

How Healthy Is Your Relationship With God?



SABBATH—MARCH 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 3:14–17; Revelation 3:20; Genesis 2:7; John 15:1–11; Luke 11:13.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I loved you as the Father loved me. Now remain [continue] in my love’ ” (John 15:9, ICB).

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP with God? Is it alive and strong? Do you spend time with God daily? Do you study His Word, the Bible? Do you talk to God as a Friend? If yes, how much time do you spend every day doing these things?

Also, do you talk to people about your friendship with God? Do you tell them it's the most wonderful relationship in your life? Or is your relationship with God becoming weak? Yes, you read, pray, and study sometimes. But if you are honest, your relationship with God is not really fresh or strong anymore. Or maybe your relationship with God is somewhere between 'hot' and 'cold.' The Bible has a special name for this hot-and-cold relationship: it is 'lukewarm' (read Revelation 3:16, NIV).

Do you sometimes wonder what the angels in heaven think about us? Maybe they wonder why we don't love God more? Or maybe the angels wonder why we don't wish to grow close to God every day? For sure, a friendship with God changes our lives, both now and in the future.

This week, we will think about our relationship with God. Do you want this relationship to get better? If yes, you first must be honest about your relationship with God now. Then you must follow Jesus' advice in the Bible.



Maybe the angels wonder why we don't wish to grow close to God every day?

**HOW DO WE FEEL ABOUT GOD RIGHT NOW?
(Revelation 3:14–17)**

What will Jesus say right now if you ask Him to talk about your relationship with Him? Will He say your relationship is strong? Or will He say it was strong in the past? How will Jesus answer if He talks about His people in the end times? In Revelation 3:14–22, Jesus does talk about us. Jesus starts with saying, “ ‘I faithfully [can be trusted to] tell people God’s true message. Everything that God has created [made] starts with me’ ” (Revelation 3:14, EASY). In court, an honest witness doesn’t lie. Jesus is the Witness we can trust. Everything He says is true.

Read Revelation 3:14–17. In these verses, Jesus talks about His relationship with His people today. In what ways do these verses show you who you really are?

Jesus’ message is for Christians who live in the end times. Jesus tells us that He knows us. What does He know? He knows that we aren’t ‘hot’ or ‘cold.’ That means that we don’t love Him, and we don’t hate Him. We are ‘lukewarm.’ As ‘lukewarm’ Christians, we don’t think we need to spend much time with God. We spend a little time with God here and there. We think that’s enough. But it’s not. We need God more than we know. We should live for Jesus with our whole hearts. Or we should not live for Him at all. In God’s eyes, that is much better than our being ‘lukewarm.’ Jesus says that He will spit us out of His mouth because we taste so bad. God doesn’t want to do that. So, He asks us to make some important choices right now.

What is Jesus’ advice to us in Revelation 3:18, 19?

In Bible times, the word ‘buying’ really meant to trade or exchange stuff. So, Jesus offers us a trade: we give Him our heart that doesn’t care about Him or Bible truth. In exchange, Jesus will give us gold, white clothes, and eye medicine. Jesus wants to make us rich in His eyes. He wants us to wear His perfect obedience, the same as clothes. A living relationship with Him will change everything about us. Jesus offers us everything we need. We need what we don’t have. Jesus has what we need. But we must want to get what He has to give.

What hope does Revelation 3:18, 19 offer you today?

**Jesus will give us gold,
white clothes, and
eye medicine.**

CORRECT, CHANGE, AND REWARD (Revelation 3:20)

Jesus wants to enjoy good conversation and good food with us.

In Revelation 3:19, Jesus says, “ ‘I correct and punish the people I love. So show that nothing is more important to you than living right. Change your hearts and lives’ ” (ERV). No one can say that Jesus doesn’t care for us or our future. Because Jesus loves us so deeply, He corrects our bad behavior. Jesus isn’t happy when we come to Him only when we need Him. He wants more from us.

