

Thy Word Is a Lamp Unto My Feet: The Bible for Today
Daily Wisdom

Lesson #11 for June 16, 2007

Scriptures: Psalms 19:7-14; 119:98-105; Proverbs 3:13-16; 30:8,9; Matthew 13:22; 16:26; Romans 12:17,18; 13:1-4.

1. This lesson talks about how the Bible can affect our daily lives. As we know, the Bible speaks primarily about the daily lives and experiences of people who lived a long time ago and in very different settings than we do. Some of their circumstances and behaviors seem quite strange to us. But if we read carefully and think between the lines, we can see that God was acting behind the scenes and a war was—and is—taking place over God's character and government. Satan has made his accusations against God. Through the lives of saints, and especially through the life and death of His Son, God has provided answers and refuted the accusations of Satan. But what do these universe-wide issues have to do with our daily lives?
2. Is the Bible primarily a book of “deeds to be done and sins to be shunned”? What percentage of the Bible actually tells us in simple, straightforward terms what we should do on a daily basis? Is the Bible a rule book or a casebook? Does God spell out the principles and ask us to interpret them in our lives, or does He give examples of the lives of others from which He asks us to learn the principles? If you are a careful student of the Scriptures, is it always clear exactly what God expects you to do in any given situation in your life? Is it clear that God loves you and wants what is best for you?
3. The Bible speaks quite often about wisdom. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
4. Have you found that it is possible to confirm the principles taught in Scripture in your own personal experience?
5. Read Psalms 19:7-14; 119:98-105; Proverbs 3:13-16; and John 17:17. Do you agree with those statements? Do you find that the Bible is always a safe guide, when correctly understood, for our lives today? Our Bible Study Guide suggests that we need to read the Scriptures and obey them. In practical terms how does your understanding of the Bible affect your daily activities?
6. People in the Bible responded to God in a wide variety of ways. Often the responses, especially in the Old Testament, were those you might expect from a small child. They tried to obey—either from fear of punishment or from hope of reward. At other times we see that people obeyed Him because they hoped to be included in a certain peer group. They thought that God had chosen their particular group to be saved and so long as they remained clearly identified with that group, their salvation was assured. Their standard of behavior was determined by what was acceptable in their peer group. But on a few occasions in Scripture, we find individuals who rose above their peer group and developed a direct and personal relationship with the God of the universe. Those people chose to do right because it was right no matter what anyone else around them was doing. Can you think of examples of such behavior in the Scriptures? Abraham? Moses? Job? Daniel? At the present time, at what level would you say your personal relationship with God is? See section entitled “Moral Development.”

7. There has never been a time in history when the guidance and instruction provided by Scripture has been more widely available than today. How is the world currently responding to the truths of Scripture? How many of us give lip service to the Scripture, but in our lives do something quite different? Are we, as someone has suggested, an “information rich but implementation poor” church?
8. What should be the role of the Ten Commandments in our daily lives? What percentage of your activities do you think are covered by these 10 general guidelines? In trying to explain the Ten Commandments, would you say they are descriptive laws or proscriptive laws? Descriptive laws are those which simply describe the way things are. The law of gravity is a good example. It is always in effect and it can have good or bad consequences. Proscriptive laws, on the other hand, are those laws determined by some authority to be binding on a certain group of people. If we violate them and are caught, that authority will determine the punishment to be administered. If we are not caught, there may never be any punishment. Note that *Young’s Literal* translation in Exodus 20 says, “You will not...” rather than (*KJV*), “Thou shalt not...” Looking back over history, there have been an estimated 32 million human laws enacted. No one could ever observe all of those! Many of them are, in fact, contradictory! Many of them have since been abrogated.
9. What does the Scripture recommend regarding how we should relate to civic authority? Read Jeremiah 29:7; Romans 12:17,18; 13:1-4; and 1 Peter 2:13,14,17. These verses make it very clear that, as far as possible, when they do not conflict with direct guidance from God, we should obey the civic authorities. Paul admonishes us to obey the emperor even though in his day the emperor, Nero, was a scoundrel! Nero eventually cut off Paul’s head!
10. How much guidance can we receive from Scripture about our work? How would you compare your current work with the work originally given to Adam and Eve? There is much evidence in Scripture to suggest that work is intended to be a blessing. We are admonished to do our very best at whatever we are given to do. Diligence, integrity, and respect for authority are clearly biblical principles. But there are times when we are requested to do things which may not seem to be consistent with biblical principles. What should we do in such circumstances? What if your boss asks you to do something which you believe is dishonest? What should you do if you have fellow workers that you observe cheating the organization? Is it our responsibility, as Christians, to do a diligent job at work and to be a good example to those around us?
11. Read Proverbs 30:8,9. There seem to be dangers connected with wealth as well as with poverty. Why does God allow some people to become very wealthy while others can hardly find enough to eat? Is that God’s “doing” or the devil’s? Read Matthew 13:22, 16:26, 19:24, and 1 Timothy 6:10. Do these verses suggest that it is dangerous for us to become well-off financially?

