

## 2020 3Q Making Friends for God: Lesson 6

### Unlimited Possibilities

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

#### SABBATH

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Read first two paragraphs, “God calls us to witness...” To what are we to witness about? God—to be sure—but does the message about God ever take on any specific focus relevant to the situation of the people at a specific place or time in history?

- Did Noah witness for God but have a specific message to give?
- Did Moses witness for God when he appeared before Pharaoh and demanded the Hebrews be set free to worship Yahweh?
- Was Samuel witnessing for God when he called king Saul to account for taking booty from one of the cities they conquered?
- Was Jeremiah witnessing for God when he told Israel, including the leadership, to submit to Babylonian rule?
- Was Jesus witnessing for God when He answered the question about taxes and told them to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s?
- Was Paul witnessing for God when he told the Christians how to live in relationship with Roman authorities in Romans chapter 13?
- Was Ellen White witnessing for God when she wrote the book *The Great Controversy* in which she describes the long history of church-state abuse and governmental policies that violate God’s principles and warned about forming of the image to the beast?

Now, were any of these witnesses for God being political, or were they witnessing for God in the context of real-life situations in which the people found themselves?

Were any of these people running for governmental office? Were any of these people seeking to change the governments of the world? Were any of them seeking to get certain judges, senators, governors elected or laws passed?

Does witnessing for God mean that we never speak about issues that intersect with the state?

If we do speak about issues that intersect with the state does that mean we are being political? Certainly, we could be—but can we speak about God’s methods and principles and how to apply them to our current circumstances without being political, yet addressing current events?

I have received a few emails recently from people saying they feel that over the last six months or so, that our class has become political. I would counter, that we have not become political, but eschatological, that I continue to advance God’s kingdom of truth, love, and liberty, founded upon God’s design laws, that are an expression of His character—and like the great spokespersons for God

throughout history, at times, we make local and contemporary application of God's principles to our real-life situation.

I am not advocating for a political party, or a specific law, or a politician—I am advocating for the truth, for people to be freed from manipulation, for the application of God's principles and method, and for the recovery of the image of God in people. I am sounding an end-time warning to alert people to the dangers of joining forces with movements that are practicing principles contrary to God's kingdom, despite their stated goal.

At this time in human history, to what are we to witness? What is our message to the world today? What are we to share that meets the needs of society today?

Now I love this quote and have shared it before, it is found in the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, what do you think?

**It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character.** It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. **At this time a message** from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known.** Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth...**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.** The children of God are to manifest His glory. **In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.** COL 415.5

Does this have anything to do with the law of God? How is the law of God and God's glory and our revealing God's glory in our lives related?

Can we live out the law of God without confronting intersecting with people and practices in our society that violate the law of God?

I found this quote by the same person who wrote *Christ's Object Lessons* and she attributes these words to an angel of God—what do you think?

Said my Guide, "**There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness.** [What do you think is being referred to? More rules, or the light of God's design law, how God built life to operate—the law of love and liberty an expression of the character of God? Are we giving more light to the law of God by presenting it as design law and rejecting the imposed rules view?] **This message, understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit, will lighten the earth with its glory.** [What message? The truth about God, who is love, who created the universe to operate upon the law of love and that God is completely trustworthy.] **The great decisive question is to be brought before all nations, tongues, and peoples.** [What is the great question? If God is like Baal—an imperial dictator who imposes rules, inflicts punishment, and requires legal solutions—then worship him by becoming like him, by practicing his methods, by embracing imperial rule. Mark yourselves in

your hands by your actions of going along with forcing people by coercion and threat to do what you want, or mark yourselves in your forehead by believing it is actually right to do so. Or, worship Yahweh, the Creator, whose laws are design laws, and present the truth, in love while leaving people free and be sealed in your foreheads with the seal of God by being settled in character into His methods and principles.] The closing work of the third angel's message will be attended with a power that will send the rays of the Sun of Righteousness into all the highways and byways of life, and decisions will be made for God.”—Manuscript 15, 1888, 5. (To “Dear Brethren Assembled at General Conference,” November 1, 1888.) 2MR 58.1

How is the law of God related to the third angel's message?

Here is a description from the book *Christ Triumphant*:

The first and second messages [Revelation 14:6-8] were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed. It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel's message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. . .

