet. 3:10–14; Isa. 60:1–3.*

Memory Text: **"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"** *(1 Thessalonians 5:18, NKJV)***.**

This final portion of Colossians reveals Paul's wider network of coworkers. Acts shows him teaming up first with Barnabas, then with Silas, and then gives an overview of his three missionary journeys.

This week we will look at Paul's mission strategy, which involved the very efficient use of time and resources in reaching the major centers of the Roman Empire, as well as training promising lay workers in order to reach the cities and towns that Paul would not visit, such as Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

Through personal visits during his travels and, especially as a prisoner, through his epistles, Paul was constantly linking people and churches. He recognized that the success of the gospel mission depended upon everyone working together—Jewish and Gentile Christians; men and women; such people as Tychicus, Aristarchus, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, and Nympha. Intriguingly, we also hear of a letter he wrote to Laodicea that has not been preserved for us. Paul packs a lot in these final verses, including a personal exhortation to a man named Archippus. He did everything possible to strengthen the churches while he still could.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 28.*

Lessons on Outreach

We learn much from Paul about spreading the gospel. His travels covered an estimated 13,400 miles. This is astonishing, since much of it was on foot and some of the time he was also in prison.

Paul spent considerable time in centers of trade, such as Corinth and Ephesus, from which the message could then spread to inland towns. He also returned to churches that he had raised up in order to strengthen and encourage the new believers there. When he couldn't visit the churches personally, he sent letters. This way, the believers knew that he remembered them and cared about them.

Read Colossians 4:7–9; compare Ephesians 6:21. How is Tychicus described, and what reasons does Paul give for sending him and Onesimus to Colossae?

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Some things are best communicated orally rather than in writing. It would be interesting to know what news the two men conveyed to the Colossians. Judging from Paul's intent that these things would "comfort" *(NKJV)* and "encourage" them *(Col. 4:7–9, ESV)*, it probably included details about Paul's circumstances in prison. In any event, such communication was also important as a means of maintaining the personal ties that bind believers together.

Tychicus, whose name means "fortunate," was clearly a trusted emissary. Described as a "faithful minister" and "fellow servant," he was one of two men from Asia selected by Paul *(Acts 20:4)* to accompany him on his journey with the collection for needy believers in Jerusalem. He was also with Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome, whence he was sent to Ephesus to strengthen the work there *(2 Tim. 4:12)*. Paul also thought about sending him to Titus, in Crete *(Titus 3:12)*. Accompanying him was Onesimus, whom Paul had converted in Rome *(see Lesson 1)* and describes as "faithful."

It seems Paul also wanted to know about the circumstances of the believers in Colossae. It would not be difficult to send word back to him by someone, if not by Tychicus himself. This was another way Paul conveyed his love and concern for the believers there, even though he had not visited the church personally, and how he strengthened them in the faith so they could reach others.

How do these personal things in Paul's letters not only show his humanity but, in a small way, affirm the validity of his ministry?

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Church Connectivity

In a world connected by the internet, social media, and countless devices, it is difficult to imagine the challenge that Paul faced in helping churches feel they were a part of something bigger than their own local congregations.

Read Colossians 4:10, 11. Besides sending news back and forth through emissaries *(Col. 4:7–9)*, what other ways did Paul encourage connectivity? In view of some of the problems Paul has addressed in this epistle, what message might be conveyed through these greetings?

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With these greetings, Paul creates and fosters connectivity among fellow believers. We learn here that Mark was Barnabas's cousin. Paul thus paves the way for Mark's probable visit to Colossae. Aristarchus is described literally as a "fellow prisoner-of-war"; that is, he was imprisoned with Paul. They were both soldiers with "the armour of God" *(Eph. 6:10, 11)*, fighting to set Satan's captives free for service in the kingdom of God *(see 2 Tim. 2:1–4)*. Jesus/Justus (Jewish and Roman names that sound very similar in Greek, like Saul/Paul) is also commended to them as a trustworthy fellow laborer in the gospel.

