

Growing in a Relationship With God ***Reality Check***

Lesson #1 for April 4, 2026

Scriptures: **Revelation 3:14-22**; 4:9-11; Genesis 2:7; 3:8-10; Jeremiah 31:3-4; John 15:1-11; Romans 8:9-11.

1. How do you develop a relationship with someone/something that you cannot see, hear, taste, smell, or touch? Is the best way to learn about God from the story of Jesus Christ, the only human/divine Being who has ever lived on this earth? Is that possible? Did He really live like one of us? Is it difficult to understand and relate to Someone who lived 2000 years ago in a completely different culture? How well do we understand that culture? Most of us cannot even read or write Aramaic, the language that He and His disciples used!
2. Is the Bible that we read today a fair and accurate picture of what actually happened so long ago? Can we depend on God to make sure that the translators and the copyists that have worked on bringing the Bible to us today can be trusted? Of course, if one has doubts about the translations or the copying, one can learn those original languages since we have very reliable copies of the originals of the Old Testament that have been preserved. There is an entire science that has developed a series of steps to check on the accuracy of any copy or translation.
3. How would you describe your relationship with God? Is it growing? Is it stronger every day? Would you describe Him as a personal Friend? Perhaps, your best Friend ever? How much time do you spend with Him?
4. God has suggested a very reliable and yet simple three-part way to develop and progress our relationship with Him: (1) Bible study, (2) Prayer, and (3) Witnessing.
5. **In simple, understandable stories about things that we do know and understand, He has given us excellent examples of what kind of a Person He is. By imagining ourselves in those stories, either as participants or observers, we can get a reasonably good idea of what kind of a Person God is! (John 14:9)**
6. One of the best ways to grow a relationship with God is to pick a particular story and: “When you think you have understood a given story, try to imagine what you would have done if you were God in that situation. Also, try to imagine what you would have done in that situation if you were the Devil.” On the website, www.Theox.org, see the handout: [https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_General Principles_17.pdf](https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_General_Principles_17.pdf)
7. Take a look at the rest of that handout, giving the general principles that we have used in the past for dealing with stories or passages of Scripture.
8. If one tries to “walk in the shoes” of someone else for a while, it gives one a much better feel for why that person did what she or he did in that situation!
9. When you have experimented with that technique, you may become so excited about what you are learning that you will want to discuss what you have learned with someone else. And that is exactly what God wants you to do! More than that, if you think you understand a story or passage and what it means, try to explain it to someone else! If they are honest and inquisitive enough to ask questions, you may decide that you need to go back and do some more studying! Studying together is also a very helpful and

exciting process.

10. What do you think the onlooking universe thinks about: (1) Your relationship with God? (2) The relationship of our church with God? And (3) The relationship of our world with God? Do you think we have any “Enochs,” or even “Pauls,” in our church today?
11. We do not have to guess about our relationship with God. God has given us some very good clues in Scripture. We recognize that the book of Revelation is an excellent source of information about the future. In Revelation 2&3, John discussed the seven churches in Asia Minor (what we now call western Turkey) with which he was working at that time.
12. Revelation clearly states that it is a message from Jesus Christ Himself addressed to the church in our day. The message first talked about the messenger known as the *angel of the church of...* Then, it addressed who is the actual Author of the message, that is, Jesus. And then, it talks about the people who received the message.

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] Of course, the seven churches of “Asia” [western Turkey] do not refer literally to contemporary [in our day] churches, which, obviously, are far more numerous today than in John’s time. Rather, in the tradition of the Old Testament prophecies (*Dan. 2, 7, 8; Jer. 6:2*), the book of Revelation employs figures to convey its eschatological [end of time] message. Specifically, **the literal churches, with their historical and geographical characteristics, are used as symbolic representations of prophetic truth.** By way of example, a cursory glance at the **progression of the Lord’s movements on behalf of His church**, as portrayed in the seven letters, suggests that the literal coming of the Lord advances nearer and nearer:

