

# ***God's Love and Justice To Be Pleasing to God***

Lesson #3 for January 18, 2025

Scriptures: Luke 15:11-32; Zephaniah 3:17; Ephesians 5:25-28; Isaiah 43:4; Romans 5:8; 8:1; Mark 9:17-29.

1. What does the term *to be pleasing to God* have to do with God's love and/or God's justice?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Imagine the following scenario: a five-year-old child comes to his father with a poorly wrapped gift on Father's Day. Excitedly, he hands the gift to his father.

Imagine that the father says, "Son, I do not care about your gift. After all, there is nothing you could give me that would please me. Anything you could give me, I could get for myself, and anything you give to me was either bought with my money or made from materials that I paid for. So, keep your gift. I do not need it or want it. But I love you, anyway."

Ouch!

What do you think of this father's reaction? Such words as *heartless*, *cold*, and *unfeeling* come to mind. Is this the way God responds to us? Can we actually be pleasing to God? Hard as it is to imagine, even we as fallen beings, corrupted by sin, and prone to evil—yes, we can be pleasing to God! In other words, God does not look upon us, or the gifts that we bring Him, with the attitude of that father. On the contrary, we can be pleasing to God, but only through Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sabbath Afternoon, January 11.†§

2. Why does God value us so highly? Think of all that He has done to create us, keep us alive, and save us in preparation for resurrection and eternal life with Him.

[BSG:] As we saw in an earlier ... [study], there is no one—even the worst sinner or worst evildoer—whom God does not love. And because God values people more than we could possibly imagine, **He is displeased by sin because He loves us and knows what sin does to us**, as well.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sunday, January 12.†‡

3. There are three parables found in Luke 15: (1) The lost sheep, (2) the lost coin, and (3) the lost son (also known as *the prodigal son*). All teach about the rejoicing of God and of all heaven with the return of the subject of that parable: (1) The "lost sheep" which knows it is lost but does not know how to find its way home; (2) the "lost coin" which does not even know it is lost; and (3) the "lost son" who knows he is lost and knows how to find his way home but is reluctant to return.
4. One of the clearest pictures of God is found in the story of *the lost son* also known as ***the prodigal son***. Perhaps it should be known as ***the forgiving father***. Read this parable in **Luke 15:11-32**.

[BSG:] In this story that Jesus tells, the man's son requested his inheritance early, effectively rejecting his father and his father's household. The prodigal son then goes on to squander his inheritance and is reduced to poverty and hunger, envying pigs that eat from a trough. Realizing that the servants in his father's house have more than enough food, he decides to return home in hopes of becoming a servant.

What follows is powerful. Some fathers would turn such a son away upon his return. “You took your inheritance and cut yourself off from my house. You no longer have a home here.” That would be a logical, even reasonable, attitude, would it not? In the eyes of some human parents, the son had gone too far to be accepted back home, especially as a son.

But, in the parable, **the father (representing God Himself)** does not respond in any of these ways. Rather, “ ‘when [the prodigal son] was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him’ ” (*Luke 15:20, NKJV*). Even though it was considered less than dignified in such times for the master of the house to run out to meet someone, the father in his great compassion ran out to meet his son and, more astonishingly, restored him to his household, even throwing a celebration in his behalf, signifying the great compassion of God for each wayward person and the delight He takes in even a single person returning home. What a picture of God!

Interesting is the reaction of the other son. Why was this reaction such a human reaction, based at least in part on fairness, and so understandable, as well? What, however, does his part of the story teach us about how human concepts of fairness don't capture the depth of the gospel or of God's love for us?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sunday, January 12.<sup>†‡Ω§</sup> [Satan is the one who is constantly claiming that he is not being treated fairly! He wanted to be treated as equal with Jesus or even superior to Jesus!]<sup>‡</sup>

5. Look a little more deeply at this parable of the lost or prodigal son and his father. Why do you think that the “reasonable expectations” of the son were so different from the response that he got from his father?

