

**WE NEED EACH OTHER
FOR TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE**

**Theology of Ordination Study Committee
Sabbath Vespers**

It is so encouraging to see us continue to build on the shoulders of the pioneers of this church who spent many hours searching the scriptures to dig out the truths found in Gods' word. It helps to remind ourselves that we need each other as we continue with this task assigned to us as members of the Theology of Ordination Committee (TOSC). The wisdom found in Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 (NIV) is very relevant:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.
If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!*

The work of digging out precious stones from the mines is not an easy one. When I first visited a mine site, the people I saw were very dark covered with dust all over. Searching the scriptures has been compared to the work of digging out precious stones. Mining is not only hard but risky. Therefore, miners need each other. We, too, need each other as we search the scriptures. Let us remind ourselves just how important it is for us to work together as we immerse ourselves in studying scripture. I will quote rather extensively from Ellen G. White on how we are to approach this task.

- We should never be contented and think we have all the truth:

“There are many mysteries in the word of God that we do not comprehend, and many of us are content to stop our investigation when we have just begun to receive a little knowledge concerning Christ. When there begins to be a little unfolding of the divine purposes to the mind, and we begin to obtain a slight knowledge of the character of God, we become satisfied, and think that we have received about all the light that there is for us in the word of God. But the truth of God is infinite. With painstaking effort, we should work in the mines of truth, discovering the precious jewels that have been hidden.” – {RH June 4, 1889 Par. 3}

“A spirit of pharisaism has been coming in upon the people who claim to believe the truth for these last days. They are self-satisfied. They have said, “We have the truth. There is no more light for the people of God.” But we are not safe when we take a position that we will not accept anything else than that upon which we have settled as truth. We should take the Bible, and investigate it closely for ourselves. We should dig in the mine of God’s word for truth. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Some have asked me if I thought there was any more light for the people of God. Our minds have become so narrow that we do not seem to understand that the Lord has a mighty work to do for us. Increasing light is to shine

upon us; for “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—The Review and Herald, June 18, 1889. – {CW 34.2}

- As we continue to study scriptures, we discover some things we never knew or things we understood differently. New light and new understanding of truths may be revealed to us. When that happens, we have ample counsel on how to proceed – work together.

“New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God.”—Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 34 (1892).

“There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.” – {CW 35.1,2}

- New light must be tested by going back to the Scripture to study together and with much prayer. Discoveries of new truth by anyone should be brought to brethren of greater experience and understanding for scrutiny. Right attitude be maintained during the study.

“When a doctrine is presented that does not meet our minds, we should go to the word of God, seek the Lord in prayer, and give no place for the enemy to come in with suspicion and prejudice. We should never permit the spirit to be manifested that arraigned the priests and rulers against the Redeemer of the world. They complained that He disturbed the people, and they wished He would let them alone; for He caused perplexity and dissension. The Lord sends light to us to prove what manner of spirit we are of. We are not to deceive ourselves.”

“In 1844, when anything came to our attention that we did not understand, we kneeled down and asked God to help us take the right position; and then we were able to come to a right understanding and see eye to eye. There was no dissension, no enmity, no evil-surmising, no misjudging of our brethren. If we but knew the evil of the spirit of intolerance, how carefully would we shun it!”—Gospel Workers, 301, 302 (1915). – {CW 43.1, 2}

“Let none be self-confident, as though God had given them special light above their brethren. Christ is represented as dwelling in His people; and believers, as “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,” says Paul, “beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are

called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” – {CW 45.3}

- In the course of searching the scripture some will come to a different understanding than what others hold. An encouragement is given to seek others to listen to what they have found by studying together. There will be, within the body of believers, room enough for collective study.

“We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who, we have reason to believe, desire to know what truth is as much as we do. Suppose a brother held a view that differed from yours, and he should come to you, proposing that you sit down with him and make an investigation of that point in the Scriptures; should you rise up, filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas, while refusing to give him a candid hearing?”

