

Ministry Thrift Store

Start Up Guide And Operations Manual

Ministry Thrift Store

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All quotation emphasis is denoted by bolding and is supplied.

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Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all those who had a part in this guide coming to fruition.

A special thank you to all the volunteers who have made this ministry a success through their sacrifice and thousands of hours of dedicated service.

Pastors David and Mike for their vision in setting this ministry in motion, and their encouragement to record our experience in this guide.

The pioneers – Shirley, Rayma, John & Stacy, and all those who were instrumental in the birth and infancy of this ministry.

Roy and Rodney for their support and encouragement.

Rayma, Kathy, and my wife Cheryl for their diligent proof reading.

Gary and Diana, Manager and assistant at the Other store.

God the Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit for Their continued presence, sanctification, atonement, and guidance.

Contributions:

Wilbur – Biblical insights and thoughts specifically with the following sections. *Walking in God's Will. Working Together. The phrase "Learn, Grow and Change"*

Rayma – *Clothes Sorting Preference Two*
– *Book Department*

Katie – *Linens*

Kathy – *Boutique, Jewelry information and pricing*

Rayma, Wanda, Dicie, Rodney – *Item Pricing Lists*

Introduction

The information contained in this guide, is presented with the prayer that it will support you in your desire to serve God. We do not claim to ‘know it all’, God is still in the process of teaching us His ways.

We do not doubt that you are capable of starting and running a thrift store ministry without the help of this guide. We trust though that you will find the information gathered here – including the experiences and evidences of God's leading and provision for the past eleven years – to be a help and encouragement as you continue allowing God to shine His light through you and your church.

As you review this information and begin to experience it, you will come up with new ideas, ways of implementation, spread sheets and forms; we would welcome you sharing those with us, to aid us in becoming more efficient in our ministry, it will also be a help to others as it is shared with them.

As you move forward we invite you to come to one of our locations and experience first hand the information contained in this manual. We trust you will gain a blessing from this information, but there is nothing like ‘doing’ it.

May God richly bless you as you ‘Seek Him First’.

Ministry Thrift Store
Board, Staff and Volunteers

2. Our Story – See Webpage

3. Reasons It May Be God's Will for Your Church To Minister Through A Thrift Store

God uses many ways to reach a hurting world; we believe the thrift store ministry is one of His ways. Thrift store ministry not only provides an avenue for the church to be involved in their community, it is a ministry that may be self-funding.

God's counsel is clear; He desires that we serve our fellow man as His agents. How that takes place will be different for each church and individual. As you study and are open to God's guidance, He will make it plain what avenue of ministry He would have your church pursue. It may be in thrift store ministry, or He may use this information as a spring board to direct you down a totally different road; a road not thought of as yet. We know that as you seek God and His will for your church, He will make your path clear.

As you review this manual, we pray that you will be receptive to God's leading, and rejoice with you in your willingness to allow God to direct you in how He would have you be an active agent in His Kingdom.

Reasons It May Be God's Will for Your Church to Minister Through A Thrift Store:

1. An opportunity for God to change hearts.
2. A presence in the community.
3. An avenue for church members to be of service.
4. A self-funding way to carry out God's commission to assist the poor and down-trodden.
5. An avenue to provide employment for individuals who wish to serve in ministry, yet do not have an outside source of income.
6. An avenue to provide funds for outreach programs.
7. An avenue to work side-by-side in ministry with brothers and sisters from the community.
8. _____.

4. Direction Given God's Church Regarding Ministry

The purpose of thrift store ministry is to allow God to use the experience to change our hearts. With a changed heart God is able to shine through us more brightly; to use us as His hands and feet as we do His bidding.

The following quotes have been compiled to aid you as you consider God's plan for your church. Their review makes God's direction to His church clear. The question is, how does God want your church to fulfill Christ's commission? It may be through a thrift store ministry, or God may have another way He would have you fulfill His charge.

These Bible verses and Ellen White quotes are not exhaustive; they are a starting point as you look to God for guidance. The quotes gathered here are grouped and placed under headings; they are offered without comment except for the emphasis supplied in bold.

Two questions to consider as you study:

1. What is God's direction to us?
2. In what way would He have us respond?

As you study, the Holy Spirit will guide you and make it clear how He would have you be Christ's hands and feet

The Purpose of God's Church

“The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world...The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 9

“Like our Saviour, we are in this world to do service for God. We are here to become like God in character, and by a life of service to reveal Him to the world.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 409

Christ's Mission

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised...” Luke 4:18 (KJV)

God's Instruction

“There will always be some among you who are poor. That is why **I am commanding you to share your resources freely with the poor** and with other Israelites in need.” Deuteronomy 15:11 (NLT)

“I want you to **share your food with the hungry** and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. **Give clothes to those who need them**, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.” Isaiah 58:7 (NLT)

“Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must **care for orphans and widows in their troubles**, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.” James 1:27 (NLT)

“You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. **Don't give reluctantly** or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully. ⁸And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. ⁹As the Scriptures say,

"Godly people give generously to the poor.

