

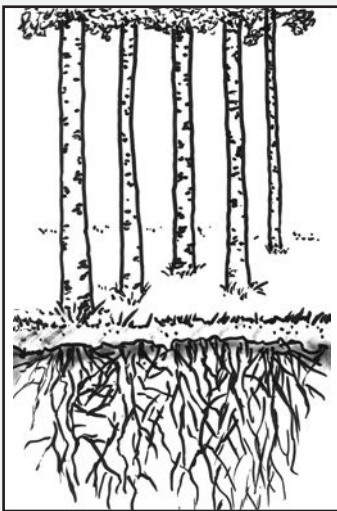
Why We Refuse to Rest



SABBATH—JULY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 10:34–39; Luke 12:13–21; Luke 22:14–30; Matthew 23:1–13; John 14:1–6.

MEMORY VERSE: “If people are jealous of others [people], their lives are not right. They do every kind [type; example] of wrong thing to get what they want. They confuse and upset people” (James 3:16, WE)



Aspens have some of the biggest roots in the plant kingdom.

ASPENS ARE BEAUTIFUL TREES. They can grow 45–90 feet (15–30 meters) tall. Aspens grow well in cold places that have cool summers. People use aspen wood to make furniture, matches, and paper. Deer and other animals often eat the bark of young aspen trees during cold winters when not much food is around. The bark of young aspens is healthful and filled with many vitamins. Aspens need lots of sunshine. They grow all the time, even in winter. So, they are important winter food for different animals.

Aspens have some of the biggest roots in the plant kingdom. The roots of the aspen spread underground and cover large areas. A single aspen tree can live up to 150 years. But the roots of an aspen tree can live below the ground for thousands of years!

In our study this week, we want to discover some of the “roots” or reasons for our not resting in Jesus. Many things can keep us from finding rest. Some of these things are easy to guess. But other things are the same as the deep roots of the aspen: we may not always be aware of the feelings and behaviors that separate us from our Savior.

JESUS DIVIDES US (Matthew 10:34–39)

Most people do not enjoy arguing or fighting. People want peace. As Seventh-day Adventists, we teach workshops on how to solve problems in our churches and in the workplace.

Read Matthew 10:34–39. What does Jesus mean in these verses when He says, “ ‘I did not come to bring peace, but war’ ” (Matthew 10:34, WE)?

These words of Jesus surprise us. Jesus is the Savior. He came as a helpless baby to this earth. He did not come as a powerful king with bodyguards all around Him. Jesus preached love to His neighbors and enemies. Now Jesus tells His followers that He brings separation and hard times. His followers must have wondered, as we do: “How can this be?”

Matthew 10:35–39 really is about our being loyal to Jesus. Jesus says Micah 7:6 to His followers. Then He asks them to make choices that will change their lives forever. Yes, a son should love his parents. That love is part of the law that God gave Moses on the mountain. But what if we put our love for our parents before our love for God? Then Jesus says we have a hard decision to make. We must choose between God and our parents. A father and a mother should love and care for their kids. But what if parents put their love for their kids first and their love for God second? Then Jesus says parents must make a difficult decision. They must choose between God and their children. Jesus must come first in our lives. That is what Jesus is telling us here.

Jesus uses the words “ ‘not worthy’ ” (ERV, ICB, Nlrv) or “ ‘not good enough’ ” (NLV, WE) three times in Matthew 10:37, 38. These words do not show us how good we are. These words talk about our friendship with Jesus. We are worthy and good enough when we choose Jesus above everything else. That includes our father, mother, or children. When we choose Jesus, we choose the cross.

“I want to see our young people filled with the spirit of religion that will cause them to pick up the cross and follow Jesus. Go forward, young followers of Jesus. Wear His holy life the same as clothes. Your Savior will lead you to the job that best fits your talents and skills. He will put you where you can do the most good for Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 87, adapted.



**Jesus must come first
in our lives.**

A SELFISH HEART (Luke 12:13–21)

Selfishness is the same as the aspen tree we read about on Sabbath. Selfishness has deep roots named “sin.” Sin keeps us from real rest in Jesus. Selfishness may be the easiest sin for us to show. For many people, selfishness is as natural as breathing.

Jesus tells a picture story in Luke 12:13–21. What problem does the picture story show us? Are we selfish when we plan for the future? Is our planning for the future the same as our showing that we do not care about the kingdom of God? If no, then what is Jesus really warning us about in these verses?

A man asks Jesus for help. The man wants Jesus to tell his brother to share with him the things from their dead father. But Jesus refuses to be their judge. Jesus tells the man a picture story. The picture story shows the deeper problem in the hearts of the two brothers: selfishness.

Think about the many ways you are selfish. How does selfishness hurt your friendship with God? With your husband or wife? With your family? With your church family? With your neighbors? With the people at your job? What answer to this problem do we find in Philippians 2:5–8?



Selfishness may be the easiest sin for us to show.

The rich man in the picture story in Luke 12:13–21 thinks only about his needs and wishes. He forgets about the things that God wants him to do in this life. What are the important rules of the kingdom of God? For sure, these rules are not about getting more and the best for ourselves on this earth. Paul shows us the important rules of the kingdom of God in Philippians 2:5–8. These rules caused Jesus to go to the cross for us and die in our place.