Paul makes a point of mentioning that Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus are Jewish believers ("of the circumcision"). He then goes on to mention three Gentiles: Epaphras, Luke, and Demas *(Col. 4:12–14)*. It is significant that, despite some tensions in the church between Jews and Gentiles, these coworkers are able to labor effectively together, unitedly and harmoniously. By saying "only," though, Paul seems to imply a certain disappointment that more Jewish Christians have not stood by him in his sufferings. Nevertheless, it is significant that by this time, John Mark, who had some years before deserted Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey *(Acts 13:13)*, proves not only loyal but a "comfort" to Paul *(Acts 15:36-40)*.

Threats to unity are nothing new. In recent years, the Adventist Church has undergone profound changes as it has spread globally, and forces have hammered away at its unity. This stress on unity can be felt at every level of the church.

How can you, at your local church, work to lessen the things that threaten our unity? What are these tensions at the local level, and what can be done about them?

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Standing Perfect and Complete

Books have been written about the purpose-driven life and the purpose-driven church. While "purpose-driven" may not be quite right, a clear "purpose focus" is vital for accomplishing any meaningful endeavor. Paul's life and ministry, as well as that of his coworkers and the other apostles, exemplify this focus *(see Phil. 3:13, 14)*. The results speak for themselves—the gospel spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire and beyond *(Col. 1:23)*. The same focus is needed today.

Read Colossians 4:12, 13. What purpose is described, and how is it to be accomplished?

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As we mentioned in an earlier lesson, Epaphras was probably instrumental in the spread of the gospel to Colossae and to the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis *(see Lesson 1)*. His greetings and prayers for these churches were no doubt greatly encouraging to believers there. Epaphras's prayers had a clear focus—that the Colossians would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" *(Col. 4:12)*. Let's consider more carefully the rich components of this prayer.

Stand. The word means to stand firm and unmoved, which is possible only by being "grounded and steadfast" in the faith and confident of the truth of the gospel *(Col. 1:23, NKJV)*. The same word is used several times by Paul in reference to the battle against "the wiles of the devil" *(Eph. 6:11)* and withstanding the forces of darkness through divine power by putting on "the whole armour of God" *(Eph. 6:10–18; compare 2 Tim. 2:19)*.

Perfect. The word refers to the perfection of character that finds its ultimate expression in sacrificial love *(Matt. 5:44, 48)* by those who will never claim to have "arrived" *(Phil. 3:12–15, NIV)*.

Complete. This powerful word means to satisfy fully or bring something to full measure. It is used of Abraham's being "fully convinced" that God would do what He promised, though humanly impossible *(Rom. 4:21, NKJV)*, and Paul's being strengthened by the Lord so that "the message might be preached fully" through him *(2 Tim. 4:17, NKJV)*.

All the will of God. The word "all" is comprehensive. Paul himself prayed that the Colossians would be filled with a knowledge of God's will, "live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects" *(Col. 1:9, 10, NET)* through "His glorious power" *(Col. 1:11, NKJV)*.

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Living in This World but Not of It

Read Colossians 4:14, 15 and 2 Timothy 4:10, 11. How is Luke distinguished from Demas, and why?

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The apostle John tells us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" *(1 John 2:15)*. Luke's love for Jesus and His kingdom led him to stand by Paul to the end, come what may, whereas Demas loved this world more than the world to come.

Read the following passages. What counsel is given for those awaiting the Second Advent?

1. *Mark 13:32–37*_____

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2. *Titus 2:11–14* _____

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3. *2 Pet. 3:10–14*_____

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4. *Rev. 3:17–21*_____

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Jesus and the apostles frequently warn us to "watch," be vigilant, and be ready always for the Master's coming so as not to be taken by surprise. Unfortunately, as did the disciples who failed to heed Jesus' command to "watch and pray" *(Mark 14:38, NKJV)*, many will not make the necessary preparations. It all comes down to who or what has our hearts, because we cannot serve two masters.

In the message to Laodicea, Jesus gives us a clear prescription. First, repent of our sins. Second, we are to open our hearts to Jesus and let Him be in control, which then (third) enables us to obtain the "gold" of faith and love tested by trial and victorious over temptation.

What specifics might Jesus be asking you to repent of in your life? What part of His prescription are you in need of most?

