

## **Family Seasons**

### **What Have They Seen in Your House?**

Lesson #12 for June 22, 2019

Scriptures: Isaiah 38; 39; 58:6-7,10,12; 1 Corinthians 7:12-15; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:1-2; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7; 3 John 11.

1. After calling the children of Israel out of Egypt and leading them down to the foot of Mount Sinai but before He gave the Ten Commandments from the top of that mountain, God said to them: "You will be my chosen people, dedicated to me and serving me as priests, if you will obey me and keep my covenant." (See Exodus 19:5-6.) Peter, realizing that God was in his day reaching out to all Christians, repeated those promises in 1 Peter 2:9. We are to be a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own chosen people. And what are we supposed to do? Proclaim the wonderful acts of God because He has "called us out of darkness into His own marvelous light." Are all our homes and our lives a light to the community?
2. Read John 13:34-35. On His last night with His disciples, Jesus told them that if they really loved each other, their witness would stand out in the world. **It is God's plan that Christian homes should be beacons of light to all around them.** Is that true in our communities?
3. Read Isaiah 38 and 39. Even though Hezekiah was one of the better kings in the later years of the kingdom of Judea, he made two major mistakes in his life.  
**2 Chronicles 32:25,31: <sup>25</sup>But Hezekiah was too proud to show gratitude for what the LORD had done for him, and Judah and Jerusalem suffered for it....**  
<sup>31</sup>and even when the Babylonian ambassadors came to inquire about the unusual event that had happened in the land, **God let Hezekiah go his own way only in order to test his character.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., 2 Chronicles 32:25,31). New York: American Bible Society. [Bold type is added.]
4. But, that was not Hezekiah's only mistake. His son, Manasseh, was the most wicked king in Judah's history! He did everything he possibly could to undo any good that had been done by his father. He even sacrificed his own children to pagan idols. So, in addition to failing to correctly represent God to the Babylonian ambassadors, Hezekiah did a terrible job in his own home. (See 2 Kings 21.)
5. Turning back to his experience with the Babylonian ambassadors, remember that they found out about the Hezekiah story because the sundial turned back ten steps. What did Hezekiah say to them about what had caused that turning back? It certainly did not have anything to do with his wealth or his military equipment or prowess that he showed them!
6. "God left him to test him." (2 Chronicles 32:31, *New International Version\** and *Christian Standard Bible\**) How well do we do in our day at praising God? Or, are we more likely to show off our wealth, our business successes, or our scholastic accomplishments?
7. How many non-Adventist visitors have been to our homes? When such an event does happen, it is very unlikely that our visitors will open up a conversation about spiritual matters. So, how can we learn to open up that subject in sensitive and appropriate ways?

8. The single best way to do that is to talk about what God has done for us personally. That is especially true for those who have not grown up as Seventh-day Adventists. After all, we have been brought to life from being spiritually dead! Isn't that reason enough to praise God? (Ephesians 2:4-6) A great witness is for a converted Adventist to tell how he became an Adventist!
9. What kind of opportunities do we have to share our faith in our homes? Obviously, **the most natural opportunity we have to share our faith is with members of our own households. That is our most important mission field!**

10. **John 1:40-42:** <sup>40</sup> One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." (This word means "Christ".) <sup>42</sup>Then he took Simon to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock".)—*Good News Bible*.\* [Content in parentheses is in the source.]

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7:** <sup>6</sup>Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. <sup>7</sup>Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working.—*Good News Bible*.\*

11. Clearly, God, through Moses, instructed the children of Israel to teach their children about God through careful instruction and personal witnessing every day. When Andrew first met Jesus, he was so excited about that event that he went immediately to find his brother Peter. Do we have opportunities to do that kind of witnessing?
12. Read Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi had been through a very difficult and trying time of her life, losing her husband and both of her sons in Moab. They had gone to Moab because of a famine in Bethlehem. (Ruth 1:1-2) But, despite all those setbacks, Naomi managed to witness to her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. What did Orpah and Ruth see in Naomi. While we do not know what happened to Orpah after she returned to her people in Moab, Ruth managed to find her way into the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the royal line of Judah and Israel. Did Ruth live long enough to meet David?
13. Do you think Ruth ever traveled home to Moab to see her family and tell them of her good fortune? Did any of them go to Bethlehem to see how Ruth was doing? It was not that far across the Jordan Valley from where they lived to where Ruth found her new home.
14. Think of the impact that these stories had on those to whom the witness was given: Ruth and Peter. What if Andrew had not bothered to tell his brother about Jesus?
15. None of us is a perfect witness, either in our homes or elsewhere.

**Ruth 1:19-22:** <sup>19</sup> They went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the whole town got excited, and the women there exclaimed, "Is this really Naomi?"