Philippians 2:5–8 shows us the real meaning of love. Love for God and other people should be the reason for the choices we make. If love is not the reason, then we will continue to put less treasure in heaven. We will collect more riches for ourselves on this earth.

Why is it so easy to wish for more money? We all need some money to live. But why do we always want more, even if we already have enough for our needs?

THE STRONG WISH FOR FAME AND POWER (Luke 22:14–30)

Do you want to feel encouraged and filled with hope? Then read about the last week that Jesus lived and worked for God on this earth. Sadly, this story about Jesus also shows us something that is not very nice about His followers. They wish for fame and power. They want to be important in the kingdom of God. These wishes cause them to do and say foolish things.

Read about the meal with Jesus in Luke 22:14–30. As you read these verses, think about how Jesus must feel as His followers argue about which one of them is the most important (Luke 22:24). Why do the followers of Jesus do this? What is the problem with their hearts?

Who is the best and most important one of us? This is not the first time the followers of Jesus ask this question. Matthew 18:1 tells us that the followers of Jesus ask Him, “Who is the most important person in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1, NIV). Jesus does not answer right away. He wants to teach His followers an important lesson. So, He asks a child to come to Him. Then Jesus puts the child in the center of the group. Everyone must wonder, “What is Jesus doing?” Jesus explains Himself: “The truth is, you must change your thinking and become like little children. If you don’t do this, you will never enter God’s kingdom” (Matthew 18:3, ERV).

We must allow God to change our hearts. Or we will never find real rest in Jesus. We know that we need God to help us. We know that we cannot depend on ourselves to change the things we wish for. But Jesus can give us new hearts. Jesus tells His followers: “Trust Me. Depend on Me for everything. Be the same as this child in your hearts. A man who is really important in the eyes of God will give up his wishes. He will do what God wants him to do.”

It is sad that the followers of Jesus are slow to learn this lesson. When they walk to the place where they will eat the last meal with Jesus before He dies on the cross, they fight and argue.

All this happened after the followers of Jesus spent a long time working with Jesus. This is a sad example! Their fighting shows us that the human heart is very evil. But there is a beautiful side to this story. Jesus does not give up on His followers.



“The truth is, you must change your thinking and become like little children. If you don’t do this, you will never enter God’s kingdom” (Matthew 18:3, ERV).

LIVING A LIE (Matthew 23:1–13)

Hypocrites are people who want us to believe that they are better than they really are. Hypocrites are fakes. They live a lie. Their private lives do not match what we see in public. So, hypocrites have a “private face” and a “public face.” The public face is the face they show us. The private face is the person they really are. Jesus says the word “hypocrite” seven times in Matthew 23. Jesus names the Jewish religious leaders hypocrites (Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). The New Testament stories about Jesus show how He offers forgiveness to sinners. Many of these sinners are married people who cheated on their husbands or wives, tax collectors, women who sell sex for pay, and even killers. Jesus shows them mercy. But Jesus does not show a lot of mercy to hypocrites (read Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; Matthew 7:5; Matthew 15:7–9; Matthew 22:18).



Jesus names the Jewish religious leaders hypocrites.

Read what Jesus says about the behavior of hypocrites in Matthew 23:1–13. Write down the four things that Jesus says hypocrites are guilty of doing.

Jesus says the religious leaders do four wrong things. The religious leaders are named Pharisees. The Pharisees are very strict about keeping the law. The Pharisees are very different from the Sadducees. The Sadducees are another Jewish religious group. They are mostly rich and powerful. The Sadducees speak the Greek language well. They know all about the writings of Greek thinkers. The Sadducees do not believe that God will judge all the people on earth. The Sadducees also do not believe in everlasting life. Jesus says that both the Sadducees and the Pharisees are hypocrites.

Why does Jesus say that the Sadducees and Pharisees are hypocrites? Jesus says hypocrites do not do what they say they will do. Hypocrites make religion hard work for people. But hypocrites do not follow the same rules. Hypocrites want people to praise them for their good behavior. Hypocrites want honor that belongs only to God. Jesus is upset with the religious leaders. That is why He calls them hypocrites. But His heart is full of love, even for them.

Do you need to be a religious leader to be a hypocrite? Of course not! How can we learn to see if we are guilty of this bad behavior? How can we get rid of it?

FINDING REST IN JESUS (John 14:1–6)

When we are feeling tired and worn out, what can we do to find rest in Jesus? How can we stop feeling afraid? What must we do to win the war against separation, a selfish heart, the wish to be important, the wish for fame and power, and living a lie? Read John 14:1–6 for the answers.

Real rest always starts with Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He knows the right direction we should go. Jesus is the Law Giver. He is truth made flesh. His Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Are you feeling hurt, tired, worn out, sick and discouraged? Then Jesus is not just any life. Jesus is the life. That is why Jesus promises us life that is full and good (John 10:10). This promise also includes our everlasting life and home with Jesus. At the same time, this promise includes a better life with Jesus here and now.