[BSG:] However, the actions of the father are different from the son's reasonable expectation. Rather, the father “ ‘ran and fell on his neck and kissed him’ ” (*Luke 15:20, NKJV*). Shockingly, these are not the only expressions of goodwill and pleasure on the part of the father. Without paying attention to the son's request to be accepted as a servant, the father highlights the dignity of his son by asking the servants to bring “ ‘the best robe,’ ” “ ‘a ring,’ ” and “ ‘sandals’ ” for him (*Luke 15:22, NKJV*). But that is not enough. The affirmation of the value of the son by means of distinguishing clothes is intensified with the remarkable celebration that the father promotes: “ ‘Bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry’ ” (*Luke 15:23, NKJV*). **In short, the father not only receives the son but is pleased with his return.**

So far, we find in the parable of the prodigal son the same overall pattern identified in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin; namely, the lost is found and there is celebration over these tidings. However, the parable of the prodigal son goes a step further, as **the celebration is strongly questioned by the older son** (*Luke 15:28–30*). This point is relevant because it **illustrates the attitude of the Pharisees** in the beginning of the chapter (*see Luke 15:2*). Both the older son in the parable and the Pharisees highly criticize the reception of sinners and table fellowship/celebration with them. This criticism reveals how they underestimate the value of the people being warmly received. By contrast, the parable teaches how God values his sons and daughters and celebrates when they repent and seek Him. For this reason, the parable ends with the father responding to the criticism

of the older son with the following statement: “ **It was right** that we should make merry and be glad’ ” (*Luke 15:32, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 40-41.†‡§

[BSG:] The Greek word for the translated expression “it was right” is the verb *dei*, which literally means “it is necessary, one must, one has to” or underscores that something “should happen because of being fitting” (Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], p. 214).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 41.†‡§

6. Think how a loving parent would feel if s/he saw his/her child drowning! Wouldn't that parent do just about anything to save that child?
7. It may be difficult for us even to imagine that God values every single human being. Ellen White told us that He would have sent Jesus on that incredibly expensive mission to this earth to save even one soul!

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] .... **Christ would have died for one soul in order that that one might live through the eternal ages.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 8, 72.3.†‡

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p112.411&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p112.411&index=0)†‡

[EGW:] .... The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ\** 100.1.‡ [\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p108.402&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p108.402&index=0)†‡

[EGW:] Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity. Today the hand that was pierced is reached forth to bless more abundantly His people that are in the world. “And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” **The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour [sic-Br] would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages\** 480.5.†‡ [\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.2357&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.2357&index=0)†‡

8. The amount that God loves us is demonstrated even in the Old Testament.

**Zephaniah 3:17-18a:** <sup>17</sup> “The LORD your God is with you;  
his power gives you victory.

The LORD will take delight in you,  
and in his love he will give you new life.

He will sing and be joyful over you,

<sup>18</sup> as joyful as people at a festival.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Zephaniah 3:17-18a). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].‡

9. In the original Hebrew of this passage, almost every word that they could use to describe joy and delight is found! What is God trying to say to us? Furthermore, God says that He wants to

dwell in the midst of us, His people! This should remind us of the experience of the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai when God instructed them to place His tabernacle in the very center of the encampment.

10. One of the most interesting places in the New Testament describing how God feels about us is Luke 15:7-9.

**Luke 15:7-9:** <sup>7</sup> “In the same way, I tell you, **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 respectable people who do not need to repent....** [Jesus was particularly referring to the Pharisees who thought that their salvation was guaranteed!]

<sup>9</sup> “When she finds it [the lost coin], she calls her friends and neighbours [*sic-Br*] together, and says to them, ‘I am so happy I found the coin I lost. Let us celebrate!’

<sup>10</sup>In the same way, I tell you, **the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.**”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†‡</sup>

11. Try to imagine how excited God and the entire universe will be at the second coming! They all will be coming down to welcome us home! Even more exciting will be the day when all evil is finally eliminated and God can recreate our world to be like the Garden of Eden.

12. In Ephesians 5:25-28, Paul suggested that God’s relationship with us should be as close as the very best human marriage relationship.