A Message for Laodicea

Read Colossians 4:16–18; compare Colossians 2:1–3. Thinking about Jesus' message to Laodicea *(see yesterday's study)***, what correlations do you find with that of Colossians, which was to be read also in the Laodicean church of Paul's day?**

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Looking at the history of God's people through the ages, the same problems occur again and again. The prophets rebuked Israel for wanting to worship like the world and urged them to repent before it was too late. Isaiah even lamented, "How the faithful city has become a harlot!" *(Isa. 1:21, NKJV)* and urged the people to return to God for forgiveness and cleansing *(Isa. 1:16–20)*. Both John the Baptist *(Matt. 3:2, 8–10)* and Jesus *(Matt. 4:17, Matt. 12:33–37)* called upon the Israelites to repent and bear fruit that would stand the test of the judgment in the last days. The apostles bore a similar message *(Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:9, 10)*.

Compare the following passages: *Isaiah 60:1–3 with Revelation 18:1–4, and Isaiah 62:1–5 with Revelation 19:7, 8***. What similarities exist between the messages in the two books?**

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God *will* unite heaven and earth. But because of the great controversy, that must be done in stages:

1. At Calvary, Satan lost any affection left toward him among the heavenly beings *(John 12:31)*.

2. Through the judgment ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, God's people are "complete in every good work to do His will" *(Heb. 13:21, NKJV)* and fitted for heaven.

3. Through the millennial judgment and the final judgment after the millennium, all remaining questions are forever settled, and sin and unrepentant sinners are destroyed in the lake of eternal fire, which also cleanses the earth *(Rev. 21:8)*.

4. Only with the end of sin can heaven and earth finally be united *(Rev. 21:3)*.

What can you yourself (not looking at anyone else) do in order to remain faithful to God and to the truth He has given us? That is, what choices are you making that reveal who truly has your heart?

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Further Thought: "The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Look at the Ellen G. White quote above. There are, yes, only two sides in the great controversy, and unless we consciously choose Christ, we are on Satan's side *(Luke 11:23)*. However much that idea might bother our sensibilities, God is not under any obligation to make sure His truths don't offend them. What does this reality tell you about how crucial the surrender of your will to Christ really is?

❷ Read Revelation 14:14–16. The early rain of Pentecost enabled the gospel seed to sprout and grow, while the latter rain prepares the earth for the final harvest. How does Revelation 14:12 relate to this prospect?

❸ What are the various ways that we, as a church as a whole and as individual believers, are impacted by the culture and world around us? How can we be protected against the negative influences of the world, which have always been a problem for God's people in every age?

INSIDE *Story*

Stolen Bible Plants a Church

By David Fletcher

Tribal fighting broke out between five villages in Papua New Guinea in 2021. Many houses were scorched, and property was looted in one of the villages, Kemefa. At least 16 people were killed.

Amid the conflict, a fighter entered the Kemefa Seventh-day Adventist Church and stole a Bible. The fighter, Abuni Ane, took the book to his home village, Orege.

After the clashes ended, Abuni began to read the stolen Bible. As he read, his heart was touched.

Several months passed, and an Adventist pastor visited Abuni's village. Abuni brought out the stolen Bible and explained to the pastor, Dicks Neheza, what had happened. Expressing remorse, he said he wanted to repent and commit his life to God.

The pastor and Abuni established a house church in Orege, and before long, Abuni decided to be baptized.

At his baptism, Abuni shared his story with attending members from the Kemefa church, where he had stolen the Bible. He asked for their forgiveness, and he handed the Bible over to the church's elder.

The elder, speaking on behalf of the church, forgave Abuni and asked him to keep the Bible. He also gave Abuni a church hymnal as a gift. The elder encouraged him to keep reading the Bible, to sing praises to God, and to plant a church in Orege.

Abuni went right to work. The next day, he and two friends went into the bush to collect timber for a semi-permanent church structure. Pastor Neheza brought carpentry tools. A church company with three founding members opened that day in Orege.

Since then, the church has grown to 18 members, including eight people who were baptized during "PNG for Christ" evangelistic meetings in 2024.



Pastor Neheza is amazed that tribal fighting and a stolen Bible resulted in a church. He said the first structure is now too small and that plans are in place to raise a larger, permanent building.