1. *Ephesus*: The Lord “walks” (*Rev. 2:1, NKJV*).
 2. *Smyrna*: The Lord “was dead, and came to life” (*Rev. 2:8, NKJV*).
 3. *Pergamum*: The Lord admonishes His people to “ ‘repent, or else I will come to you quickly’ ” (*Rev. 2:16, NKJV*).
 4. *Thyatira*: The Lord earnestly urges His people to hold fast to what they have “ ‘till I come’ ” (*Rev. 2:25, NKJV*).
 5. *Sardis*: The Lord warns His people that if they don’t hold fast and repent, “ ‘I will come upon you as a thief’ ” (*Rev. 3:3, NKJV*).
 6. *Philadelphia*: The Lord exclaims, “ ‘Behold, I am coming quickly!’ ” (*Rev. 3:11, NKJV*).
 7. *Laodicea*: The Lord states the proximity of His position relative to the heart of His people, announcing, “ ‘Behold, **I stand at the door and knock**’ ” (*Rev. 3:20, NKJV*).—T-BSG* 13.†§ [Surely, He is getting near!]‡
13. ***When He knocks on the doors of our hearts, is it clear to you that these messages to the seven churches suggest a progression of the Lord’s approach to the final church?***
 14. **Read the message to the church in Laodicea as recorded in Revelation 3:14-22.**

[T-BSG:] The message to the Laodiceans marks, therefore, the crucial moment when the coming of the Lord is the closest: He now knocks at the door of the heart. He awaits our response to His gracious invitation to give Him entrance that He may abide with us (*read also Col. 1:27*).—*T-BSG** 13.†§

15. ***How do you think God, or even your guardian angel, would describe your relationship with Him right now?***

[T-BSG:] The message [to Laodicea] itself is divided into four sections. **First**, God is presented as the Judge [or Doctor] who knows (*Rev. 3:15*). **Second**, attention is directed to God's people, who are unaware of their true condition (*Rev. 3:16, 17*). **Third**, the Lord responds to their plight and counsels His people as to the remedy (*Rev. 3:18*). **Fourth**, the letter reveals the extent of God's love for His people (*Rev. 3:19–21*).—*T-BSG** 14.†§

Section 1 (to Laodicea): The Doctor to Diagnose Or the Judge of the People

16. We need to recognize that when God does His judging, He is not acting like a typical judge in our day. **He is diagnosing our condition as an excellent physician would.**

Revelation 3:14-15: ¹⁴ “To the **angel of the church in Laodicea** write:

“This is the message from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the origin of all that God has created. ¹⁵I know what you have done....”—
American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*^{®*} [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition (Revelation 3:14-15). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].††

Section 2 (to Laodicea): The People's Condition

17. Are you willing to admit that God, the all-knowing Doctor and Judge, has made a correct diagnosis of His people and His church in our time?

18. Is it possible for us to understand why God says that He would rather have us be cold or hot instead of lukewarm? What is wrong with being lukewarm? It nauseates God so much that He is ready to vomit lukewarm people out of His “mouth”! So, what did He recommend?

Revelation 3:15-17: ¹⁵ “I know what you have done; **I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other!** ¹⁶But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, **I am going to spit you out of my mouth!** ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich and well off; I have all I need.’ But you do not know how miserable and pitiful you are! **You are poor, naked, and blind.**”—*Good News Bible-TEV.*†*

19. Do these words describe you or your church in any way? If so, what needs to happen?

20. What are we saying to those around us, not to mention to the onlooking universe by our profession and our behavior? **Angels cannot read our thoughts; however, they can certainly see our behavior and hear our words!** It should be obvious to us that what God is hoping to sell to us is something we can never get or pay for by ourselves. However, **He offers it freely.** Let us try to analyze God's critiques of His church: Are you aware of cases in which **our church has gone “backwards”** in its relationship with God?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth**, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis [site of the 1888 General Conference session] against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. **By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.**—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*,* Book 1, 234.6-235.0.^{†‡} [Testifying in front of the U.S. Congress, A. T. Jones successfully argued against the proposed Sunday law!][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p98.1417&index=0>][‡]

[EGW:] For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. **The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan.** In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.—Manuscript 4, 1883.—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism** 696.2.^{†‡} [It has now been 182 years since 1844!][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p30.3860&index=0>][‡]

21. These statements were made about the Seventh-day Adventist Church many years ago. Have we improved in any way? Would we still call ourselves “rich and increased with goods”? If one were to listen to the General Conference session reports from each division every five years, one would think we were boasting! Should we be?