**Ephesians 5:25-28:** <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. <sup>26</sup>He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, <sup>27</sup>in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty — pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. <sup>28</sup>Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

[BSG:] How could it be that the God of the universe takes delight in mere humans, fleeting blobs of protoplasm on one tiny planet amid what is probably an infinite universe? How could it be possible that humans could matter so much to the Supreme Being, who is all-powerful and who needs nothing? These questions can be parsed into two aspects. **First**, how could God Himself be delighted? **Second**, how could humans bring Him delight, particularly given our sinfulness? The first aspect of these questions is the topic for [this study].—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*<sup>\*</sup> for Tuesday, January 14.<sup>†‡</sup>

13. **God loves us individually and as a group.**

**Isaiah 43:4:** “I [the LORD] will give up whole nations to save your life, because you are precious to me and because I love you and give you honour [*sic-Br*].”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

**Psalms 149:4:** The LORD takes pleasure in his people; he honours [*sic-Br*] the humble with victory.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

**Proverbs 15:8-9:** <sup>8</sup> The LORD is pleased when good people pray, but hates the sacrifices that the wicked bring him.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD hates the ways of evil people, but loves those who do what is right.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

14. **The only thing that God truly hates is sin; He hates sin because it damages and destroys His children.** When we do what is right, then God is delighted with us. However, when we do what is wrong, God weeps. This is reflected in verses like Psalm 146:8 and 2 Corinthians 9:7.

**Psalm 146:7-8:** <sup>7</sup>The LORD sets prisoners free  
<sup>8</sup>and gives sight to the blind.

He lifts those who have fallen;  
he loves his righteous people.—*Good News Bible*.\*

- 2 Corinthians 9:7:** <sup>7</sup>You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for **God loves the one who gives gladly**. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. <sup>9</sup>As the scripture says:

“He gives generously to the needy;  
his kindness lasts for ever [*sic-Br*].”—*Good News Bible*.\*††

[BSG:] Think about how closely tied heaven and earth must be that God, the Creator of the universe, can be so intimately involved, even emotionally, with us. What hope should this amazing idea give you, especially if you are going through a hard time?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Tuesday, January 14.‡

15. **Considering how much we have done to displease God, why does He still work with us? Is it possible that God knew about the great controversy and all the evil that we would create even before He created us? God has a future plan for us that is beyond our wildest imagination!**

**Romans 5:8:** But God has shown us how much he loves us — it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!—*Good News Bible*.\*

[BSG:] God bestows grace on people prior to any human response. Before anything we say or do, God reaches out to us and gives us the opportunity to accept or reject His love. As Romans 5:8 puts it, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (*NKJV; compare with Jer. 31:3*). And we can be reconciled to God and even pleasing in His sight, by faith through the work of our Redeemer.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, January 15.‡§

16. God wants to make each one of us, metaphorically, a part of His eternal temple which has Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone.

**1 Peter 2:4-6:** <sup>4</sup> Come to the Lord, the living stone rejected by people as worthless but chosen by God as valuable. <sup>5</sup> Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For the scripture says:

“I chose a valuable stone,  
which I am placing as the cornerstone in Zion;  
and whoever believes in him will never be disappointed.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

17. We have presented two stark contrasts: (1) The delight that God has with those who learn about Him, become His friends, and live a righteous life; versus (2) those who turn against Him, do evil, and cause Him to weep.