Your weekly mission offerings support church-planting in Papua New Guinea and around the world. This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to the South Pacific Division, whose territory includes Papua New Guinea. Thank you for your generous offering this Sabbath.

Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

Part I: Overview

Key Text: *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Study Focus: *Col. 4:7–18*

Paul's final words in his letter to the Colossians are filled with love and heartfelt concern for the church. Tychicus and Onesimus are ***beloved*** brothers *(Col. 4:7, 9)*. Luke is a ***beloved*** physician *(Col. 4:14)*. Paul's heart overflows with love. His love for his fellow workers is representative of his love for the church. His love and concern for his audience reveal his desire to know their circumstances and to comfort them *(Col. 4:8)*.

Paul's wish with regard to the church members in Colossae is for them to "stand perfect and complete" *(Col. 4:12, NKJV)*. For this reason, he assembles a "dream team" to work alongside him. Indeed, Colossians 4:7–14 is, as it were, a parade, featuring a marching unit of courageous Christian soldiers engaged in the most crucial of all battles, spiritual warfare. Paul teaches us that mission is teamwork. In their work for the church in Colossae, Tychicus and Onesimus appear at the forefront, sent by Paul both to give, and get, information *(Col. 4:7–9)*. However, other fellow workers of Paul were also deeply committed to the church members in Colossae *(Col. 4:10–14)*.

This week's lesson emphasizes three major themes:

1. Mission is a collaborative effort of people, working together in close connection.
2. Because mission is a collaborative effort, church leaders and missionaries must work with this clear purpose in mind, so that church members may "stand perfect and complete" *(Col. 4:12, NKJV)*.
3. A profound love for Jesus removes any possibility of compromising with this world's standards and with the materialism that characterizes it.

Part II: Commentary

Mission Involves Teamwork

Jesus highlighted the importance of teamwork. For instance, in Luke 5, we see the story of Jesus at the lake of Gennesaret, where He "saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets" *(Luke 5:1, 2, ESV)*. These men had given up fishing, as they were not able to catch anything! Jesus told them to let down their nets, once again, " 'for ***a catch***' " *(Luke 5:4, ESV; emphasis added)*. Suddenly, "when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking" *(Luke*

5:6, ESV). So, those in the one boat "signaled to their partners in the other boat to ***come*** and ***help*** them" *(Luke 5:7, ESV; emphasis added).* What a powerful lesson—for them and for us! Now, Jesus could say, " 'From now on you will be ***catching*** men' " *(Luke 5:10, ESV; emphasis added).*

Colossians 4:7–14 displays Paul's commitment to teamwork *(see also 1 Cor. 3:5–9)*. He was not alone in his missionary endeavors. In this passage in Colossians, the apostle mentions a missionary team, consisting of nine individuals! We can gain valuable insights from how he characterizes their involvement in the gospel mission.

Tychicus	1. Beloved brother 2. Faithful minister 3. Fellow servant in the Lord	*Col. 4:7*
Onesimus	1. Faithful [brother] 2. Beloved brother 3. One of you	*Col. 4:9*
Aristarchus	1. Paul's fellow prisoner	*Col. 4:10*
Mark	1. Cousin of Barnabas	*Col. 4:10*
Barnabas	No presentation: a very well-known figure	*Col. 4:10*
Jesus	1. Called Justus	*Col. 4:11*
Epaphras	1. One of you 2. Bondservant of Christ 3. "Always laboring fervently for you in prayers" 4. "He has a great zeal for you."	*Col. 4:12, 13, NKJV*
Luke	1. Beloved physician	*Col. 4:14*
Demas	No presentation	*Col. 4:14*

This table reveals that Paul had a "dream" team. Mission work is not a solitary activity. The more people engaged in missionary work, the greater the results. However, there is also room for a quasi-anonymous missionary, such as "Jesus who is called Justus" *(Col. 4:11, NKJV)*. This verse is the only place in which he is mentioned in the entire New Testament. Interestingly, Paul says nothing about Demas *(Col. 4:14).* Perhaps, Paul's silence is because there was nothing positive to say, as Demas already might have been drifting away from the faith, as the apostle mentions in 2 Timothy 4:10. It is noteworthy that Paul's missionary team includes people from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. Differences dissolve in the unity of faith.