Jesus tells us, “ ‘Do not let your heart be troubled’ ” (John 14:1, NLV). These words are an invitation. Jesus invites us to trust Him when we feel low. He will give us hope. When we fight hard against sin, Jesus will help us win the war. He will finish His good work He started in our hearts (Philippians 1:6). He will save us.

Things may get very bad at times in life. That is when we must trust in the promise Jesus gave us: Jesus is getting a place ready for us. In this place, we will never feel worn or tired again. Jesus gives us this hope of a better future. He also offers us a better life now. Jesus offers this hope to all of us. Are you an awful sinner? Jesus still offers you this hope. Are you weak? Jesus offers you this hope, even when you make mistakes.

The important thing we must remember is to come to God anyway. Maybe we are hurt. Or broken. God accepts us even if we are not perfect. That is what His loving-favor is all about. We must believe that God will give us this favor if we ask for it in faith.

Read Jeremiah 3:22. What does God ask us to do? What will He do for us when we do what He asks?

Jesus promises us: “ ‘I will come back. Then I will take you with me, so that you can be where I am’ ” (John 14:3, ERV). What does this promise show us about how important the Second Coming is? Why is this promise so precious?



Jesus invites us to trust Him when we feel low.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “A heart full of self cannot grow. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? Then forget about yourself. Try to help other people. Talk about the love of Jesus. Tell people how good Jesus is to you. Do everything God gives you to do. Care about the people around you. Do everything you can to save them. Then Jesus will give you His Spirit of unselfish love. He will help you save other people. Your spiritual life will grow. You will be the same as a fruit tree that produces much fruit. The Spirit of God will be seen in your life. Your faith will grow stronger. Your beliefs will grow stronger, too. God will make your love perfect. More and more, you will show the life of Jesus in your own life. Everything clean, holy, and lovely will be seen in you.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 67, 68, adapted.

Ellen G. White gives us advice for solving problems between church members: “The conversations between the church members go on for hours. Their time is wasted. So is the time of the servants of God who must sit there and listen to them talk. The problem is that the love and mercy of God are not alive in the hearts of the church members. They should empty their hearts of all selfishness and pride. Then most problems will be solved in five minutes.”—*Early Writings*, page 119, adapted.



“A heart full of self cannot grow.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can you work together with the Holy Spirit to empty your heart of selfishness?
- ② Wanting to do important things is not bad. God wants to do big things in our lives. But how can our wish for these things cause us to become full of self? What can we do to avoid this danger?
- ③ Most of us do not show people the ugly parts of our hearts. We hide our wish to be important. We hide that we are living a lie. We do not show people that we are selfish or greedy. We show them that we are nice. But really, our hearts are the same as the roots of the aspen tree we read about on Sabbath. Our evil behavior hides in our hearts below the surface of our skin. How can we get rid of the “root” of our problem and find real rest in Jesus?
- ④ What hope do we have without the Second Coming? Explain.

THE STRANGER AND THE “LOST” BIBLE

COVID-19 made Pastor Sandile Khumalo fall to his knees in prayer. During COVID-19, the city of Johannesburg shut down. Johannesburg is the biggest city in South Africa. 5.5 million people live in Johannesburg. Sandile was the pastor of three churches there. The shutdown was very strict. Parks closed. Citizens were not allowed to jog, walk their dogs, or even buy or sell cigarettes and alcohol.

Sandile started to preach online to his three churches. Sometimes, people sent Sandile nice messages telling him how much his sermons encouraged them. But Sandile wanted to do more for God. So, he prayed. He asked God to send him someone who needed to meet Jesus during COVID-19.

What happened next surprised Sandile. Soon after, Sandile got a WhatsApp text message from a stranger. The person said his name was Hilton. Then Hilton sent Sandile a picture of a Bible he found in a minivan taxi on his way to work. Minivan taxis can be seen everywhere on the streets of Johannesburg.

“I picked up your Bible in the taxi,” Hilton wrote in his text to Sandile. Hilton explained that he opened the Bible and found the name of Sandile and his contact information inside the cover. So, Hilton decided to contact Sandile.

Sandile looked with interest at the photo of the Bible that Hilton sent him. Sandile owned many Bibles. But he did not remember the Bible in that picture. The Bible had a red cover. It looked new and expensive. But Sandile had not ridden in a minivan taxi in years. Sandile asked his wife and other family members about the Bible. They did not remember Sandile owning this Bible at all. Hilton did not care that Sandile did not own this Bible. Hilton was more interested in what the Bible said. Hilton never read a Bible before. So, he was excited to get started. He asked Sandile to give him Bible studies.

Sandile knew that God heard his prayer. God sent Sandile someone who did not believe in Him and who needed to meet Jesus during COVID-19. This answer to prayer was a real miracle. “I praise God for this chance to share Jesus with Hilton. I cannot explain how this chance to serve God happened. It is a miracle!” Sandile said. Then he added, “I hope my time with Hilton will lead him to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.”

This story shows us what “I Will Go” is all about. “I Will Go” is a plan to add more members to the church in cities that have more than 1 million people living in them. Learn more about this plan at IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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