Their good deeds will never be forgotten."

¹⁰For God is the one who gives seed to the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will give you many opportunities to do good, and he will produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹Yes, you will be enriched so that you can give even more generously. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will break out in thanksgiving to God. ¹²So two good things will happen—the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanksgiving to God. ¹³**You will be glorifying God through your generous gifts.** For your generosity to them will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. ¹⁴And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the wonderful grace of God shown through you. ¹⁵Thank God for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words!” 2 Corinthians 9:7-15 (NLT)

“But if there are any poor people in your towns when you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you, **do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them.**” Deuteronomy 15:7 (NLT)

“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.” Psalm 82:3 (KJV)

“Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.” Proverbs 31:9 (NLT)

“Who should know how the widow should get along unless it be those who have well-filled granaries? The means for her to get along are at hand. And dare those whom God has made His stewards, to whom He has entrusted means, withhold from the needy disciples of Christ? If so, they withhold from Jesus. **Do you expect the Lord to rain down grain from heaven to supply the needy? Has He not rather placed it in your hands, to help and bless them through you?** Has He not made you His instrument in this good work to prove you and to give you the privilege of laying up a treasure in heaven?” Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 32, 33 also Welfare Ministry, p. 216

Honoring God

“Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but **those who help the poor honor him.**”
Proverbs 14:31 (NLT)

The poor will always be with us

“You will always have the poor among you...” Mark 14:7 (NLT)

“You will always have the poor among you, but I will not be here with you much longer.”
Matthew 26:11 (NLT)

“There will always be some among you who are poor...” Deuteronomy 15:11 (NLT)

A picture of what God's people look like

“When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in.

They are generous, compassionate, and righteous.

⁵All goes well for those who are generous,
who lend freely and conduct their business fairly.

⁶Such people will not be overcome by evil circumstances.
Those who are righteous will be long remembered.

⁷They do not fear bad news;
they confidently trust the LORD to care for them.

⁸They are confident and fearless
and can face their foes triumphantly.

⁹**They give generously to those in need.**
Their good deeds will never be forgotten.

They will have influence and honor.” Psalm 112:4-9 (NLT)

“**The godly know the rights of the poor;** the wicked don't care to know.” Proverbs 29:7 (NLT)

A virtuous woman “...**extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy.**”
Proverbs 31:20 (NLT)

We are to be a Refuge

“But to the poor, O LORD, **you are a refuge from the storm.** To the needy in distress, you are **a shelter from the rain and the heat.** For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall.” Isaiah 25:4 (NLT)

We are God's hands and feet, we are His heart. We are the tangible revelation of God to a dying world

“It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. **There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love.** All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.” Christ's Object Lessons, p. 419

“We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our co-operation; for **man must be the channel to communicate with man.** And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love.” Desire of Ages, p. 297

“There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; **but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ.**” Desire of Ages, p. 297

“He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a **link in the chain let down to save the world,** one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 105

Having a presence in the community, not setting ourselves apart

“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. **The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence.** Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 143

“Those who have been most successful in soul-winning were men and women who did not pride themselves on their ability, but **who in humility and faith sought to help those about them.** Jesus did this very work. He came close to those whom He desired to reach.” Gospel Workers, p. 194

“The common people are to take their place as workers. **Sharing the sorrows of their fellow men** as the Saviour shared the sorrows of humanity, **they will by faith see Him working with them.**” Gospel Workers, p. 38

“The work which the disciples did, we also are to do. Every Christian is to be a missionary. **In sympathy and compassion we are to minister to those in need of help, seeking with unselfish earnestness to lighten the woes of suffering humanity.**” The Ministry of Healing, p. 104

“To the early church had been intrusted a constantly enlarging work,--that of **establishing centers of light and blessing** wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 90

Would your community be aware if your church closed its doors tomorrow?

“The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled upon the church book, **but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by**

the number of her persevering, faithful workers. Personal interest, and vigilant, individual effort will accomplish more for the cause of Christ than can be wrought by sermons or creeds.”
Review and Herald, Sept. 6, 1881

“Let all who believe the third angel's message take up the work that God has committed to them. Let them seek to realize its greatness and importance. Let believers do all in their power to arouse an interest in present truth in the neighborhood in which they live. Let all act an earnest, disinterested part. **Some will labor in one way, and some in another, but all should do something...**” The Review and Herald, September 17, 1903

As we serve, God will open opportunities to share His truth

“Many can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness. Their physical wants must first be relieved. **As they see evidence of our unselfish love, it will be easier for them to believe in the love of Christ.**” Counsels on Health, p. 391

“So it should be with us. Wherever we are, we should watch for opportunities of speaking to others of the Saviour. If we follow Christ's example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him. Not abruptly, **but with tact born of divine love, we can tell them of Him who is the "chiefest among ten thousand," and the One "altogether lovely."** This is the very highest work in which we can employ the talent of speech. It was given to us that we might present Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour.” Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 338, 339