Money can do strange things to people. Unlike food, water, or rest, no matter how much money people make, it never seems enough. Sometimes, in fact, the richer people are, the greedier they become.” *Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* p. 132 for Wednesday, June 13.
12. The Bible talks about laying up treasures in heaven. What is implied by that? How do we do that?

13. Young people make a number of very important decisions that affect their entire lives, e.g., what friends to choose, what education to get, what occupation to pursue, what life-partner to choose, and what picture of God to accept. Why doesn't the Bible give us more details about the early years of the life of Jesus as an example for young people? See *Desire of Ages* pp. 68-92.
14. When faced with a dilemma in your life, do you search for a similar situation in Scripture and then follow a "thus saith the Lord"? Or do you seek to find the principles that you believe are behind the different stories and then live your life according to those principles? Is it safer to live a life based on "God has said it, and I believe it, and that's all there is to it" or to live a life based on principles as you interpret them from Scripture? Are there potential dangers in either approach?
15. As human beings most of us look to the guidance of others around us. We sometimes talk about Christian leaders who are "servant leaders." Imagine how wonderful it would be to have Jesus living in our community as an example of how to face the challenges of our lives. On the other hand, many would find that very threatening! They would be very uncomfortable with someone like Jesus nearby!
16. Read Matthew 20:25-28. A clear difference is set forth between the leadership of Jesus Christ and the typical leadership of "worldlings." How many leaders do you know of each type?
17. What should be the relationship between biblical principles, holy living, and a correct witness for Christ?
18. How long would it take to finish the gospel if everyone in the world did as much as you do or as little as you do?
19. Those who study the Bible, counsel with God, and rely upon Christ will be enabled to act wisely at all times and under all circumstances. Good principles will be illustrated in actual life. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 43.

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Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was a professor at Harvard University. He became famous for his work beginning with his dissertation in 1958 at the University of Chicago. He started as a developmental psychologist and then moved to the field of moral education. He was particularly well-known for his theory of moral development which he popularized through research studies conducted at Harvard's Center for Moral Education.

His theory of moral development was dependent on the thinking of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and the American philosopher John Dewey. He was also inspired by James Mark Baldwin. These men had emphasized that human beings develop philosophically and psychologically in a progressive fashion.

Kohlberg believed, and demonstrated through studies, that people progressed in their moral reasoning (i.e., in their reasoning for ethical behavior) through a series of stages. He believed that there were six identifiable stages which could be more generally classified into three levels.

Kohlberg's classification can be outlined in the following manner:

LEVEL	STAGE	SOCIAL ORIENTATION - VIEW - PERSPECTIVE
Pre-Conventional [Morality/Thinking]	1	Obedience and Punishment; Fear of Punishment, Hope of Reward
	2	Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange; "What's in it for me?"
Conventional [Morality/Thinking]	3	"Good boy/girl"; Do what will gain the approval of others
	4	Law and Order; Abiding by laws or rules
Post-Conventional [Morality/Thinking]	5	Social Contract; Genuine interest in the welfare of others
	6	Post-conventional; Universal ethical perspective; "Doing what is right because it is right"

The first level of moral thinking (pre-conventional morality/thinking) is that generally found at the elementary school level. In the first stage of this level, people behave according to socially acceptable norms because they are told to do so by some authority figure, e.g., parent or teacher. This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment. The second stage of this level is characterized by a view that right behavior means acting in one's own best interests.

The second level of moral thinking (conventional morality/thinking) is that generally found in society, hence the name "conventional." The first stage of this level (stage 3) is characterized by an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others. The second stage of this level (stage 4) is one oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty.

The third level of moral thinking (post-conventional morality/thinking) is one that Kohlberg felt is not reached by the majority of adults. Its first stage (stage 5) is an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The last stage (stage 6) is based on respect for universal principle and the demands of individual conscience. While Kohlberg always believed in the existence of stage 6 and had some nominees for it, he could never get enough subjects to define it, much less observe their longitudinal movement to it.

Kohlberg believed that individuals could only progress through these stages one stage at a time. That is, they could not "jump" stages. They could not, for example, move from an orientation of selfishness to the law and order stage without passing through the "good boy/girl" stage. They could only come to a comprehension of a moral rationale one stage above their own. Thus, according to Kohlberg, it was important to present them with moral dilemmas for discussion which would help them to see the reasonableness of a "higher stage" morality and encourage their development in that direction. The last comment refers to Kohlberg's moral discussion approach. He saw this as one of the ways in which moral development can be promoted through formal education. Note that Kohlberg believed, as did Piaget, that most moral development occurs through social interaction. The discussion approach is based on the insight that individuals develop as a result of cognitive conflicts at their current stage. (For more information contact: info@theox.org)