Section 3 (to Laodicea): The Lord's Counsel

22. What can we learn from Scripture about how God has related to various earlier groups?

Revelation 3:18: “I advise you, then, to **buy gold** from me, pure gold, in order to be rich. Buy **also white clothing** to dress yourself and cover up your shameful nakedness. Buy also some **ointment to put on your eyes**, so that you may see.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

Leviticus 18:25: **Their [the Canaanites] actions made the land unclean, and so the LORD is punishing the land and making it reject the people who lived there.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†‡} [This was what God said to the Israelites in the days of Moses!][‡]

23. About 800 years later, God said about Judah:

2 Chronicles 33:9: Manasseh led the **people of Judah to commit even greater sins than those committed by the nations [the Canaanites]** whom the LORD had driven out of the land as his people advanced.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†‡} [What do you think God should have said to those people of Judah?][‡]

24. When God advises that we should buy gold from Him, He is certainly not talking about

any amalgamated dross or any false gold. It must be the pure, genuine gold that God offers. God also offers white clothes. This *whiteness* exemplifies purity and represents a condition that God wants His people to be in when He returns to take them to heaven with Him. Why is sin so attractive to humans?

25. We apparently need “eyesalve” to correct our vision. How could our evaluation of ourselves be so different from God’s evaluation of us?
26. It is interesting to find that biblical Laodicea considered itself a **rich banking center** with a textile industry that was known all over the Mediterranean world for its very special **cloth** and a medical school which was famous for its **eyesalve!**
27. Our only hope is to trust in God. When Adam and Eve sinned, it would have been so easy for God just to eliminate them. He could have destroyed mankind again at the flood. However, God’s love would never allow Him to do that. Then, He sent His Son to show us the way back to God. It is certainly not an on-and-off kind of love that He has for us!

Revelation 3:19-20: “I rebuke and punish all whom I love. Be in earnest, then, and turn from your sins. ²⁰Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if any hear my voice and open the door, I will come into their house and eat with them, and they will eat with me.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide=BSG*:] This is such a beautiful and extraordinary word picture. The God of the universe wants to sit down over a meal with you, with me. He desires mutual engagement and conversation over good food. He wants a close, abiding relationship, and Jesus invites us to have this with Him.

Jesus stands patiently waiting and knocking at the door of your heart. Perhaps you’ve seen pictures of this in children’s books—a tall, graceful Savior, **knocking gently. He doesn’t barge in and force you to talk with Him. He doesn’t impose on your time or your busy life.** Time is short; so, if you hear Him, open the door. He will be there to step into your life.

This metaphor illustrates the kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with each of us. But one day, when you meet Jesus face-to-face, when you cast your crown at His feet in adoration and praise with thousands upon ten thousands of others in worship to the Creator (*Rev. 4:9–11, Rev. 5:11–14*), **when you think back to your earthly trials and see that they dim into insignificance**—do you think at that point you’ll ever regret the time you spent [in Bible study and prayer] with Jesus on earth?—*BSG** for Monday, March 30.^{†§}

28. What do we actually need to do to open the door and let Christ in? We only need to consent to give Him the time to correct what is wrong with us through spending time in Bible study, prayer, and witnessing!
29. ***Try to imagine the day when you are invited to sit on a throne next to God Himself! What would you want to say to Him at that point? Are you ready to join every person/being in the entire universe in praise to the Father, Holy Spirit, and Son?***

Revelation 4:9-11: ⁹The four living creatures sing songs of glory and honor and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever. When

they do so, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before the one who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They throw their crowns down in front of the throne and say,

¹¹ “Our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory, honor, and power.

For you created all things,

and by your will they were given existence and life.”—*GNB-TEV*.*

Revelation 5:11-14: ¹¹Again I looked, and I heard angels, thousands and millions of them! They stood around the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders, ¹²and sang in a loud voice:

“The Lamb who was killed is worthy

to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and strength, honor, glory, and praise!”

¹³**And I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea—all living beings in the universe—and they were singing:**

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honor, glory and might, forever and ever!”

¹⁴The four living creatures answered, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

30. These passages give us some very exciting descriptions of how things will be when God takes home His faithful people. **Notice, especially Revelation 5:13** (just above): “And I heard every creature [**This includes Satan and his angels! Compare Philippians 2:5-11.**] in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea—all living beings in the universe—and they were singing.”—*GNB-TEV*.*†
31. Do you recognize Jesus as knocking at this time on the door to your heart? If yes, invite Him to come in. If you are not sure, try to develop that relationship.
32. God’s love is intense and everlasting! Believe it or not, He is determined to do whatever He can to win us back. He understands perfectly well what our current condition is.
33. Are we prepared to sit beside Him on His throne in heaven?