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.[What is the eternal gospel—the good news that has been true for eternity past and will be true for eternity future and which Jesus revealed in His life here on earth? That God is not as Satan alleges, God is truly good, trustworthy, and a being of love. But notice, specifically what comes next] He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.[What law lens are you hearing this through? The hour in which a tribunal is set up, or the hour in history when enough truth has been presented that people can make a right judgment about God? Notice, immediately after saying the hour of *his* judgment has come, we are told what to do in response to finally judging God correctly] Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”” [What kind of law is creation built upon? Design law, stop judging God to be a dictator and the source of inflicted pain and death, and judge Him correctly, as Creator whose laws are design laws] This message, if heeded, will call the attention of every nation and kindred and tongue and people to a close examination of the Word, and to the true light in regard to *the power* that has changed the seventh-day Sabbath to a spurious sabbath. . . The Sabbath memorial, declaring who the living God is, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, has been torn down, and a spurious sabbath has been given to the world in its place. Thus a breach has been made in the law of God. . . {CTR 338.5}

What are we to call people's attention to? Not the Sabbath or Sunday as *THE* issue, but to the *power* that changed the Sabbath to Sunday. In other words, the Sabbath-Sunday issue is the evidence of the breach in the law, and what was that breach? The lie that God's law is imposed law—changing in the minds of people that God's law functions like human law. This is the breach, the Sabbath was created

as a day of rest and is evidence of design law, Sunday was legislated as a day of rest and is evidence of imperial law or human law. Thus, we are to call people out of a system of imperialism, religions that teach God's law functions like human law and back to worship our Creator whose laws are design laws. This is the repairing of the breach!

So what is the final message of mercy? The truth about God—His character and methods of love, design law, how reality works.

## SUNDAY

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Differing Gifts—what does it mean that we have differing gifts?

From where do our gifts come?

If we have differing gifts does that mean we have different value or worth? No!

If we have differing gifts, even though we the same value and worth, do we have different abilities?

If we have different abilities, despite having equal worth, what would that mean for where we find ourselves working in God's cause? Do we all end up doing the same activity?

What about in society as a whole—do these principles hold true? Are we all of equal worth as children of God? But do we have different abilities, gifts and talents? Does that mean some individuals are better suited than others for various positions or jobs?

Do we also have different individualities, and do we develop different characters?

Do we apply ourselves uniquely and thus, can two people with similar gifts get different outcomes because of different applications of their gifts?

What is God's role in the development of a person's gifts, abilities and talents?

What is the person's role?

What is society's or government's role in the development of an individual's gifts?

Are there laws involved—what kind of laws? What are the design laws that are involved? The law of exertion, the law of worship, the law of love, the law of liberty—all of these are involved in a person developing their abilities to the maximum.

Can governments legislate and enact laws designed to help people develop their abilities—like laws that all children will attend school? Or laws that provide meals for kids at school. Will such laws cause all children to get equal outcomes from school? Why not?

- Are all teachers equal?
- Are all schools equal?
- Are all children equal?
- Are all homes and parents equal?
- Do all have equal friends?
- Do all have equal ability?
- Do all have equal health?
- Do all have equal sleep, nutrition, safety, or support?
- Do all apply themselves equally to the task of learning?

Do all have equal value and worth? So does equality in value and worth mean we all get equal outcomes?

What is the Christian's responsibility?

What principles must be applied in order for people to maximize their development?

To maximize development, individuals must be stressed, challenged, pressured to struggle against difficulties. In other words, strength come from exertion, so in order to grow people have to be presented with problems or obstacles that are beyond their current level of functioning or understanding, yet within their ability to master.

Most of the time this means they will not initially perform well or won't initially understand. It means that frequently they will get the problem wrong—but as they apply themselves their skill, understanding, and abilities get strengthened, honed, developed and improved. A good teacher or coach will push, but also encourage.

It is damaging to people to never be stressed, challenged, or pressured, to be given advancement without having applied oneself and developed one's abilities. In other words, passing children to the next grade when they haven't mastered their current grade-level, because we don't want to hurt their feelings, or stigmatize them is damaging.

The first paragraph of our lesson talks about unity despite differing gifts, do you hear anything we have been talking about this morning that if applied is unifying? Have we been elucidating ideas and principles that are universal truths, that are true for all people, of all cultures, throughout all human history?