<sup>20</sup> "Don't call me Naomi," she answered; "call me Marah, because Almighty God has made my life bitter. <sup>21</sup>When I left here, I had plenty, but the LORD has brought me back without a thing. Why call me Naomi when the LORD Almighty has condemned me and sent me trouble?"

<sup>22</sup> This, then, was how Naomi came back from Moab with Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law. The barley harvest was just beginning when they arrived in Bethlehem.—*Good News Bible*.\*

16. Naomi felt that God had dealt her several terrible blows. She even told her friends back in Bethlehem to call her *Bitterness (Marah)* instead of *My Delight (Naomi)*. But, despite all of that, she obviously managed to attract Ruth. We may go through hard times; but, few of us have had it worse than Naomi did. Are we acting like our homes are our most important mission fields?
17. Unfortunately, it is so often the case that Christian parents think that their children will just somehow automatically absorb their faith. That is a tragic mistake. The home is the most obvious place for sharing the gospel. This must not be taken for granted. Parents need to find ways to witness to their children.
18. Sometimes, depending on a variety of circumstances, a Christian may find himself or herself married to an unbeliever. Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-15; and 1 Peter 3:1-2. Clearly, both Paul and Peter believed that a Christian spouse would have a sanctifying influence on the other members of the household. Is that what usually happens? How often does a non-Christian partner manage to draw the believing partner away from God?
19. Loving kindness, unwavering fidelity, humble service, and a winsome witness on the part of the believer can have a sanctifying influence on the spouse. Ephesians 5:21 suggests that we need to be submissive to our partners. But, that submission does not extend to being the recipient of abuse. Violent partners are not to be accepted as the norm.
20. So, what can the church do to help unbelieving partners of church members? They can certainly be invited to join in church activities, visits to nature, church picnics, or activities for the benefit of the entire community. Of course, it is also appropriate to invite them to one's home for a Sabbath meal.
21. Read 1 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7; 3 John 11; and especially read 1 Corinthians 11:1; and 2 Corinthians 3:18.  
**1 Corinthians 11:1:** Imitate me, then, just as I imitate Christ.—*Good News Bible*.\*  
**2 Corinthians 3:18:** All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.—*Good News Bible*.\*
22. We are challenged to follow the examples of believers who, in turn, are following the example of Christ.
23. Each of us has an influence on all those around us. And if Jesus Christ is one of the major influences in our lives, we will, in turn, reflect that image to others. This is one of the most important ways in which we can share the gospel. That is especially true within the home itself.
24. Ellen White wrote: "Social influence is a wonderful power. We can use it if we will as a means of helping those about us."—*The Ministry of Healing*\* 354.2.
25. Christian couples can be a wonderful influence on those around them as they share together meals, fellowship, Bible study, or almost any kind of social interaction appropriate

for Christians.

26. Unfortunately, however, we must remember Jeremiah 17:9; John 2:24-25; and Romans 3:23. None of us is perfect. In fact, we are all sinners. And the Christian must constantly be aware of evil influences that surround him or her.

**Jeremiah 17:9:** “Who can understand the human heart?

There is nothing else so deceitful;

it is too sick to be healed.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

27. How can we best witness for Christ not only to our young children living at home but also to those who are teenagers or even adults who have left the immediate home but sometimes come back?
28. Read Isaiah 58:6-7,10-12; and Romans 12:13. There is no question about the fact that we can have an influence on those around us by sharing meals with them, our homes with them, giving them clothes, and satisfying other needs they might have. The question which must be asked, of course, is how can we do that safely in our day? Surely, God will guide us if we are careful and ask for His guidance.
29. Read 1 Peter 4:9; Genesis 18:1-8; 24:15-21,31-33; and Luke 19:1-9. The story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming Jesus Christ Himself and two angels into their home is an amazing story. One wonders how conservative Jews read the story; Abraham broke all the rules of kosher when feeding God Himself! Review the entire story.
30. Rebecca was a remarkable hostess. Watering an entire group of camels is not easy! But, as a result, she ended up joining the genealogy of Jesus Christ and the royal line of Israel.
31. Think of the story of Jesus with Zacchaeus recorded in Luke 19:1-9. Do you think Zacchaeus would have invited Jesus to come to his home if he had had the opportunity? Or, would he have been too embarrassed to ask? Was he ashamed of his social position? Read the chapter about Zacchaeus in *The Desire of Ages*. Zacchaeus had already tried to turn his life around, and that time with Jesus was just the defining moment. How would you feel if God invited Himself to your house?
32. So, what is true hospitality? It means reaching out a helping hand to provide—where appropriate—rest, food, and fellowship to someone in need. It really means self-sacrificing love. Jesus described it as if we were serving Him. (Matthew 25:35-40)

Families sometimes complain that they lack the facilities, the time, and/or the energy to offer hospitality. Others feel awkward, unskilled, and unsure about reaching beyond what is familiar in order to associate with unbelievers. Some wish to avoid the complications to their lives that may arise from becoming involved with others. Many contemporary families confuse *hospitality* and *entertaining*.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, June 20. [Italic type is in the source.]

