

Families in the Family of God
What Have They Seen in Your House?

Lesson #11 for March 18, 2006

Scriptures: Isaiah 38; 39; 58:6, 7, 10-12; 1 Cor. 7:12-15; Heb. 6:12; 13:7; 1 Pet. 3:1, 2; 3 John 11.

1. Do all of your neighbors know that you are a Christian? Do they know that you are a Seventh-day Adventist? Jesus said and Matthew wrote “you are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, **so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.**” (Matthew 5:14-16). Are your neighbors very happy that you live next to them? Why? Or why not?
2. Peter suggests that we are: “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9, *NIV*). What do you think this implies? Do our lives declare the praises of God? What do you think Peter had in mind?
3. Ellen White went even further when she stated “**Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives...**Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquirements limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes. If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life and beauty and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth. “ *Ministry of Healing* pages 352, 355. How can we make this true in our own experience?
4. If these statements are true, and they certainly must be, what picture of God is the world seeing in you and your home? But how would you define a Christian home? Are Christians more friendly? More hospitable? Can you “smell the scent of prayer”? Are Christians kinder, more generous, more loving? If people see you relating to the other members of your family can they tell that you are different? Better? Like Jesus?
5. What are the **signs** of a Christian home? Are there any visible tokens?
6. Our opening story for this lesson comes from the experience of Hezekiah. You will remember that Hezekiah was fatally sick. Isaiah came and told him that he was about to die. But when Hezekiah humbled himself and pleaded with God, his life was extended for 15 years. As a result God gave him a sign. The Babylonians noticing the sign decided to travel to Hezekiah’s kingdom to see what was up! What did Hezekiah show them? Why did he choose to do this? Read 2 Chronicles 32:31. Have visitors to your home ever gotten the wrong impression about Christianity? Why?
7. **Is the Christians witness more verbal or nonverbal? If the verbal witness is not consistent with the nonverbal witness which do you think our visitors will take home with them?**
8. Is it the responsibility of every Adventist when a non-Christian or non-Seventh-day Adventist visits their home to find some way to turn the conversation to talk about God? About Adventism?
9. **Christians should immediately recognize that everything we have, from material possessions to life and health is a gift from God. Does God have any right to expect anything in return? Or should Christians say that their home lives are private and should be kept away from the prying eyes of the world? Remember that our world and each of our lives are displayed on the “theater of the universe”. (2 Cor. 4:9)**

10. How well do Seventh-day Adventists do in sharing the real gospel and its real meaning in their own lives with their own children? What are the best ways for us to instruct our children in the right?
11. In what ways can parents best share the gospel with their children? Read Deuteronomy 6:6,7. How is this actually carried out in practice? When you hear some bit of good news about the church or about some Christian act do you rush to tell your family members like Andrew did in telling Peter? Why? Or why not? Isn't it obvious that our own family should be our first mission field?
12. **Do your children clearly observe in you a real enthusiasm about your Christianity? Do they see that you enjoy the Sabbath day? Do they look forward to the Sabbath because of what you do with them during those special hours?**
13. What are the most important reasons why young people today decide to leave the church? Can we change these reasons for the better?
14. Our lesson suggests that when visitors come into our homes we should be careful to acknowledge God as the giver of all gifts. Have you ever had a visitor ask you how God went about giving you these gifts? "If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life and beauty and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and death." Ellen G. White, *the Ministry of Healing*, page 355.
15. The story of Naomi and Ruth clearly demonstrates that we can live and speak the truth about God even under very difficult circumstances. Have you ever had an experience like that of Naomi or Ruth? Through that experience did you give the kind of witness that Naomi apparently did?
16. Who among your colleagues, your family, friends knows the real you? What is the real you like? Do you enjoy living and sharing Christian principles?
17. What is the difference between entertaining and hospitality? Do your friends feel completely welcome in your home? Why? Or why not? Do people come to your place to have a good time? Do they feel comfortable in talking to you about anything deeper than superficial matters?
18. What constitutes a "mixed" marriage? The New Testament has some very specific counsel about "mixed" marriages. (1 Corinthians 7:12-15; 1 Peter 3:1,2). In order to have a "mixed" marriage is it necessary for the two partners to be of different races? Of different religions? Of different spiritual views even within the same church? Can a "mixed" marriage extend hospitality and warmth and speak to the children and to visitors in the same way that an unmixed marriage could?
19. In your experience what is more likely in a "mixed" marriage? Does it often happen that the churchgoer convinces the other partner to begin going to church? Or is it more likely that the secular member of the pair convinces the churchgoer to loosen their standards until they become more like the world?
20. Can a Christian wife submit to an unbelieving husband? What would this imply? "'Submission in a Christian marriage arises out of reverence for Christ (compare Ephesians 5:21).' But faithfulness to the claims of God on one's life does not require a spouse to suffer abuse at the hands of a violent partner". (See Tuesday, March 14)
21. **If someone could follow your every movement for one or two weeks what would they say is your most precious possession? What is most important to you in your life?**
22. Many Christian families have experienced the heart-breaking scenario of having someone in the

family, often a young person, decide to leave the church. What is the best way to reach out to these backsliders? They often seem very resistant to the gospel. Does our attitude toward them ever contribute to their desire to distance themselves from the church?

23. There are several passages in Scripture suggesting that young Christians can grow more like Jesus by imitating the good examples of church leaders who are themselves following the example of Jesus. (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7; three John 11). Have you ever seen this take place? How can we make the most of this influence for good?
24. We know very well that especially at younger ages children are very desirous of imitating and copying their parents or those to whom they look for guidance. Ellen White says:
“It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.” {GC 555.1}
25. Can an imperfect human parent be a good example by following the perfect example of Christ? How do we do more of this?
26. What factors keep you from inviting others into your home and sharing with them? How often do you extend hospitality to friends, neighbors, people who are not Seventh-day Adventists? Why do you feel uncomfortable doing this? Or why not?
27. The Bible gives some excellent examples of people such as Abraham who welcomed strangers into their homes (Genesis 18:1-15) and were blessed enormously as a result. Do you think it is possible that God might actually come to this earth and appear as a human being on occasions even in our day? Are you embarrassed about the size or condition of your home? Are you short of time for preparation? Are you afraid that your food might not be acceptable? What other things do you think might serve as barriers or hindrances to your being more hospitable?
28. One of the serious mistakes that Christians have made in the past is thinking that when we invite strangers into our homes we need to talk to them about the church or even about ourselves. Even the church at its best times is less than perfect. We ourselves may be far less than perfect! **But we can always talk about God and many people feel quite comfortable in talking about God. The truth about God is always good news! The truth about us is often not good news. Hopefully it will be at times good news!**
29. How many people in your class were encouraged to become regular church members or to remain so because of the wonderful influence of some Christian home either their own or someone else's?
30. Do you have someone in your class who has an unbelieving spouse? How can you reach out to that couple? Could we learn to extend arms of fellowship around an unbelieving spouse and help in bringing that person near to the church family?

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