We do not give service to others, for our salvation, we serve because God knows what is best for His children, we serve because we are following the direction of our Father. Paul makes it clear that if we serve just to serve, it is to no avail

“If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but **if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.**” 1 Corinthians 13:3 (NLT)

Conclusion

“I have been instructed to refer our people to the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. Read this chapter carefully and understand the **kind of ministry that will bring life into the churches.** The work of the gospel is to be carried by means of our liberality as well as by our labors. When you meet suffering souls who need help, give it them. When you find those who are hungry, feed them. In doing this you will be working in lines of Christ's ministry. The Master's holy work was a benevolent work. Let our people everywhere be encouraged to have a part in it.” Medical Ministry, p. 263

“No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn. ⁷I want you to **share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them,** and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

⁸“If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹Then when you call, the LORD will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply.

"Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors!
¹⁰Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day. ¹¹The LORD will guide you continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring." Isaiah 58:6-11 (NLT)

"The work of gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute, is the very work which every church that believes the truth for this time should long since have been doing. We are to show the tender sympathy of the Samaritan in supplying physical necessities, **feeding the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to our homes, gathering from God every day grace and strength** that will enable us to reach to the very depths of human misery and help those who cannot possibly help themselves..." Testimonies Volume 6, p. 276

He (God) **will not hearken to the prayer of His people** while the orphan, the fatherless, the lame, the blind, and the sick **are neglected among them.**" Testimonies Volume 3, p. 517

Further Study

Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* "The Helpless Poor," Chapter 13.

Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry*

5. Purpose/Mission

It is important to have a purpose and mission that is understood by all who participate in the ministry. Each church with a thrift store ministry may have a different purpose and mission, and they may change over time. However, with a definite purpose and mission, everyone involved knows the direction you are headed and the success of the ministry can be evaluated.

Your 'Purpose' is a statement of why the ministry exists. The 'Mission' is the means by which you carry out your purpose. Below is our Purpose and Mission to give you some ideas as you formulate yours.

PURPOSE

“To foster an environment that encourages each person who enters to continue learning how to participate in God’s work of creating His Character in them.”

God is looking for people who will allow Him to create His character in them. A people who are willing for God to bring them to the place where their every thought is in harmony with God’s will – a people who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These people are an example to the universe of what God is offering to do in hearts of sinful humans.

Learning how to participate in God's work of creating His character in us should be the purpose of everything we do in life. God will use different means to carry out this purpose. The thrift store ministry can be one of those means.

MISSION

“To allow God to use us as He sees best, to fulfill the ministry purpose.”

This mission is carried out in the thrift store ministry through a wiliness to serve those who:

- come to serve
- come to shop
- have physical needs
- have merchandise they no longer need

In the process of allowing God to use everything that takes place in our lives to further His goal of creating His character in us, He will use us as His 'human agents'. As we interact with those God brings across our path, He will shine His light through us and will use us to encourage them to recognize and experience Christ’s work in their lives.

The next two pages are a more in-depth explanation of our Purpose and Mission.

Ministry Thrift Store

Purpose and Mission

Purpose –

To encourage all who enter to continue growing in learning how to respond in the experience of a personal friendship with Father and Jesus and thereby, allow Them, through Holy Spirit, to create Their Character in them. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature...**” 2 Peter 1:4 KJV

Mission –

To allow God to use everything that takes place in our lives to further His goal of creating His character in us, and in that process to use us as His ‘human agents,’ to shine His life giving light through us to others. “In God’s great plan for the redemption of a lost race, **He has placed Himself under the necessity of using human agencies as His helping hand.**” Selected Messages Book 1, p. 99

When this Purpose and Mission are our focus; we can expect the presence of God to fill the store each day, and we have the assurance that He will use the Goals listed below to further His work.

There are *four main categories of people* who are served by the ministry of the store – all of whom have in common a primary need – **God**. The ministry goal is to serve in a way that allows God to shine through us to not only meet an apparent need of food or clothes, but to ultimately meet the primary need of a saving knowledge and experience with God.

Goal –

That the *store be an environment* that speaks to the needs of:

- I. Those who know God has called them here as His ‘**Helping Hands.**’
 - a. A place that encourages Christ’s flock to continue to develop and express their relationship with Jesus in a tangible way.
 - b. A setting that fosters those ministering; to pray, listen and encourage the individuals they come in contact with each day.
- II. Those who **come to shop.**
 - a. A refuge to those who enter, from the pain and stress of the world.
 - b. A place where members of the community feel welcome and experience peace.
- III. Those who come because they have **physical needs.**

A sanctuary that offers gifts of food, clothing, furniture, etc.
- IV. Those who **bless us with donations.**

A brokerage center to distribute previously-enjoyed merchandise to new homes.