Have these principles of individuality, hard work, reaping and sowing come under attack in our society recently? Why?

Consider the impact in history when position was awarded based on identity rather than ability:

- Divine right of kings—rulers become rulers because of inheritance not because of ability, not based on character, talents or gifts. What happened in human history when this occurred?
  - Do you notice God overthrew this human tradition in several places:
  - Abel and Seth inherited the blessing, not Cain;
  - Isaac inherited the blessings, not Ishmael;
  - Jacob inherited the blessings not Esau;
  - Joseph inherited the double portion of the first born, not Reuben;
  - Judah became ruler of the family not Reuben, Simeon, or Levi;
  - Ephraim inherited the blessing of the firstborn not Manasseh.
  - Solomon inherited the kingship not David's older children.
- What about in society today, what happens if we place people in position based on some identity issue, rather than ability?
  - Pastors are based on gender not upon gifting by the Spirit?
  - We require school admissions or business admit or hire based upon gender or race rather than qualifications?
  - What impact does that have upon people if we reward based no some identity issue rather than on abilities? Would it undermine individual application, why strive, why develop, why achieve, it won't matter, what I need to do is be identified with the groups that get advancement, that is what matters. Character isn't important, group identity is what is important.
  - This same problem can be applied to religion, when people believe belonging to the right denomination is what matter not character. 2000 years ago, "We are Jews and we have Moses and the Law, and we are God's chosen." What about today, "We are Seventh-day Adventists and we are secure because we have the Sabbath and we are God's chosen."
  - Is it about identity with various groups whether race, nationality, or religion, or is it about having character like Jesus?

Is it ungodly to *discriminate*—meaning to differentiate in our decision-making—in who we hire, what position we place people in, who we marry, who we let babysit our children, who we associate with *based upon character, abilities, gifts*? Or are we supposed to make such discriminating decisions?

One of the falsehoods that has become commonplace in society today is that being equal in worth, in value, means we have equal abilities—it does not. This falsehood leads to the idea, that it is wrong to discriminate based upon ability, character, gifting, or talents—it is not.

It is actually good for all involved to be truthful, to say to those ill-suited for certain tasks or roles, that they don't have the requisite qualifications or skillset for that position.

When does this become a problem? What happens if a person gets their feelings hurt when they are rejected in a relationship or for a position?

Have you ever been rejected for a position—whether being left out in a pick-up game on the playground, or rejected when dating, or rejected by an employer, or rejected by a church group?

How did you respond when rejected?

How did Jesus respond when He was rejected?

What is a healthy response to rejection?

- Be truthful—evaluate, to the best of your ability, why you were rejected, was it because:
  - you were ill suited for the position?
  - the other person was ignorant of your abilities?
  - the other person had a bias against you?
  - the other person didn't have a bias against you, but did have a bias toward the other person that was selected (nepotism for instance)?
  - God was protecting you from some future bad outcome?
- Apply the truth
  - If you realize that you are ill suited, then address that concern.
    - If you weren't picked for a basketball team and you are 5'8" tall, accept the truth about yourself, you will never be a professional basketball player, no matter how much you practice.
    - If you don't have the education, license, experience, then if you want the position go to school or get the license
    - If you have character shortcomings—an addiction you have not addressed and thus were rejected in a relationship—then get into recovery etc.
  - But if you realize that you are well suited but still were not chosen, then apply the truth that your rejection in that circumstance was not about you, but about something outside of you, and that if you have put your life in God's hands, then you can have assurance that God is protecting you, or the other person has their reasons that have nothing to do with you and move on.

In the last two paragraphs the lesson uses the Bible metaphor of the body, and that the body has many different parts that have different functions, but all are important to the overall health of the body. They give the example of the eyelashes, and how small they are, but what an important role they play.

Likewise, in the body of Christ, the church, we all have different abilities, gifts, talents—and have developed them differently. And therefore, will have different roles to play, but as long as we are surrendered to God, following where God leads, we will be useful to the body of Christ and in God's cause.

What is the basis of true unity? Do we have true unity when we all take an oath to believe the same creed or list of fundamental beliefs?

Or, is true unity found when we have had our hearts renewed to love like Jesus loves—including having hearts that love the truth and love to grow in the truth?

If we have a group of people with hearts that are pure, that love like Jesus, that are honest, kind, patient, peaceful, true, meek—does that mean they all believe the same on every point?