Some further remarks can be made:

First, Tychicus and Onesimus are portrayed as beloved and faithful.

Second, Onesimus and Epaphras are "one of you," meaning that they were members of the church in Colossae.

Third, Epaphras is further portrayed as the "bondservant of Christ," a man of prayer, and someone with great zeal for the church. Though absent from Colossae, Epaphras was "always laboring fervently for" them in prayers *(Col. 4:12, NKJV)*. We can learn a precious lesson from this attitude: when one cannot help in person, one can still pray.

Fourth, some of these men appear in the book of Acts as Paul's travel companions *(Aristarchus [e.g., Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4, 5; Acts 27:2]; Tychicus [e.g., Acts 20:4]; Barnabas [e.g., Acts 12:25, Acts 13:1–15, Acts 14:19–28])*.

Fifth, the inclusion of Onesimus, a new convert *(Philem. 10)*, demonstrates that Paul was interested in training people for ministry so that they would become his fellow workers *(Col. 4:11)*.

Sixth, at first, Paul was unwilling to give a second chance to Mark, a hesitant missionary *(Acts 15:38)*, but he later reconsidered *(Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11)*, even, in time, calling him his fellow laborer *(Philem. 24)*.

Seventh, Paul's expressions of love and the greetings that he sends from his fellow workers to the church nurtured a sense of companionship between church leaders and the congregation.

Perfection and Completion

In their work, Christian leaders must focus on one clear goal: helping church members grow in faith and align fully with God's will. They must work and pray for them to be "perfect and complete" *(Col. 4:12)*. At first sight, these terms may convey the false impression that Paul is advocating for sinlessness or absolute perfection, but such is not the case. The Greek word rendered as "perfect" is *teleios*, which can simply mean "mature" *(1 Cor. 2:6, 1 Cor. 14:20, Phil. 3:15, NKJV)*. In turn, the Greek word rendered as "complete" is *plēroō*, which, when applied to people, is used elsewhere in reference to God's action of filling someone with spiritual blessings *(see Acts 2:28, Rom. 15:13)*. In Ephesians 4:13, Paul indicates that "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" results in "a perfect/[mature (*teleios*)] man."

Paul wants the church members in Colossae to develop a Christlike character. Earlier in his letter, he revealed his concern about this matter (*Col. 2:6, 7)*. A Christlike manner of living includes knowing "His [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" *(Col. 1:9, NKJV)*. It also means walking "worthy of the Lord," pleasing Him, "being fruitful in every good work," and "increasing in the knowledge of God" *(Col. 1:10, NKJV)*. Additional characteristics of spiritual maturity are stressed in Colossians 2:2, in which Paul speaks of being "knit together in love" in order to attain "to all riches of the full assurance of understanding." In

sum, Paul says that the goal of preaching is to present "every man perfect in Christ" *(Col. 1:28; see also Col. 1:29).*

Warning Against Materialism

The Bible teaches that Christians must not conform to the world's values or the materialism that defines it *(Rom. 12:2)*. However, Demas fell into the trap of loving this present world *(2 Tim. 4:10)*. In both Romans 12:2 and 2 Timothy 4:10, the Greek word rendered as "world" is *aiōn*. It is applied in reference to "the system of practices and standards associated with secular society."—Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), p. 507.

In addition to *aiōn*, the term *kosmos* is often used to refer to the evil values and systems of this world. For instance, in 1 John 2:16, the apostle John uses three phrases to summarize how this worldly system operates: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" *(NKJV)*. Scholars agree that this trifecta of worldly lust and pride constitutes a radical warning against materialism. It is not surprising that Paul holds such a negative view concerning "the present age [*aiōn*]" *(Titus 2:12, NKJV)*, to the point of emphasizing that Jesus "gave Himself for our sins, that He might *deliver us from this present evil age*" *(Gal. 1:4, NKJV; emphasis added).* In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul delivers a clear command for "those who are rich in *this present age* not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God" *(NKJV; emphasis added).* In Titus 2:12, the apostle remarks that Christians should reject "ungodliness and worldly lusts" by means of a sober, righteous, and godly life "in the present age" *(NKJV)*.