Supportive Goals –

1. Continue to understand that the store, and all it encompasses, belongs to God, He is to be put first in all that is said and done. “...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...”
Matthew 6:33
2. All staff and volunteers who serve at the store come to know it is where God has called them to be.
3. To continue to meet the physical needs of those who find themselves in need of food, clothing, furniture, etc., at no cost to them. “...God now entrusts men with means, with talents and opportunities, that they may be His agents in helping the poor and the suffering.” The Desire of Ages, p. 523
4. To provide usable items at an affordable cost for those with limited incomes.
5. To believe God will provide all that is needed in His time and in His way. “But my God **shall supply all your need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

These goals will only be accomplished as the staff make it their continuing choice to allow God to develop His character in them. As this takes place they are Christ’s arms of love allowing His grace and joy to flow through them, drawing others to Christ.

“He who uses his entrusted gifts as God designs becomes a co-worker with the Saviour. **He wins souls to Christ, because he is a representative of His character.**”

The Desire of Ages, p. 523

Public Mission Statement –

Our desire is to allow God to shine through us, as we provide food, clothing, and household items to those in temporary crises. This assistance is made possible because of the mercy of Christ our Saviour, through sales of donated items, the dedication of our volunteers, our customers, and the generosity of our friends who bless us with their donations.

6. Lessons God is Teaching Us

God uses our experience with the thrift store ministry to teach us His ways. We are learning that He is able to supply all we need, not only for this life, but life eternal. We are experiencing His ability to provide our temporary needs, and most importantly our need for a new heart filled with His joy, peace and love.

Regardless of the specific ministry God has directed us to be engaged in, He invites us to place our trust in Him and walk by faith. As we follow God's leading in thrift store ministry, we experience His provision of:

location – personnel – finances – merchandise – customers –
supplying the financial needs of all personnel involved

We are learning that God's promises are true. As we go forward with the conviction that we are walking in God's will, we have His assurance that He will take care of our every need.

“The means in our possession may not seem to be sufficient for the work; but if we will move forward in **faith, believing in the all-sufficient power of God, abundant resources will open before us. If the work be of God, He Himself will provide the means for its accomplishment.** He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. **The little that is wisely and economically used in the service of the Lord of heaven will increase in the very act of imparting...**If we go to the Source of all strength, with our hands of faith outstretched to receive, we shall be sustained in our work, even under the most forbidding circumstances, **and shall be enabled to give to others the bread of life.**” The Desire of Ages, p. 371

As we move forward in **FAITH** with the conviction that we are following **GOD’S WILL**, we find that He is our **SOURCE** to supply our needs from His resources, so that we may **BLESS OTHERS** with the bread of life.

The following sections are thoughts provided as a starting point for study and discussion as we each continue to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God’s great love and mercy for every human being.

- A. A New Heart
- B. God’s Agents
- C. Channels of Blessings
- D. Disinterested Giving
- E. Dispensing Mercy
- F. Success by God’s Standard
- G. Trust in God
- H. Walking in God’s Will

A. A New Heart God's Solution for Sin

Six thousand years ago Adam and Eve chose to distrust God. This choice severed the connection between man and Divinity, infected this world with sin, and brought death. Some of the effects of their choice were immediate, some were realized over time. As Adam and Eve had children, the infection was passed to each child, and has continued from one generation to the next. You and I come along thousands of years later, and find we are also contaminated with the disease of sin.

“We are all **infected** and impure with sin....” Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)

With the infection of sin, Adam and Eve lost the capacity to choose whom they would trust. Satan was now their master; man was doomed to a life of slavery to Satan and his kingdom. However, God stepped in and reconnected man with heaven (Gen. 3:15). The promise of the ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ (Rev. 13:8) was shared with the parents of the human race; the Messiah was the avenue of reconnection with heaven.

“But man was **not abandoned** to the results of the evil he had chosen....**All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.**” Education, p. 27

The Savior stepped in and restored to Adam, Eve, and their seed, the power to choose whether or not to yield to Satan or Christ, to choose with whom they desire fellowship. Because God reconnected humanity to Himself, we today – though sick with the infection of sin – have the opportunity to choose God and His healing, to yield to His ability to cleanse us from the cancer of sin, to be fully and wholly restored to life. God restored in us the capacity to choose to walk in companionship with our Creator, a relationship that allows God to create in us new life.

“**Christ is seeking to uplift all who will be lifted to companionship with Himself, that we may be one with Him as He is one with the Father.** He permits us to come in contact with suffering and calamity in order to call us out of our selfishness; **He seeks to develop in us the attributes of His character**--compassion, tenderness, and love. By **accepting** this work of ministry we place ourselves in His school, to be fitted for the courts of God. By **rejecting** it, we reject His instruction, and choose eternal separation from His presence.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 388

God has given us the ability to accept the work of Christ in our life, or reject it, the choice is ours. We are free to remain in our sin sick state, or accept the transforming healing power of the Divine Physician as we walk in companionship with Christ. We are unable to administer the antidote (Jer. 13:23), it comes only through connection with Divinity, a Source outside of ourselves, a Physician Who is able to heal us from the inside out.