Jesus warns us for our own good. Jesus tells us to confess our sins and to stop sinning. We can’t stop sinning if we don’t know we’ve done something wrong. So, Jesus tells us what’s wrong with us: we think we’re rich. But He says, “ ‘You do not know that you are in trouble and need help. You are poor. You are blind. And you have no clothes to wear’ ” (Revelation 3:17, WE).

Read Revelation 3:20. What does Jesus promise us in this verse? What must we do to get this special gift?

Revelation 3:20 contains a beautiful symbol: Jesus wants to sit and eat with you and me. Wow! Can you imagine in your mind eating at the same table with Jesus? Jesus wants to enjoy good conversation and good food with us. This symbol shows us a close, loving relationship. Jesus invites us to have this relationship with Him.

Jesus is patient. He knocks at the ‘door’ of your heart. He waits for you to open the door to let Him in. Jesus doesn’t push open the door or force you to talk with Him. Time is short. So, if you feel Jesus knock on your heart, open the ‘door.’ He is waiting to enter your life.

The symbol of Jesus eating a meal with us shows the relationship that Jesus wants us to have with Him. Some day you will meet Jesus face-to-face. You will throw your crown at His feet in deep love for Him. You will praise and sing to Him with the millions of angels and people around God’s throne (Revelation 4:9–11; Revelation 5:11–14). When you try to remember your troubles on earth, you will see that the joys of heaven are worth it. You will not be sorry for the time you spent with Jesus on earth.

Right now, Jesus knocks at the ‘door’ of your heart. You must choose to open your heart to Him. How can the Cross help you to make that choice?

EVERLASTING LOVE (Genesis 2:7)

Jesus shows us what is wrong with our hearts. Then Jesus tells us we must win the fight against sin and Satan. “ ‘Everyone who wins against Satan will come to sit with me on my throne where I rule [sit as king]. I won against my enemies. Then I sat down with my Father on his throne. I will give you the same authority [power]’ ” (Revelation 3:21, EASY). For some of us, the fight against self may be the biggest battle of our lives. If we want to win, we must understand we are weak. We must accept Jesus’ warning. We must confess our sins. Then we must wear Jesus’ life of perfect obedience, the same as clothes. We also must ask Jesus to heal our eyes. Then we may really see our sin.

Jesus understands that our hearts are ‘lukewarm.’ So, we don’t love Jesus as we should. Jesus encourages “ ‘everyone who wins against Satan. . . [just as] I won against my enemies’ ” (Revelation 3:21, EASY). Because Jesus died to save us, He won the fight against sin and its penalty. So, Jesus understands the wars that we must fight against sin. He promises to help us.

Many people in the Bible accepted God’s invitation to be in a relationship with Him. This idea is the most important topic in the whole Bible. When we look at some of these people from Bible times, we can see God working in their lives in different ways and at different times.

What do these stories teach us about how God works with people at different times and in different places?

Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:8–10 _____

Genesis 5:24 _____

Genesis 6:13 _____

Genesis 12:1–4 _____

Exodus 34:29 _____

As these verses show us, God always wants to be close to His children. God wants to be close to you now. We can read about this idea in Jeremiah 31:3, 4.

God is seeking you. He invites you to come close to Him. He wants to build your relationship with Him. If that’s not happening, we must blame ourselves, not God.

What things in your life now separate you from God? Ask God for the strength to help you give them up.



Because Jesus died to save us, He won the fight against sin and its penalty.

LIVING IN JESUS (John 15:1–11)

Jesus' followers left the upper room with Him. Then, they went with Him down the stairs to the street below. Together, they walked to Gethsemane. That night was one of the most important nights in human history. Before they left the upper room, Jesus told His followers some of His most powerful truths.

What does Jesus say in John 15:1–11?

In these verses, Jesus explains how to have a close relationship with God. How do we do that? We must “stay joined [connected]” to Jesus (John 15:4, ERV), the same as a branch is connected to a vine. In other words, we must “‘continue to live in me [Jesus]’ ” (John 15:4, EASY). Read John 15:1–11 in the Easy-to-Read Bible and in the Easy English Bible. Count how many times you read the words “stay joined,” “stay connected,” or “continue to live.” Many times, right? This idea is very important. If we want to stay connected to Jesus, He must live in our hearts.