Interestingly, the information that Demas loved this present world somehow explains the statement, "Demas has forsaken me" *(2 Tim. 4:10, NKJV),* which indicates his desertion of missionary duties. A visible sign that a person loves this present age is the weakening of a burning love for mission in their heart. Those who deeply long for the age to come are the very ones who "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" *(Titus 2:12, NKJV).* This longing includes active engagement in mission.

Part III: Life Application

Meditate upon the following themes. Then ask your students to answer the questions at the end of the section.

"There is a poignancy to Paul's letters, for they reflect his great desire for community, to be one with his converts and have good fellowship with them.

Paul is no loner; he is far more like a parent who misses his faraway children. . . . In his letters he reflects the collectivist mentality again and again. His social networks are crucial to him personally but also in carrying out the shared task of spreading the good news."—Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 114.

This quotation reveals Paul's full commitment to the proclamation of the gospel. Should we, living in the last days of this world's history, be any less engaged in spreading the gospel than were Paul and his missionary team in the first century? They were willing to do their best and work together for the advancement of God's kingdom. Likewise, we are called to work in unity. Every person has a role to play in God's overarching plan of cosmic salvation. We are called to help others grow in spiritual maturity in preparation for the age to come. In fact, the more we long for the age to come, the more we do for Christ in the present age. Yet, our love for Jesus will keep us safe from the danger of compromising with this world's values in such a way that, although we are in this world, we never shall feel that we belong to it *(John 15:19).*

Questions:

1. **Why are our social networks crucial to ministry? Who is in your social networks? How have they aided your mission work and witnessing efforts for God?**

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2. **How has God called you to help others grow in spiritual maturity and to prepare for heaven?**

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3. **In what ways does your love for Jesus keep you safe from compromising with this world's values? What does it mean to be in this world but not of it?**

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Your relationship with God is your most important relationship. Don't delay in building it and making it as strong as it can be. Now is the time to work on this relationship because it impacts everything else.

Whatever your relationship with God is like today, this quarter's guide (entitled Growing in a Relationship With God by Nina Atcheson) is written with you in mind to reawaken your love and commitment to Jesus Christ as you seek Him anew. The lessons are written in a more personal style because they are about a personal God who wants to know you, personally.

The Bible uses the metaphor of a race to describe the lifelong relationship with God. Our spiritual race is a marathon, not a sprint. There may be times when we stop running, or even fall flat on our face. It happens, and, when it does, we must stay on course, in spite of the trials and hardships that, inevitably, come *(Heb. 12:4-11)*. We don't run this race alone. Not only are there other runners who love Jesus and His Word in the race with us, but the Helper also dwells in us to strengthen and sustain us as we run, and "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith" *(Heb. 12:2, NKJV)*.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will move upon us to draw us closer to God as never before.

Lesson 1—Reality Check

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Our Condition** *(Rev. 3:14-17)*
MONDAY: **Rebuke, Repent, and Reward** *(Rev. 3:20)*
TUESDAY: **Everlasting Love** *(Jer. 31:3, 4, NKJV)*
WEDNESDAY: **Abide** *(John 15:1-11)*
THURSDAY: **Linked to the Vine** *(Luke 11:13)*
Memory Text—*John 15:9, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: A relationship with God changes everything—both here and in eternity. Let's consider the current state of our relationship with God, and what the Bible's advice is for us.

Lesson 2—To Know God

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **A Clearer Picture of God** *(Isa. 46:9, 10)*
MONDAY: **God Is Holy** *(1 Sam. 2:2; Isa. 57:15)*
TUESDAY: **God Is Love** *(1 John 4:7-19)*
WEDNESDAY: **God in Creation** *(Gen. 1:1; Gen. 2:7)*
THURSDAY: **Immanuel, God With Us** *(Matt. 1:23)*
Memory Text—*John17:3, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: As we learn more about God, our understanding and love for Him will deepen so that, ultimately, we will want to grow closer to Him in order to reflect His love and character to others.

Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on audio CD, and via online download to people who are legally blind or physically disabled. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services for the Blind, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981; email: services@christianrecord.org; website: www.christianrecord.org.