“All our good works are dependent on **a power outside of ourselves.**” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 159

A companionship relation with God provides this power, a power that takes what sin has ruined and creates beauty. When we make the choice to reconnect and walk with God, we avail ourselves of the cure.

We are very familiar with the symptoms of the sin infection, it is manifested in our lives as a natural desire to think and act contrary to the way God thinks and acts, to be self centered and unwilling to react to life's circumstances with trust and love. This way of responding to life comes from an inherited sinful carnal nature, it is reinforced by the sin that surrounds us as we grow and our character develops. Paul gives a clear picture in Colossians of how the infection of sin is revealed in our lives.

“So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with **sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires**. Don't be **greedy** for the good things of this life, for that is **idolatry**...now is the time to get rid of **anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander and dirty language**. Don't **lie** to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds.” Colossians 3:5-9 (NLT)

That is an extensive list of how our selfish heart exhibits its character. Praise God that not only does He not condemn us for the condition we find ourselves in, (Romans 8:34) He has a remedy; a cure for our infection of sin.

Verses five to nine of Colossians three, describe how our sinful nature is manifested, verse ten gives us the solution, the cure, “...you have clothed yourselves with a **brand-new nature** that is **continually** being renewed as you **learn more and more about Christ**, who created this **new nature within you**.”

The cure from the infection of sin is to receive a new nature; the nature of Christ. God is offering to take the evil ways 'lurking' in me, and replace them with Jesus' pure ways, He is offering to renew my mind, to create in me a new nature, a selfless character of love and mercy. This new character thinks the way God thinks, and acts in a way that brings life and peace. The character of God, the mind of Christ, is the antidote for sin.

We receive this remedy to our sin sick state, through the power of a companionship connection with Divinity. In fellowship with Christ we find that instead of manifesting our sinful nature as outlined in verses three to nine, we begin to experience the qualities of God as outlined in verses twelve to seventeen, “Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with **tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**.¹³ You must **make allowance** for each other's faults and **forgive** the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.¹⁴ And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is **love**. Love is what binds us all together in **perfect harmony**.¹⁵ And let the **peace** that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be **thankful**.¹⁶ Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you **wise**. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while **giving thanks** through him to God the Father.” Colossians 3:12-17 (NLT)

As we allow Christ to create His nature in us;

- ❖ We are filled with, **tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**
- ❖ We **make allowances** and **forgive** each other
- ❖ We are drawn together with **love** and **harmony**
- ❖ God's **peace** rules in our hearts
- ❖ The word of God makes us **wise**
- ❖ **Thankfulness** and praise are on our lips and in our hearts

God is offering us a gift we will marvel in for an eternity. He is offering to take what sin has ruined and create in us His beauty and grace.

“It is the privilege of every believer in Christ to possess Christ's nature, a nature *far above* that which Adam forfeited by transgression.” The Upward Look, p. 18

What an awesome truth, as God renews our minds, He is transforming us to a state above that which Adam held before he sinned. God has made a way of escape from our sinful desires and has provided a means for us to gain back what Adam lost – a nature like God's – through the restoration of our character. Christ is offering to renew our minds, to change the way we think, to give us His way of relating to life's sorrows, irritations, joys and blessings. As our thoughts become more like His our actions will follow, and we find that it becomes natural for us to act like He acts.

One of Satan's accusations in the great controversy being waged; is that God's laws are unfair and cannot be kept by His subjects. God's answer to Satan's accusation, is a people who walk in fellowship with Christ, who have allowed Him to take away their bent to sin, a people who have allowed God to create His nature in them.

Through the ages God has had individuals who have permitted Him full access to their lives. Enoch is a clear example of one who allowed God to perform His transforming work, the same work God is offering to accomplish in you and me.

“Enoch was a prophet who spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. He was a light amid the moral darkness, a pattern man, a man who walked with God, being obedient to God's law--that law which Satan had refused to obey, which Adam had transgressed, which Abel obeyed, and because of his obedience was murdered. And now God would demonstrate to the universe the falsity of Satan's charge that man cannot keep God's law. He would demonstrate that though man had sinned, he could so relate himself to God that he would have the mind and spirit of God and would be a representative symbol of Christ. This holy man was selected of God to denounce the wickedness of the world, and to evidence to the world that it is possible for men to keep all the law of God. . . .” The Upward Look p. 228

Enoch is a testimony and witness to the power of God to create a new character in man. God desires to walk with us through the same creative process He took Enoch; He desires to impart to us His characteristics of trust, peace, joy and love.

The character traits of God are available to each of us. All of heaven was disrupted for the privilege of restoring us to the image of God.

“...what has our salvation cost the heavenly universe? **To make us partakers of the divine nature, heaven gave its most costly treasure...**” The Review and Herald, January 14, 1909

One of the most sought after emotions in this world is peace of mind. Humans go to great lengths to chase this seemingly allusive commodity. However, God has already made His peace available to us – it is a gift – a gift bought through His agony. Isaiah tells of the suffering God experienced for the privilege of giving us His peace.