“The only right way would be to sit down as Christians and investigate the position presented, in the light of God’s word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position in the least if it were false, or strengthen your position if it were true. If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it. There must be no spirit of pharisaism cherished among us. When Christ came to His own, His own received Him not; and it is a matter of solemn interest to us that we should not pursue a similar course in refusing light from heaven.” – {CW 44.1,2}

- Just because there is calm, no controversy over matters of biblical truth within the body of believers should not be taken that all is alright.

“The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God’s people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.” – {CW 39.1}

“God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures, and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold.” – {CW 40.1}

“Agitate, agitate, agitate! The subjects which we present to the world must be to us a living reality. It is important that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith, we should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound. These may avail to silence an opposer, but they do not honor the truth. We should present sound

arguments, that will not only silence our opponents, but will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny....” – {CW 40.3}

- Why exactly do we need each other even in this pursuit for truth?

“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for “in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”—Testimonies for the Church 5:291-293 (1885). – {CW 47.1}

“As we take up the study of God’s word, we should do so with humble hearts. All selfishness, all love of originality, should be laid aside. Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. It was the unwillingness of the Jews to give up their long-established traditions that proved their ruin. They were determined not to see any flaw in their own opinions or in their expositions of the Scriptures; but however long men may have entertained certain views, if they are not clearly sustained by the written word, they should be discarded. Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. This was the spirit cherished among us forty years ago...”. – {CW 36.4}

“We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.” – {CW 37.1}

“If you search the Scriptures with a meek and teachable spirit, your efforts will be richly rewarded. “The natural man receiveth not of the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The Bible should be studied with prayer. We should pray as did David, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” No man can have insight into the word of God without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If we will but come into the right position before God, his light will shine upon us in rich, clear rays. This was the experience of the early disciples. The Scriptures declare that “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” God is willing to give us a similar blessing, when we seek for it as earnestly.” – {RH June 4, 1889 Par. 6}

- **Above everything else, we need the Holy Spirit of God in this search.**

The Lord did not lock the reservoir of heaven after pouring his Spirit upon the early disciples. We, also, may receive of the fullness of his blessing. Heaven is full of the treasures of his grace, and those who come to God in faith may claim all that he has promised. If we do not have his power it is because of our spiritual lethargy, our indifference, our indolence. Let us come out of this formality and deadness. – {RH June 4, 1889 Par. 7}

I have seen these counsels in operation during the study by this committee. Many excellent papers have been presented, discussions made, questions raised. I thank God for the dedication, faithfulness and courage of all our presenters.

As we wrap up our January series of meetings let me say that we have spent significant time studying and arguing for two main understandings on the subject of our assignment – women’s ordination. These are like pillars of a bridge standing erect and strong. We now need to lay the platform of the bridge for the church to walk on. It is easy to build fences around each of the pillars, but our call is to make a bridge for our people to walk on, not to walk away.

During the post-election violence in Kenya, there are two young men who were reported by BBC to have made a significant difference in the third largest slum in Africa, Kibera. Osodo belonged to the ethnic group that was in the opposition and Kyalo belonged to an ethnic group that was viewed to support the government. Osodo was expected by his own people to join the mobs that were causing havoc and death but he stayed inside his house. At one point, Osodo could not stand to hear and see people die so he stepped out to do something. The angry mob caught up with him and showered him several threats, accusing him to be a traitor. He ignored them and walked across to his friend’s house (Kyalo). These two decided to go out convene a meeting of the community to talk about peace. Before Koffi Annan, former United Nation’s General Secretary, announced peace for the nation, Osodo and Kyalo had brokered peace for the dwellers in Kibera.

There are those times in life we are called to walk across to hold the hand of the other, working together to determine what is best for all without compromising what we believe to be true. Our June meetings will be dedicated to this task. Pray earnestly for God to lead us.

Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. Philippians 4:8 (NKJ).

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