Why not? Because we are all finite, we are all coming from different backgrounds, we all have different experiences, different education, and are at different places in our maturity—thus it is predictable and inevitable that we WILL understand various points of doctrine differently. We are not unified by having the same list of beliefs—we are unified in loving the same God, surrendering to the same Savior, and have the same design law (love, truth, freedom) written upon our hearts, so we practice the same methods.

I have unity with my grandchildren—we are united in love, affection, devotion, trust, loyalty—but we certainly do NOT understand everything the same way—and our difference in understanding is not a source of division between us, why not? Because of love, because of trust, we both have hearts to understand the other. I love to hear how my grandchildren understand things, and they love to spend time with me and learn from me.

Why is it not like this in the church, with some being more mature than others, but all having love for each other?

In my experience, traveling around the world, whenever people accept the truth about God's character of love, and His law as design law, there is this unity of heart. We may still see certain points differently, but we have real friendship, affection, and love for each other.

But when unity is based on legality, agreeing to a certain list of rules, then arguments are frequent when differences of belief, doctrine, definitions, rituals, practices, come up. Why? Because security is not found in heart transformation, but in rule-keeping. In that situations, whenever someone doesn't believe things like us, it makes us insecure and incites argument and conflict, rather than loving acceptance.

When is it appropriate and even necessary to amputate a body part? When that part becomes gangrenous—which occurs when it is cut off from the blood flow despite being attached to the body.

Is there a lesson in this for when we need to cut people off from our fellowship?

What does the blood represent? The life and love of Jesus. And what happens in our hearts and minds if we shut ourselves off from God's presence in our lives? We become more selfish, more fearful, and will manifest the fruits of the selfish spirit—gossiping, judgmentalism, perversities of various kinds, unkindness, untruthfulness, accepting and teaching lies, hardness of heart.

But, when do we sever the connection with such people—when do we amputate a person from our fellowship? Jesus said the wheat and tares grow up together until the harvest, that we are not to seek to uproot the tares from the church—yet, are there times it is still necessary? When?

When a limb of the body does need to be amputated, who do we want to do it? How do we want it done? Are there lessons in this analogy in how we should handle the painful circumstance of severing a connection with a church member who has hardened themselves in such a way they are leading others away from God?

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “According to 1Corinthians 12...” Do you believe this? Do you see this as an issue of trust in God?

What happens when people trust God with their lives, accept their abilities and gifts, humbly seek to apply them where God leads? What happens when people do not do this?

Satan tempted Eve to be dissatisfied with the gifts and abilities and position God had given her, and he suggested she could be more if she would merely take the fruit God had said not to partake of.

How many people today, partake of some “forbidden fruit” because they are not content with their lives, their selves, and are seeking for more ability, fame, power, position, or wealth than God has called for them to have?

What happens when we are not content with God’s plan for our lives?

What do you think of this historic quote from *Review and Herald August 4, 1910*:

God did not create evil. He only made the good, which was like himself. **But Satan would not be content to know the will of God and do it.** His curiosity was on the stretch to know that which God had not designed he should know. **Evil, sin, and death were not created by God; they are the result of disobedience, which originated in Satan.** [A result of disobedience, not an inflicted punishment by God for rule-breaking, but the unavoidable result of being out of harmony with the design laws that God built life to operate upon.] But the knowledge of evil now in the world was brought in through the cunning of Satan. These are very hard and expensive lessons; but men will learn them, and **many will never be convinced that it is bliss to be ignorant of a certain kind of knowledge, which arises from unsatisfied desires and unholy aims.** The sons and daughters of Adam are fully as inquisitive and **presumptuous as was Eve in seeking forbidden knowledge. They gain an experience, a knowledge, which God never designed they should have;** and the result will be, as it was to our first parents, the loss of their Eden home. When will human beings learn that which is demonstrated so thoroughly before them? RH August 4, 1910, par. 4

Can you think of types of knowledge that God never designed for us to have? The knowledge, by experience, i.e. knowing, anything that is out of harmony with His design law for life.