“...it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down...he was wounded and crushed for our sins. **He was beaten that we might have peace.** He was whipped, and we were healed!” Isaiah 53:4,5 (NLT)

God experienced the torment of Calvary so that we may experience His peace. We do not have to beg or plead with God for His peace, it is freely given. The characteristic of peace is used here as an example of one of God’s freely offered traits because it is a tangible characteristic of God we may experience at a moments notice. However, all of the characteristics of God are a gift available to every human through the work of the Holy Spirit.

“Transformation of character is wrought through the operation of the Holy Spirit, which works upon the human agent, implanting in him, according to his desire and consent to have it done, a new nature. The image of God is restored to the soul, and day by day he is strengthened and renewed by grace, and is enabled more and more perfectly to reflect the character of Christ in righteousness and true holiness.” The Review and Herald, September 17, 1895

God is continually offering us His nature, however, it is our choice whether or not we receive it. The gift of God’s characteristics has already been given; I take part in their blessing, when I consent to God’s offer and yield to Him. When I realize I lack the peace of heaven, when I simply ‘consent’ or ‘yield’ to the Holy Spirit’s transforming work, He fills me with His peace.

“It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord--fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The Review and Herald, March 22, 1892. (Selected Messages, Volume 1 p. 190)

“The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the control of the word of God. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit the precepts of the word will become the principles of the life.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 514

If I desire to languish in my lack of peace; I am free to do so. God will not force my will; He must have my consent before He is able to renew my mind. However, when I choose to yield my emotions to Christ, He floods His peace into my heart.

“It is our privilege to have in our hearts, at all times, the peace of Christ....” Our High Calling, p. 326

The peace of God is a tangible demonstration of His ability to transform my heart. As I experience God’s ability to fill me with His peace, I grow in my trust that He is able to fully restore in me all His attributes.

As we continue to yield more areas of our life to God – give Him access to our thoughts and desires – He creates in us the nature of Jesus and we gradually become more like Him. As we yield our sinful nature to God on a day by day, moment by moment basis, He creates His character in us. With a character that is being renewed, we have His assurance He is restoring us – restoring us to His likeness.

This is good news; Jesus is offering to restore us to a level ‘far above that which Adam forfeited.’ With this restoration we do not just become **better people**, we become more like Christ.

“The very essence of the gospel is restoration...” The Desire of Ages, p. 824

This restoration takes place at the root of my illness, God is offering to do more than just take away my symptoms, He is offering to completely change me, to heal me wholly. I may be able to control my outward behavior for a time, I may even be able to think different thoughts, however, the healing I need is something only God can accomplish, there is nothing I can do on my own to cure the disease of sin.

“Man needs a power outside of and beyond himself, to restore him to the likeness of God...” The Desire of Ages, p. 296

Praise God for the reality of a restored heart, for the power of the Holy Spirit at work within me. As I yield my nature to God and accept His nature in its place, I find my desire for sin being replaced with a willingness to walk in the ways of God.

“...through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature,...Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity.” The Review and Herald, April 24, 1900

As we grow in Christ and allow Him to change our hearts, as did Enoch, the picture of Jesus becomes clearer in our lives and it becomes easier for us to choose to yield our ways to God. As we experience more of His peace, love and care, we become more willing to allow Him access to our hearts to achieve His everlasting desire to completely restore us to His likeness, and the process continues.

“Do not neglect to look to Jesus, who is seeking to mold and fashion you after His image. If you will consent, He will lead you on till at length you reach perfection. He will renew you more and more till you are complete in Him.”

Manuscript Releases Volume Eighteen, p. 52

This transformation does not take place overnight. It is a process God takes us through; a process that will never violate our will or our ability to choose in whom we place our trust. To effect change in any area of my life; God must have my consent. I may think I have yielded every thought to Him, however, I do not realize I still have ways of thinking that are contrary to God's way of thinking. God uses the experiences of life to point out to me my wrong way of thinking and as I yield my thoughts to Him He renews my mind and gives me more of Jesus way of thinking.

“The little incidents of everyday life often pass without our notice, but it is these things that shape the character.” Testimonies Volume 4, p. 561

How long this process of transformation takes, is in God's hands. We have His assurance that He will complete His work in our life, He will make us whole.

“May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together – spirit, soul, and body – and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!” 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24 (The Message)

“The Holy Spirit seeks to abide in each soul. If it is welcomed as an honored guest, those who receive it will be made complete in Christ. The good work begun will be finished; the holy thoughts, heavenly affections, and Christ like actions will take the place of impure thoughts, perverse sentiments, and rebellious acts.” Manuscript Releases Volume Eighteen , p. 47

God will finish the work He began in me, in His time. I may grow impatient, but I rest in His promise that as I continue to allow Him access to my heart He will continue His work in me until it is finished, knowing there is only one thing that can remove me from God's hand – my choice. My freedom of choice is a sacred gift God will never take away. I am always free to choose my way or God's way. God will do everything in His power to entice me to choose Him, however, He will never force my will, I am always free to choose.