Soon Jesus will die on the cross. Before He dies, He wants His followers to understand that they must live in Him. Jesus also wants us to understand how to do that.

Jesus is the same as the vine. We are the same as the branches that are connected to the vine. When we stay connected to Jesus, we will grow ‘fruit.’ (What is this fruit? Read the answer in Galatians 5:22, 23 and Ephesians 5:9.) We need help to make ‘fruit’ grow. Sometimes, we may behave as if we are connected to Jesus. But if we are not really connected in our minds and hearts, our lives will show no ‘fruit’ or good behavior. Then we won’t have any spiritual life or power. We will be the same as a dead branch. God cuts off all dead branches from the Vine, Jesus. But even if we grow a lot of ‘fruit,’ God will trim all our ‘branches’ to make them grow better.

We all have painful experiences. If we live in Jesus, these experiences will help us grow strong. The ‘fruit’ that we grow will show everyone that we belong to Jesus. People will praise Jesus because of the wonderful changes they see in us. When we live in Jesus, we will feel joy. We will do everything He asks (1 John 5:3). Our living in Jesus helps solve the problems that He talks about in Revelation 3:20. Jesus’ love brings us close to Him in our hearts. When we know this love, we will love God and other people.



Jesus is the same as the vine. We are the same as the branches that are connected to the vine.

CONNECTED TO THE VINE (Luke 11:13)

Sometimes we may not be connected to Jesus with our whole hearts. We may go to church, pray, and do what we know is right. But inside we feel 'dead.' Why? The answer is that we can't connect ourselves to Jesus any more than a branch can connect itself to a vine. God loved us first. He made the first move to come to us and start a relationship. Our coming to Him is always our answer to the things He does for us. We come to Him because He came to us first.

The grapevine helps us better understand this idea about God. During the winter, the buds on the branches of the grapevine dry up. When spring comes, the soil warms up. The roots fill with water. The sap flows up the trunk of the vine into the buds. The sap is the liquid part of the plant. Then the vine starts to grow again. Without the sap, no growth will happen.

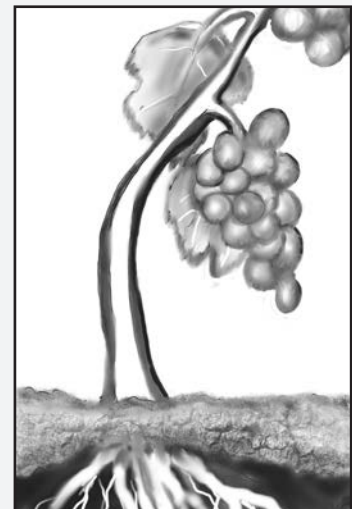
The sap in the grapevine is the same as the Holy Spirit in our lives. We may be the same as a dead branch. But when we choose to spend time with God, God sends His Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit fills us with new life. Then we start to grow in God. In the same way, we must choose to live in Jesus. We also must ask for God to fill our hearts with His Holy Spirit.

Read Luke 11:13; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:19; and Romans 8:9–11. What important message do these verses teach us?

The Holy Spirit helps us to grow in God. The Holy Spirit makes sure that we stay healthy and connected to Jesus, the Vine. We need to ask God for the gift of the Holy Spirit every day. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us on earth to

- be our Helper (John 14:16–18),
- show Jesus to us (John 15:26),
- tell us the truth about sin (John 16:7, 8), and
- lead us into all Bible truth (John 16:13).

Read again the list above. How can each thing on the list that the Holy Spirit does help make your relationship better with God?



The sap in the grapevine is the same as the Holy Spirit in our lives.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “If we want to stay connected to Jesus, we must ask for the Holy Spirit every day. We must give our lives fully to God. We must serve Him with all our hearts. We must keep our hearts open to God all the time so that He may communicate with us. We must hold tight to Jesus in the same way that the branch connects to the living vine. Then the branch can get sap from the vine all the time. In the same way, we must get from Jesus the things we need. We need His strength and perfect love. We get these things with faith from Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 676, adapted.