[BSG:] After depicting our apathetic condition, Jesus tells us that this is something to be overcome. “ ‘ “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” ’ ” (*Rev. 3:21, NKJV*). **For some of us, it may be the greatest battle we ever face—simply realizing our weak, self-sufficient condition; accepting Jesus’ rebuke; repenting; and receiving Jesus’ robe of righteousness over us.**—*BSG** for Tuesday, March 31.^{†‡§} [Are we sure what all that means and how it takes place?][‡]

Revelation 3:21: “To those who win the victory I will give the right to sit beside me on my throne, just as I have been victorious and now sit by my Father on his throne.” —*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

34. If we briefly review the history of the Bible and the stories of God's people, what do we learn about God's love? Consider the story of Adam and Eve (especially Genesis 2:7; 3:8-10); Enoch (especially Genesis 5:24); Noah (especially Genesis 6:8); Abraham (especially Genesis 12:1-4); and Moses (especially Exodus 34:29). God's love was still just as earnest in the days of Jeremiah when His people were in Babylonian captivity!

Jeremiah 31:3-4: ³ "I [the LORD] appeared to them from far away. **People of Israel, I have always loved you,** so I continue to show you my constant love. ⁴Once again I will rebuild you. Once again you will take up your tambourines and dance joyfully."—*GNB-TEV*.^{*†‡} [Will we be dancing with the LORD (YAHWEH)?][‡]

Section 4 (to Laodicea): The Lord's Love—Abide with Christ

35. How many of us truly realize our helplessness and hopelessness without Jesus Christ? Even if we recognize it, are we willing to admit it to ourselves?

Revelation 3:19-22 [Reading verses 19&20 again]: ¹⁹ "I rebuke and punish all whom I love. Be in earnest, then, and turn from your sins. ²⁰Listen! **I stand at the door and knock;** if any hear my voice and open the door, I will come into their house and eat with them, and they will eat with me. ²¹To those who win the victory I will give the right to sit beside me on my throne, just as I have been victorious and now sit by my Father on his throne. ²² "If you have ears, then, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches!"—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†‡}

36. So, how does an incredibly loving and patient God want to respond to us?

[T-BSG:] At this moment, immediately after His words of pastoral exhortation, the Lord's discourse [in Revelation 3:19-21] becomes more personal. So far, God has addressed Laodicea collectively as His people, as the aggregate church of the last days. **Now, in verse 20, He suddenly turns to each believer within that church as the unique individual whom He loves personally and with whom He entertains a distinct relationship. It is significant that in the apocalyptic repetition of the number seven, the verb "I love," in the first person, is followed by seven more verbs that express the Lord's intense and personal love for each one of us (Rev. 3:19–21): (1) " 'I rebuke,' " (2) " 'I chasten,' " (3) " 'I stand at the door,' " (4) " '[I] knock,' " (5) " 'I will come in to him,' " (6) " 'I will dine with him, and he with Me,' " and (7) " 'I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.' "**—*T-BSG** 16.^{†‡Ω§} [Remember that in Hebrew thinking, the number 7 means something is complete and final.][‡]

Abiding in Christ or Remaining in Christ

37. Jesus had some words to say about how we should relate to Him. The key word or phrase is **to abide or to remain!**

John 15:1-11: ¹ "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. ³You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. ⁴Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it

can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ **“I am the vine, and you are the branches.** Those who remain in me [“abides in Me,” *NKJV**], and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. ⁶Those who do not remain in me [“does not abide in Me,” *NKJV**] are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. ⁸My Father’s glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples. ⁹I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”—*Good News Bible-TEV.*††*

[BSG:] These words, spoken by Jesus Himself, describe what a close relationship with God is like. Notice the word that is repeated, not just twice but ten times: *abide* [*remain* in *GNB-TEV**]. **To abide in Jesus is to live in connection with Him.**

As He faces the Cross, not only does Jesus emphasize the great importance of this abiding in Him, but He clearly and simply states the practical aspects of what it looks like in our lives.

Which is: **Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches.** As a result of our abiding with (being connected to) Him, fruit will grow on our branches.—*BSG** for Wednesday, April 1.††§

[EGW:] “Abide in Me, and I in you.” **Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit,** a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 676.2.†† [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3329&index=0>]†

38. Let us be honest! There is no way we can produce spiritual fruit on our own. We might appear to be abiding in Christ; however, no fruit is produced. Eventually, our branches will dry up. And dead branches are cut off and thrown into the fire. Clearly, abiding in Jesus is the solution to the problems which are discussed in Revelation 3:14-22.