“God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 176

As I continue to yield my will to God and allow Him to renew my mind, and I experience the transformation of my character and the peace and joy that comes only from Him, it becomes progressively more natural for me to choose Him. As I continue to choose Him, I have Christ's assurance in John 10:28;

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” John 10:28 (KJV)

This is God's promise to you and me; not only will we live with Him for eternity, we can experience His transforming power at this moment as we allow Him to fill us with His peace. We do not have to wait for heaven; we can experience the cure for the infection of sin now.

The cure? A new nature

The means? Companionship connection with God

This is the gospel: while we were yet sinners Christ came in search of us, giving us the ability to connect with the only Source of Life, to yield our will and allow Holy Spirit to create His beauty in our hearts. With a new heart we will walk with Jesus through the gate of eternity to celebrate with our heavenly family through time without end.

What a glorious eternity, rejoicing together with the heavenly hosts as we marvel at the beautiful character of Christ, as we praise our Lord for His salvation, for His love that did not leave us to die, but provided us a way of escape.

“...the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.

"...Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Revelation 5:13.

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”

The Great Controversy, p. 678

Further Study

Man Disconnected and then Reconnected to God

“The sin of Adam caused a deplorable state of things. **Satan would now have unlimited control** over the race unless a mightier being than was Satan before his fall, **should take the field, conquer him,** and ransom man.” Confrontation, p. 17

“When, in consequence of transgression, **Adam and Eve were cut off from all hope,** when justice demanded the death of the sinner, **Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice.**” {CT 268.2}

“**But man was not abandoned to the results of the evil he had chosen.** In the sentence pronounced upon Satan was given an intimation of redemption. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," God said, "and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. This sentence, spoken in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. Before they heard of the thorn and the thistle, of the toil and sorrow that must be their portion, or of the dust to which they must return, they listened to words that could not fail of giving them hope. **All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.**” Education, p. 27

“**The promise given** to Adam and Eve in Eden **was the gospel to a fallen race.**” SDA Bible Commentary, p. 932

Companionship

“**Remain in me, and I will remain in you.** For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and **you cannot be fruitful apart from me.**” John 15:4 (NLT)

“**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:**” Philippians 2:5 (KJV)

A Transformed Nature/Character

“Instead, there must be a spiritual **renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.** You must display a **new nature** because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.” Ephesians 4:23,24 (NLT)

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature,** having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:4 (KJV)

“**If the truth we profess to believe, does not change the heart and transform the character, it is of no value to us.** If the same defects of character remain in us after we have a knowledge of the truth; if pride, self-esteem, self-sufficiency, evil thinking, evil surmising, evil speaking, still continue; if we judge those with whom we come in contact, we are not becoming sanctified through the truth, and will have no part with Christ in his kingdom.” Review and Herald, October 31, 1893

“The sanctification of the soul is accomplished through steadfastly beholding Him [Christ] by faith as the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. The power of truth is to **transform heart and character**. Its effect is not like a dash of color here and there upon the canvas; the whole character is to be **transformed**, the image of Christ is to be revealed in words and actions. **A new nature is imparted**. Man is renewed after the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness. . .” (Letter 2a, 1892). SDA Bible Commentary Vol. 6 p. 1117

“**You will find help in Christ to form a strong, symmetrical, beautiful character**. Satan cannot make of none effect the light shining forth from such a character....God has given us His best gift, even His only-begotten Son, to uplift, ennoble, and fit us, **by putting on us His own perfection of character**, for a home in His kingdom.” Messages to Young People, p. 63

“The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. **These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them**. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God**. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty.” The Desire of Ages, p. 762

A Glorious Character

“As children of the first Adam, we partake of the dying nature of Adam. But through the imparted life of Christ, man has been given opportunity to win back again the lost gift of life, and to stand in his original position before God, a partaker of the divine nature....**The life which Christ offers us is more perfect, more full, and more complete than was the life which Adam forfeited by transgression.**” Signs of the Times, June 17, 1897

“The glory reflected in the countenance of Moses illustrates the blessings to be received by God's commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ. It testifies that **the closer our communion with God, and the clearer our knowledge of His requirements, the more fully shall we be conformed to the divine image, and the more readily do we become partakers of the divine nature.**” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 330

Evidence of a New Nature

“It is our privilege, by an earnest study of the word, to learn wherein we are not manifesting the principles of that word in our lives. And as the mirror reveals to us our defects, we are to seek by earnest prayer and faith to put them away. As we strive to meet the perfection that God requires, insensibly to us **the human will become molded to the divine. Christ's nature will be revealed in human nature; the words will become gentle and courteous, the ways kind and helpful. Tho we may be largely unconscious of the change, yet the transformation is being surely wrought**. Beholding day by day the glory of the Lord, we are molded into conformity to His Spirit and will.” The Signs of the Times, February 24, 1909

“Christ came to restore to its original loveliness a world ruined by sin. . . . In the new earth there will be no sin nor disease. . . . And the body will be restored to its original perfection. We shall wear the spotless image of our Lord. . . .