33. How well does your home life reflect your spiritual condition?

Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives....—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*\* 352.3.

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.—*Ibid.*\* 355.1.

34. Have you personally been influenced for the truth by your experience in someone else's home? Do you know others who have been? What can those lessons teach us? Are we doing everything we can to reach out to those whose spouses are nonbelievers?
35. What do the heavenly angels have to say about your home as they witness you in all that you do every day?

We've all heard of that illusive "silent witness" that we as Christians are supposed to be exuding everywhere we go. It causes people to line up and ask us, "What do you have that is different? I want some of that." Then we tell them of Jesus, and conversions are soon to follow. No doubt, testimonies confirm that this phenomenon happens, but for the most part, if we are honest, this scenario is a kind of Christian urban legend that has left many Adventists waiting years for such encounters. In the meantime, guilt creeps in as one wonders why his or her "silent witness" is not loud enough to gain attention.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 158.

36. The one place where the "silent witness" has the most impact on the lives of others is in our homes. First of all, on our children, but also on others who might share our hospitality. Our homes are the places where we relate most closely to others and have the best chance of influencing them.
37. God created the first home. That home was in the Garden of Eden. While there was no opportunity for Adam and Eve in the garden to share the gospel with unbelievers, we must remember that the Garden of Eden and that idyllic setting was God's pattern for the Christian home. But, the best part of all is that we know that that idyllic setting will be restored in the new Eden in the earth made new. (Revelation 21:1; 22:2)
38. How often do we allow job responsibilities, social pressures, even church activities to distract us from our primary responsibility to our own children? Seventh-day Adventists are the special targets of Satan's attacks. And Satan has been very successful in alienating Seventh-day Adventist youth away from the faith and beliefs of their parents. Some very sobering results have come out from a survey study done on Seventh-day Adventists in North America.

"We were talking about an extensive NAD [North American Division] survey taken in North America, the results of which left one feeling as though they had the wind knocked out of them. **Probably the most startling revelation was that if, since the inception of the church, the ONLY growth in NAD membership had been biological, and if we had simply retained 80 percent of our own youth, the membership in North America at the time of that conversation would have exceeded 8 million**" (excerpted from **personal email correspondence with Lee Venden**). Given that the current NAD membership is 1.24 million as of 2017, you can see how staggering this statistic is. That would equate to a more than 600 percent increase in NAD membership today.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 159. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

Even God lost one-third of His own children from the perfect environment of heaven!

39. Amazing! If we as Seventh-day Adventists could just consistently witness to our own children, the church in North America would have grown at least six times faster than it has.
40. Are our homes microcosms of paradise? Are those who see us in our home environment—especially our children—attracted to that Christlike environment? How can Christians demonstrate the very best kind of hospitality? Are we doing it?
41. One of the first questions that arises when we talk about hospitality is, “To whom should we show our hospitality?” This question sounds strangely like a question that was asked of Jesus in Luke 10:29: “Who is my neighbor?” The answer given by Jesus may be hard to swallow but is probably the ultimate example of hospitality. Jesus actually turned the question on its head and really asked: “What kind of person are you going to be?” There are so many ways in which Christians could reach out to others in “saving” ways. How many of those ways can you think of? They might extend all the way from sharing some food to helping someone who has been abused or who has lost their home to stay at your house for a period of time.
42. Think of the effect that Jesus had by inviting Himself to the home of Zacchaeus! Transformation, restoration, and salvation! (Luke 19:8-9) There is no talk of a series of Bible studies or sermons given, just a gesture of “reverse hospitality”!
43. When those who experience our hospitality recognize that God’s love is being demonstrated, it has a powerful effect on them. But, we cannot have that kind of influence just by passing people on the street. We must engage them; we must interact with them; ideally, we must invite them into our Christian homes.
44. Many modern societies place a high importance on education, career, upward mobility, rank, wealth, and sometimes maybe even community service. But, how often do we place “developing a true Christian home which produces a healthy Christian family” at the top of the list?
45. At the end of their lives, how many people wished they had spent more time in the office and less time with their families?
46. We recognize that radical hospitality could involve safety concerns for one’s family. So, how do we deal with that issue? That is indeed a major concern in our times. It is important to be with visitors at all times and in every location and also to make them feel welcome in our home; but, we also must keep an eye on them.
47. So, how can churches reach out with true Christian hospitality? The Loma Linda University Church is one of the main sponsors of a “pantry” located at the Social Action Community Health System Norton Clinic site in San Bernardino. At that site there is a pantry where food is given to thousands of people every week. What does that say to the people who depend on us and our giving and sharing? Have some of them recognized the effects of Christianity and wanted to know more?

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