18. Hebrews 11 is a chapter full of many people who, despite their many sins and mistakes, have pleased God. Hebrews 11:6 also says that without faith, we cannot possibly please Him.
19. What is faith? As Dr. A. Graham Maxwell said and wrote that **faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well-known. The better we know Him the better that relationship can be. We cannot say, "will be" because think how well Lucifer knew God and still decided to rebel against Him. In that light, we need to realize that good friends talk together often and ask questions of each other. God is delighted when we ask Him serious questions.**
20. God is so excited about working with us that He describes the work of the Holy Spirit as taking place in us. What does that mean?
- 1 John 3:2:** My dear friends, we are now God's children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, **we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.**—*Good News Bible*.\*† [God's name will be "written on our foreheads!"]‡
21. Many people have the idea that God is a harsh, critical Judge. They believe that if Jesus were not interceding on our behalf, we would have no chance of survival or salvation. That statement is partially true when we have a correct picture of God's wrath or anger and how the judgment actually takes place. (See the handout: "God's Wrath/Anger in the Book of Judges and Other Books" on Theox.org posted under Teacher's Guides in the section of General Topics.)  
([https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart\\_BTGG\\_PDF\\_Gnrl\\_Gods\\_Wrath\\_or\\_Anger\\_16.pdf](https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Gods_Wrath_or_Anger_16.pdf))
22. ***If the universe were to accept Satan's accusations against us as true without hearing Christ's response to Satan, not one of us could be saved!***
- Zechariah 3:1-5:** <sup>1</sup> In another vision the LORD showed me the High Priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD. And **there beside Joshua stood Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him.** <sup>2</sup>The angel of the LORD said to Satan, "May the LORD condemn you, Satan! May the LORD, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you. This man is like a stick snatched from the fire."  
<sup>3</sup> Joshua was standing there, wearing filthy clothes. <sup>4</sup>The angel said to his heavenly attendants, "Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing." Then he said to Joshua, "I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear." [Who was doing the action in this passage?]  
<sup>5</sup> He commanded the attendants to put a clean turban on Joshua's head. They did so, and then they put the new clothes on him while the angel of the LORD stood there.—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡
23. If (1) Satan is the one accusing us, and if (2) Jesus Christ is the One defending us, and if (3) God the Father is the Judge, **who are the members of the jury? Is it other humans? Is it angels?**
- Daniel 7:9-10:** <sup>9</sup>While I was looking, thrones were put in place. One who had been living for ever [*sic-Br*] sat down on one of the thrones. His clothes were white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne, mounted on fiery wheels, was blazing with fire, <sup>10</sup>and a stream of fire was pouring out from it. There were many thousands of people there to serve him, and millions of people stood before him. **The court began its session, and the books were opened.**—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡

[EGW:] The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. [They are especially interested because we could be their future neighbors!] The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to “the first dominion.” Micah 4:8. Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man’s creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect **as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.**

While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, **Satan accuses them before God as transgressors.** The great deceiver has sought to lead them into skepticism, to cause them to lose confidence in God, to separate themselves from His love, and to break His law. Now he points to the record of their lives, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer, **to all the sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects.**

**Jesus does not excuse their sins,** but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying: I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” Psalm 51:17. And to the accuser of His people He declares: “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Zechariah 3:2. Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Ephesians 5:27. Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written: “They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.” Revelation 3:4—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 483.3-484.2.†  
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24. Think of the experience of parents with a new child. They take great interest in the first smile and the first steps. Every tiny evidence of intelligence is a delight to the parents. In the same way, God is delighted with even the tiniest progress we make toward His goals for us.
25. Consider the story in Mark 9:17-29 of the father who took his son who had epilepsy to be healed by the disciples. It is disappointing to see that the disciples could not heal that young boy. Jesus, of course, had no problem healing him. On the mount, Jesus had stood in heaven’s glory. At the bottom of the mount, He had to deal with demon possession!
26. We are particularly interested in the fact that Jesus did not tell the father to go away, build up his faith, and then, come back and have his son be healed. Jesus knew that the father was planning to base his faith in Jesus on what Jesus was able to do for his son. **The father was likely thinking, if Jesus can heal my son, then I will believe in Him.** When the father realized that his son’s fate rested on the level of the father’s own faith, he cried out to Jesus, “Help my unbelief!”

27. Later, Jesus told His disciples that only prayer could drive out that kind of demon! What does that mean? Jesus was able to cast out that demon because He had a close working relationship with His Father. He worked out His plans for each day by spending a portion of the night or sometimes the whole night in prayer and conversation with His Father. (See Luke 6:12.)
28. On another occasion, Jesus described what kind of faith is effective for our relationship with God and for salvation.

**Matthew 17:20:** “It was because you haven’t enough faith,” answered Jesus. “I assure you that if you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill, ‘Go from here to there!’ and it will go. You could do anything!”—*Good News Bible*.\* [Compare Hebrews 11:5-6 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.]<sup>‡</sup>

[EGW:] .... **Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 664.4.<sup>‡</sup>

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3274&index=0>]<sup>‡</sup>

29. ***So, what does it actually mean by the term “to please God”?***
30. ***Pleasing God is a great objective; but, it must be done willingly when we know that what we are doing is the right thing to do and not an obligation.***

[EGW:] **The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. **The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*\* 97.3.<sup>‡</sup>