The development of Christian character, tending toward this state of perfection, **is a growth toward beauty. . . . As the heart becomes transformed by the renewing of the mind**, the graces of the Spirit leave their impress on the face, and it expresses the refinement, delicacy, peace, benevolence, and pure and tender love that reign in the heart. . . .” *My Life Today* p. 153

A Growth Process

“What beauty of character shone forth in the daily life of Christ! He is to be our pattern. **There is a great work to be done in fashioning the character after the divine similitude.** The grace of Christ must mold the entire being, and its triumph will not be complete until the heavenly universe shall witness habitual tenderness of feeling, Christlike love, and holy deeds in the deportment of the children of God.

Each person must obtain an experience for himself. No one can depend for salvation on the experience or practice of any other man. We must each become acquainted with Christ in order properly to represent Him to the world. "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). None of us need excuse our hasty temper, our misshapen characters, our selfishness, envy, jealousy, or any impurity of soul, body, or spirit. . . .”

We must learn of Christ. We must know what He is to those He has ransomed. **We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature**, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. **Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . .”**

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, **daily partaking of His nature**, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus. . . . In Him there is inexhaustible fullness. . . .

God has given us every facility, every grace. He has provided the riches of heaven's treasure, and it is our privilege to draw continually from this capital.” *God's Amazing Grace* (1973) p. 235

“Oh, let us dwell upon Jesus' lovely, spotless character, and by beholding we shall become changed to the same image.” *In Heavenly Places*, p. 352

“None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to **make it beautiful with His own glory.”** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 37

“The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the **implanting of Christ's nature in humanity.** Gospel religion is Christ in the life--a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel

cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ.” Christ's Object Lessons p. 384

“At infinite cost provision has been made for men to reach perfection of Christian character. Those who have been impressed by the Holy Scriptures as the voice of God, and desire to follow its teachings, are to be daily learning, daily receiving spiritual fervor and power, which have been provided for every true believer in the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Signs of the Times, March 8, 1910

Is it Possible for our natures to be recreated this side of eternity?

“Paul attained to the full moral stature of a man in Christ Jesus.” (Letter 5, 1880). S.D.A. Bible Commentary Volume 7, p. 903

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness--godlikeness--is the goal to be reached.” Education, p. 18

“The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness. They are made partakers of the divine nature, and grow more and more like their Saviour, advancing step by step in conformity to the will of God, till they reach perfection.” Selected Messages Volume 1, p. 240

“The acceptance of Christ's atonement is the ground-work of true faith. To those who repent and confess their sins, the Holy Spirit, the Author of all sanctification, will give grace to speak kind, tender, respectful words....They will co-operate with Christ in the work of bringing their hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong under the control of the Divine Will, so that sin shall not have dominion over them. Looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, they will be changed into His likeness. They will grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ.” The Signs of the Times, October 2, 1901

Yes, it is possible. How? By Yielding to Christ

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. . . The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. . . It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them through the manifestation of His love. **If they respond to His drawing, yielding their hearts to His grace,** He will lead them on step by step, to a full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal. God's Amazing Grace, p. 99

“The third angel's message is swelling into a loud cry, and you must not feel at liberty to neglect the present duty, and still entertain the idea that at some future time you will be the recipients of great blessing, when without any effort on your part a wonderful revival will take place. Today you are to give yourselves to God, that He may make of you vessels unto honor, and meet for His service. Today you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are

to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. **It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ**, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord--fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit." The Review and Herald, March 22, 1892. (Selected Messages, Volume 1 p. 190)

"God will honor and uphold every truehearted, earnest soul who is seeking to walk before Him in the perfection of the grace of Christ....**Shall we believe that God will work in our hearts? that if we allow Him to do so, He will make us pure and holy, by His rich grace qualifying us to be laborers together with Him?** Can we with keen, sanctified perception appreciate the strength of the promises of God, and appropriate them to our individual selves, not because we are worthy, but because Christ is worthy, not because we are righteous, but because by living faith we claim the righteousness of Christ in our behalf?--Manuscript 125, 1901" Selected Messages Book 1, p. 108

"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." The Desire of Ages, p. 668

"**The Saviour longs to manifest His grace and stamp His character on the whole world.** It is His purchased possession, and He desires to make men free, and pure, and holy. Though Satan works to hinder this purpose, yet through the blood shed for the world there are triumphs to be achieved that will bring glory to God and the Lamb. Christ will not be satisfied till the victory is complete, and "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. 53:11." The Desire of Ages, p. 827

"Every soul who receives Christ, is to **reveal Christ to the world through a transformed character.** His life is to be a continual manifestation of devotion to the will of God. By obedience to the commandments of God, man is to honor and glorify his Maker. **In his own transformed character he is to magnify before the world the plan of salvation as a plan that is laid in the mercy and the love of God.** The name of Jesus will be exalted **by these representatives of Christ;** for there is no other name given among men whereby we may be saved." Lake Union Herald, November 17, 1909