39. Do we really understand what it means to be linked to the Vine?

[BSG:] Abiding in Christ can sometimes feel like one of the hardest things to do. We might know that it’s what we need, but the rush of life pulls us into its stream, and it all feels too hard. Following God can seem like the biggest burden ever, especially for those badgered by someone trying to get them to follow Jesus. This kind of religion can feel like drudgery because it’s all about external actions rather than what’s in the heart. Nothing could be further from what God desires, which **is a relationship whose foundation**

is mutual love, not just rules; a chosen relationship (in which He first chose you) **based on love and free choice**.

Sometimes we might be partly connected to the Vine but not really abiding with every fiber of our being. We might go to church, pray, and do what we know is right, but inside we feel shriveled up. The truth is this: we can't make ourselves abide in Jesus any more than a branch can make itself connect to a vine. God loved us first; He made the first move. Our response is always a reaction to what God has first done for us.—*BSG** for Thursday, April 2.†‡

[*BSG:*] If you, meanwhile, look at how a grapevine survives through winter, you'll learn a fascinating fact—the buds on the branches become dehydrated and isolated from the growing system until spring. When the soil warms up, the roots absorb water, and sap flows up through the trunk of the vine into the buds and then initiates growth. Without the sap flowing through the vine, no growth will happen.

The sap in a grapevine is like the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We might be like a dead branch, but when we choose to spend time with God, the Holy Spirit enters into us like the sap from the roots and brings us to life so that we start to grow. In the same way that we need to make a conscious choice to want to abide in Jesus, we must also ask for the Holy Spirit (the sap) to flow into our lives.—*BSG** for Thursday, April 2.†‡

40. As recorded in John 15 on His last night with His disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus Himself told us that He would send the Holy Spirit to work with us. So, what does the Holy Spirit do for us? The Holy Spirit: (1) Is supposed to be our Comforter (John 14:16-18); (2) Is supposed to reveal the truth about Jesus to us (John 15:26); (3) Is supposed to convict us of sin (John 16:7-8); and ultimately, of course, (4) Is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

41. ***Can you recognize these activities of the Holy Spirit in your own life?***

42. ***If you were to give yourself a grade for your Christianity, what would it be? Are we abiding fully and completely in Jesus?***

43. Remember what we just said about how grapevines survive the winter!

[*BSG:*] Like the slow growth of a grapevine's branches, our relationship with God might grow slowly, or it might come in bursts as a result of much-needed rain. Regardless of the pace at which we grow and the abundance of fruit that is produced in our lives, **we need daily "sap,"** or the Holy Spirit, to ensure that we're remaining connected to Jesus.—*BSG** for Friday, April 3.†‡

44. As we read earlier in *The Desire of Ages* page 676.2: **"Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit."**

[*EGW:*] How is the dry disconnected sapling to become one with the parent vine stock? How is it to be made a partaker of the life and nourishment of the living vine? **Only by being grafted into the vine, by being brought into the closest relationship possible.** Fiber by fiber, vein by vein, the twig holds fast to the life giving vine until the life of the vine becomes one with the branch, and the branch produces fruit like that of the vine.—Ellen

G. White, *Manuscript 67, 1897*,* par. 35; [*Letters and Manuscripts*,* vol. 12 (1897)].^{†‡}

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14062.7317040&index=0>][‡]

[EGW:] 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** 668.3.^{†‡}

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3287&index=0>][‡]

45. In a certain sense, this lesson is about a reality check. Can you think of times in your life when you had major impacts, either for or against your relationship with God?
46. In my personal experience, it was at Loma Linda University while working on a master's degree in religion under the mentorship of A. Graham Maxwell that I deepened my relationship with God. Even though I already had a degree in Theology and Biblical Languages, the associations at Loma Linda University transformed my understanding of God and how to relate to Him. It also enhanced my understanding of the meaning of the life and death of Jesus!
47. Ellen White wrote about the “constant receiving of His Spirit.” Do we understand what that means? Do we pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How might things change in your life if you had a daily relationship with the Holy Spirit?
48. As we read earlier in *The Desire of Ages* page 676.2: “**Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit.**”

[BSG:] What might change if we, as a church, were to pray for the Holy Spirit more earnestly and more regularly?—*BSG** for Friday, April 3.[‡]

[BSG:] Be brutally, even painfully, frank with yourself regarding your relationship with God. What conscious choices do you need to make in order to have the closeness with Him that He wants but that you hinder?—*BSG** for Friday, April 3.[‡]

[BSG:] **Summary:** Before we can start growing in a relationship with God, we first have to pause to consider what our current relationship with Him is like. If it's Laodicean or if our branches are not flourishing, Jesus has the perfect solution for our spiritual condition: **to abide in Him.**—*BSG** for Friday, April 3.^{†‡}

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