He doesn't want us to have:

- The knowledge of what taking cocaine or other illegal drugs feels like
- The knowledge of adultery
- The knowledge of worshipping false gods
- The knowledge of sorcery or witchcraft or communing with demons
- The knowledge of cruelty to other people or to animals
- The knowledge of murder
- The knowledge of bearing false witness
- The knowledge of envy
- The knowledge of laziness
- The knowledge of gluttony
- The knowledge of pornography
- The knowledge of war
- The knowledge of human politics (remember God warned them against kings)
- The knowledge of sin in all its deviations from God's design

If God did not want humans to have the knowledge of evil, why did God put the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden?

Notice it was the Tree of the *Knowledge of Good AND Evil*, meaning what?

It was the Tree, that would impart knowledge, but what kind of knowledge?

- Was it a tree where they would go to pick up books to read about good and evil?
- Would they get a TED talk on good and evil at the tree?
- Would they hear sermons or have Bible studies at the tree?
- What kind of knowledge were they to get there?
- When Jesus said, "This is life eternal that they might *know* you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) what kind of knowledge was Jesus speaking of?
- So, what kind of knowledge were they to obtain at the tree?
  - The knowledge of experience. They were to consider, reason, think, reflect, examine the evidence, and then decide and choose to internalize into their hearts and minds either good (trust in God, choose the truth and embrace His methods and thus know good) or internalize evil (distrust in God, choose the lie and embrace Satan's methods and thus know evil).

God put the Tree there for their development, for them to exercise the abilities God had given them so they could solidify themselves in perfect loyalty to God—so they could *know* good.

It was never God's design or intent for them to come to *know* evil by experience. It was God's design, for them to know the evil of sin by description, by education, just as God and the loyal angels had warned them—"in the day you eat thereof you will surely die." But God never wanted them to know evil by experience.

## **WEDNESDAY**

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Read second paragraph, "God promises that His..." Are gifts of the Spirit restricted by gender? Are certain gifts given only to men or to women?

Do we obstruct the health of the church if we take the position that only certain gifts can be experienced by men?

Are there objective differences in general between men and women?

Is it ungodly, discriminatory, to recognize these differences?

Why do you think, through all human cultures, throughout all recorded human history, societies have been organized in families with men being predominantly in leadership?

Is it only because of selfishness and men abusing their physical strength, or are their objective reasons that contribute to this arrangement, including in homes where godly love rules?

Consider human history, and consider a husband and wife who both love and trust God and want to live according to God's design. They enter into a genuine partnership to live other-centered lives; they both seek to bless and uplift the other and never seek to dominate, abuse or control the other. Would the couple want to divide responsibilities between the two of them so that their family would be most successful in their society?

Then, who would likely be the hunter, the woodsman, the plowman, the laborer and who would be the child bearer and homemaker? Would this be because of abuse, or because both husband and wife want to maximize their inherent strengths for the good of their family?

If a more successful arrangement could have been found in history, don't you think it would have emerged? Has a more successful arrangement ever emerged?

Now, does that mean there cannot be crossover? Are there examples in history of strong women succeeding in leadership?

But what happens when we ignore inherent differences in ability, and move forward with practices that ignore those realities? Are there any dangers?

Are families under assault today? From what forces? Are women being tempted in societies today to be dissatisfied being a mother and homemaker, to not be content in following their gifts? I know of women who love being mothers and homemakers, and yet still experience criticism for not working outside their home.

## **TUESDAY**

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What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Read first paragraph, “Spiritual gifts...” The gifts are for the healing of people and the elimination of sin, for the advancement of God’s kingdom.

The lesson asks what is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

Read third paragraph, “The special gifts of the Spirit...”

## **THURSDAY**

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What is necessary to grow our gifts? Are any of God’s laws involved? What happens if we don’t apply ourselves?

Should we expect our gifts to just be given and develop without application?

What about ideas in society that it is wrong to expect hard work?

## **FRIDAY**

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Read second paragraph, “To everyone...”

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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**Saturday, October 3, 2020:** Come and Reason will be presenting a live in-person event at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga TN! **Healing the Mind and Transforming the Character in a Broken World** is one-day event and will be packed with presentations by Timothy R. Jennings, Katie McPherson, Ben Bost and Kent Delhousaye. Join us to learn principles and strategies to heal the mind and heart from fear and habits that overrun our lives You'll want to book your spot soon before the event is sold out-- lunch is included in this great price! Click [here](#) for more information.

**October 9-10, 2020:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

**November 6-7, 2020:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX.  
More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>