

# ***Sabbath School Today*** **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

## ***Family Seasons*** **Lesson 7: Keys to Family Unity**

Years ago a member of my church was trying to justify her anger at another member by saying “churches are families and families fight.” Unfortunately, she was right, but that is not the ideal God has for families or churches. A Christian family should be an example of God’s ideal of unity. Too many times families deal with each other at one extreme or the other. They can be too rigid or too lenient.

The poet Robert Frost said “home is a place that when you go there, they have to take you in.” Continuing to help someone can do more harm than good. I have a friend whose son is addicted to several powerful street drugs. For years, she was terrified he would die in the cold under a road. Whenever he got in trouble, he called mom. She bailed him out and let him come home. Unfortunately, he refused to go into rehab and would always slip back. Right now, he is back in jail for 3 years and she has promised that there is no more help unless he gets into rehab after his release. If she can do this difficult thing he will be better off than if she doesn’t stop the cycle of enabling.

Other families fail at genuine unity because some of the members (usually the parents) are completely inflexible and require the appearance of unity from all others. No respect is given to the opinions of others, the authority is strictly autocratic.

There are many variations of family disunity, but the worst thing that usually happens is the children grow up with a distorted view of their heavenly Father. Churches often make the same mistakes as families of being too autocratic or too lenient. Both families and churches should be welcoming places but does that mean the demands someone makes should always or never be met? Do we have the right to protect family and church members even when it means making people unhappy?

There are times when we are called on to speak up, and other times silence is golden. God gave us brains and His word and Holy Spirit to give us wisdom. The Quarterly uses a quote from *Early Writings*: “If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties.” [1]

Ellen White continues on the next page: “Truth, saving truth, must be given to the starving people who are in darkness. I saw that many prayed for God to humble them; but if God should answer their prayers, it would be by terrible things in righteousness. *It was their duty to humble themselves.*” [2] Just here is a hint as to how to avoid suffering, which is the primary way God has to discipline our characters. If we would simply humble ourselves, the result would be accomplished without the suffering.

Another thing we need to notice is that Mrs. White's emphasis is that "Truth, saving truth must be given to starving people who are in darkness." Many of these starving people are in our homes and churches. If you have been diligently studying the 1888 message with an open mind, you have been given a gift by God that you have a duty to share starting with those around you.

Often when learning the true gospel for the first time, we are eager to share. If you have tried to share what you might know and have met resistance, ask God through His Holy Spirit to show you if you are part of the problem. Most of us have experienced a flat or hostile reaction. In sharing, we must remember that their journey is not your journey. They might just be coming from a different perspective. Your reaction to their indifference or hostility might snuff out any further interest in finding truth as it is in Christ on their own.

If you are just coming to the message, keep studying. There are many books that will be helpful in understanding the true 1888 message and its history. You may want to begin with the writings of the 1888 "messengers," E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.

Study E. J. Waggoner's *Romans: The Greatest Treatise Ever Written* and *Christ and His Righteousness*. Another publication of valuable reading is the *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, which includes sermons by A. T. Jones. After Jones reports about his work defeating the Blair Sunday law bill, he develops the 1888 message theology. *The Glad Tidings* by Waggoner and *The Consecrated Way* by Jones are also good sources of the 1888 message concepts.

Elders Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short have written extensively on the 1888 message. To understand the history of the controversy of the message in our church, you may want to start with *1888 Re-examined* by Robert J. Wieland. Donald K. Short wrote these beneficial books: "*Then Shall the Sanctuary be Cleansed*", "*Made Like ... His Brethren*", and *Let History Speak*. Elder Wieland wrote several books that are good for sharing: *Lightened with His Glory*, *In Search of the Cross*, *The Good News is Better than You Think*, and *Powerful Good News*. If you want to understand the covenants, read chapter 32 in Ellen G. White's *Patriarchs and Prophets* as well as Waggoner's *The Everlasting Covenant*.

To understand the reasons why the church changed its position on the nature Christ took at the incarnation, and what the differences mean, J. R. Zurcher's book, *Touched With Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* is comprehensive reading. This only touches on some of the material available.

Why is it necessary to give this little bibliography? There is so much "non-truth" being disseminated about what the 1888 message is or isn't. Go to the original sources. I've had friends who want to discuss this or that point, and it doesn't take long to realize they haven't read more than the first few pages of a book or article. Instead, they want to argue in order to justify their views which they believe are better.

“Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self. I saw that God will not bow down and listen to long justifications, and He does not want His servants to do so, and thus precious time be wasted that should be spent in showing transgressors the error of their ways and pulling souls out of the fire.”  
[3]

Our lesson spends an entire day discussing submission (Wednesday). This concept does not appeal to our self-centered natures. Submission, however, does not mean we never stand for truth. A recent “Dial Daily Bread” article written by Elder Wieland suggests that the war in heaven was started by Christ and His holy angels. This view makes sense, because Satan and his angels were telling lies, so Someone had to speak the truth.

When we are called on to speak the truth, doing it with humility and love is the only Christlike way. Let us resolve to keep studying so God can use us to speak the truth in due season.

—Arlene Hill

**Endnotes:**

[1] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 119.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 120, emphasis added.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/W2jH56yLvyc>

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