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.369&index=0>]<sup>‡</sup>

31. Our attitude in following God’s plan for us is key.

[EGW:] **A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.**—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,\* July 22, 1897, par. 11.<sup>‡</sup>

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.14427&index=0>]<sup>‡</sup> [For comparison, see also Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Hebrews 11:5-6; and Romans 12:10-11. How many Christians are doing what they are doing only because they think they have to?]<sup>‡</sup>

32. Virtually all Christians are aware of the statements by Jesus concerning the two great commandments as recorded in Matthew 22:39: First, love God; (Deuteronomy 6:5) and, second, love our neighbors as ourselves. (Leviticus 19:18) How can that be worked out in actual experience? What does it mean to be *a friend of God*?



[EGW:] The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises.

But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour's [*sic-Br*] promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." **He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience.**

**All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 668.1-3.†‡

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33. Think of the example of the prophet Daniel.

**Daniel 9:15-23:** <sup>15</sup> "O Lord our God, you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered. We have sinned; we have done wrong. <sup>16</sup>You have defended us in the past, so do not be angry with Jerusalem any longer. It is your city, your sacred hill. **All the people in the neighbouring [*sic-Br*] countries look down on Jerusalem and on your people because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did.** <sup>17</sup>O God, hear my prayer and pleading. **Restore your Temple**, which has been destroyed; restore it so that everyone will know that you are God. <sup>18</sup>Listen to us, O God; look at us, and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of the city that bears your name. We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done right. <sup>19</sup>Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. **Lord, listen to us, and act! In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay!** This city and these people are yours."

<sup>20</sup> I went on praying, confessing my sins and the sins of my people Israel, and pleading with the LORD my God to restore his holy Temple. <sup>21</sup>While I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came flying down to where I was. It was the time for the evening sacrifice to be offered. <sup>22</sup>He explained, "Daniel, I have come here to help you understand the prophecy. <sup>23</sup>When you began to plead with God, he answered you. **He loves you**, and so I have come to tell you the answer. Now pay attention while I explain the vision."—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡ [Could that happen to one of us? What would it take?]<sup>‡</sup>

34. Imagine God speaking from some far distant place in the universe several times, telling Daniel that he was beloved of God! Could such an experience be ours?

35. Would you be happy to cause celebration and rejoicing in heaven?
36. Each time we turn to Him or reach out to someone else to encourage a relationship with God, He and all heaven rejoice together.
37. Think of how Jesus treated human beings, even the worst of them in contrast with how the Sadducees and Pharisees treated those whom they considered to be sinners and publicans. As recorded in Luke 15, they came to Jesus, grumbling that He “welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!” (Luke 15:3, *Good News Bible*.)

[EGW:] They [the Pharisees] knew not that the explanation lay in the very words they had uttered as a scornful charge, “This man receiveth sinners.” The souls [publicans and sinners] who came to Jesus felt in His presence that even for them there was escape from the pit of sin. The Pharisees had only scorn and condemnation for them; but Christ greeted them as children of God, estranged indeed from the Father’s house, but not forgotten by the Father’s heart. And their very misery and sin made them only the more the objects of His compassion. The farther they had wandered from Him, the more earnest the longing and the greater the sacrifice for their rescue.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*\* 186.2.†

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.772&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.772&index=0)‡

38. If we can cause heaven to rejoice by living righteous lives and sharing the good news with others, shouldn’t we want to do that as often as possible?
39. What we know about God is primarily spelled out in the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. He is to be our Example. **He came to show us what the Father is like.** If God the Father had come instead of the Son, the record we have of the life of Jesus would not have been different.

[EGW:] Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, veiling His glory, humbling Himself, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed in unfolding its record of His own condescending grace. **In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.**—Ellen G. White, *Letter 83, 1895*,\* par. 25 [21MR 393.1] [*Letters and Manuscripts*,\* vol. 10, 1895, Letter 83, par 25.] [10LtMs 1.2160].†‡ Compare *That I May Know Him* 338.4.

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14060.5690031&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14060.5690031&index=0)‡

40. ***So, how can we increase our friendship with God? Is that even possible? God is waiting with longing desire for just such an experience with each one of us. He considers each one of us, even those in the worst possible condition of sin, as precious; and He wants us to be saved! For what are we waiting?***

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