“What about the little dry branch that is separated from the vine? How does that dry branch become connected with the vine? How is this branch made alive again? How can it start to get sap from the living vine? The branch must be brought into the closest relationship possible with the vine. Every part of the branch must hold tight to the life-giving vine. Soon, the life of the vine will become part of the branch. Then the branch will grow fruit, the same as the fruit that grows on the vine.”—Ellen G. White, Manuscript 67, 1897, adapted.



“How does that dry branch become connected with the vine?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think back over your life. Can you think of any experiences you had that caused you to be lukewarm, or hot and cold? Jesus said to them, “You are in trouble and need help. You are poor. You are blind. And you have no clothes to wear” (Revelation 3:17, WE). What experiences or happenings in your past made you feel close to God in your heart?
- ② Ellen G. White says that we need to “ask for the Holy Spirit every day.” How often do you pray for the Holy Spirit? What do you think would change if you asked for the Holy Spirit every day?
- ③ What do you think would change if we, as a church, prayed for the Holy Spirit more often and with all our hearts?
- ④ God wants to be close to you in your heart. Be very honest with yourself about your relationship with God. What choices do you need to make to be close with Him in your heart?

BEING A BLESSING IN BUSINESS

Kavono Kivatsi Samwele loved to play the drums while his wife sang. Kavono was in his early 20s. He lived in a village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kavono enjoyed his life. Someday, he would become the village chief.

Then Kavono got an idea to write the songs his wife sang. To do that, he needed to learn to read and write first. Kavono knew about a new Seventh-day Adventist school that just opened in a nearby village. So, Kavono started the first grade there.

At the school, Kavono learned to read and write. He also learned about the God of heaven. As Kavono studied, he believed that God wanted him to become a pastor. If Kavono became a pastor, he couldn't become the village chief. Kavono decided to become a pastor.

Kavono had a son named Kasereka Maghulu Kavatsi. As a boy, Kasereka went with his father wherever he preached. Kasereka wanted to serve God, too. But Kasereka's skills were in business. So, he became a businessman. Kasereka started a farm. He became a fisherman, too. Then he opened a clothing store. His businesses grew. He enjoyed much success.

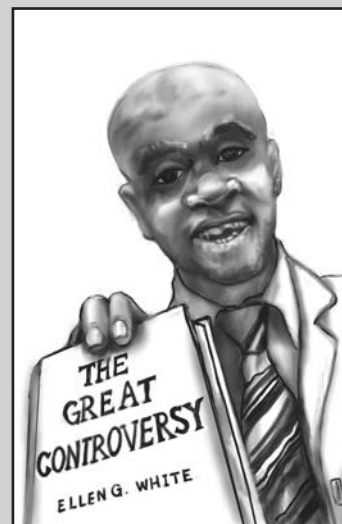
Kasereka remembered the Bible truths his father taught him. So, Kasereka paid tithe to God. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. After Kasereka got married, he and his wife paid a tithe of \$10,000.00 in US money. Kasereka's wife was the daughter of a traveling preacher. Kasereka's wife wanted her husband to give an offering of 10%. For a long time, Kasereka wondered how much to give for offering. He decided to follow his wife's advice. Kasereka and his wife gave another \$10,000.00 for offering. After that, they gave 10% tithe and 10% offering. Kasereka and his wife always had everything they needed. Kasereka said, "When you help the Lord, you get a blessing back."

Kasereka wanted to do his part to announce Jesus' second coming. Kasereka gave copies of *The Great Controversy* to fellow business leaders and government leaders. Kasereka also started an orphanage. He sent orphans and other people to school and paid for their education.

The more Kasereka blessed other people, the more God blessed him. Kasereka helped 100 people finish college. Many of the students couldn't find jobs when they finished. That's because there weren't many jobs in the country for educated people. So, Kasereka gave them jobs in his businesses. Their skills were a blessing to his companies. Kasereka says, "God always gives you back more than you give to Him."

Part of this quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will support God's work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thank you for your offering. Your gift will help announce Jesus' soon coming.

INSIDE Story



Kasereka gave copies of *The Great Controversy* to fellow business leaders and government leaders.



Kasereka Maghulu Kavatsi