

The Crucifixion of Self

Jerry Moon, April 6, 2009

Every time we face a conscious temptation we have a choice—to crucify self by denying our sinful desires or to crucify Christ “afresh”—exalt the Savior and crucify self, or exalt self and crucify the Savior. This is a daily matter: Luke 9:23. And it is not optional: Luke 14:27.

But what does it really mean to “crucify self”? How do we experience it? How do we know when it has happened? Romans 6 has an extended passage on the topic. **Rom 6:3-7**. Being crucified with Christ means being united with Him in His death so that we are *counted* dead to the old life. However, this is not something that happens once for all, as we all know. **Verses 11-12** calls us to make that death *actual* with reference to sin.

Romans 12:1. Present your bodies a living sacrifice = take up your cross, crucify self. (The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep wanting to get off the altar.) How is it done? **Verse 2** - “Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed . . .” So it’s talking about changing our sinful ways.

Paul knew what he was taking about. Let’s **read Galatians 2:20**. This means: all my plans have ceased. I have deceased. Only His plans still exist in my life. That is scary—at least it is for me—until I remember again how glorious are His plans, and what messes I have made by clinging to my own plans.

Let’s summarize what have we learned so far about the crucifixion of self:

1. Crucifixion of self is a union with Christ in His death. Rom 6:3-4
2. It involves “conscious choice to terminate the old life of sin and to develop, acquire a new life of continual surrender to Jesus. Rom 6:11
3. It needs to happen daily. Luke 9:23
4. Without it we **cannot** be Christ’s disciples. Luke 14:27, 33

That’s why the NT writers over and over urge us in various ways, to “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things,” and “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly [sinful] nature.”

[Doc 2, pp. 5-18]

That leaves one major question unanswered: How does it happen? Before returning to Scripture for the conclusion, I would like to share some brief examples of the richness and practicality of the writings of Ellen White on this subject.¹ Note first some descriptions:

We should go to Jesus just as we are, confess our sins, and cast our helpless souls upon our compassionate Redeemer. This subdues the pride of the heart, and **is a crucifixion of self**.²

When the power of Satan over souls is broken, we see men binding their will to the cross, and crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. **It is indeed a crucifixion of self; for the will is surrendered to Christ**.³

Men could not endure the perfection of Christ’s character, and they took and crucified Him. There is a **crucifixion** that must go on in our lives, **a constant dying to self and sin**. We must walk circumspectly, **that our lives may preach the gospel of Christ** to those with whom we associate. If we will speak and walk circumspectly, **the light of Christ will be revealed in our lives**.⁴

Thus confession, repentance, and surrender of the will, are all aspects of the crucifixion of self. However, the crucifixion of the self is *not* crucifixion *by* the self. While repentance, confession, and surrender require the consent of the individual will, the power to do these is supplied *by* God *for* the believer. Romans 8:13 is very explicit that it is “by the Spirit” that “*you* put to death the deeds of the body” (emphasis added). Similarly, Phil 2:12, 13 calls on believers to “work out” the salvation that God “works in you” (NKJV). The believer is called to choose obedience and surrender, but the power “both to will and to do” comes from God. In a very real sense, crucifixion is something one *surrenders to*, not something one can do for oneself. The command to “crucify self” underscores the unavoidable necessity of *the believer’s choice and*

¹ Adventists believe Ellen White’s role was not to take the place of Scripture, but to call them back to the Scriptures (which they have neglected), to “illuminate and apply” the teachings of Scripture (*Great Controversy*, vii), and to make “very plain” “the essential principles of godliness” (*Testimonies*, 2:605).

² E. G. White, *1888 Materials* (1987), 268; idem, “Meetings at South Lancaster, Mass.,” *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, par 11.

³ E. G. White, “To Abide in Christ the Will Must Be Surrendered,” *Signs of the Times*, Oct. 29, 1894, par. 6.

⁴ E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:25; also in *Peter’s Counsel to Parents*, 38.

consent to accept crucifixion, but the actual process of crucifixion is in the hands of Another. (This will become clearer when we consider the example of Jesus.)

The promise is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. **Here is a work for individuals to do**, not only to confess their sins but to put them away. **Can they do this in their own strength? No**, but **this work of crucifixion of self** can alone, be done through Jesus Christ our Sacrifice; for sin. We must come to Jesus in faith and reply upon the merits of the blood of Christ.⁵

Notice how explicit she is that the believer is neither able nor expected to orchestrate his or her own crucifixion.

You all want to choose for yourselves the process of purification. How hard it is for you to submit to the crucifixion of self; but when the work is all submitted to God, to Him who knows our weakness and our sinfulness, He takes the very best way to bring about the desired results.⁶

You need not devise ways and methods of bringing about your own crucifixion; self-inflected penances are of no avail, and will be found worthless when the test comes upon you. We are to surrender the heart to God, that he may renew and sanctify us, and fit us for his heavenly courts. We are not to wait for some special time, but today we are to give ourselves to him, refusing to be the servants of sin. **Do you imagine that you can leave off sin by your own human power a little at a time? You cannot do this.** . . . The Father loves us who believe in Christ as he loves his only-begotten Son. Thus by faith we can grasp the righteousness of Christ, and our Saviour saves us from all sin. . . . **You must take the blood of Jesus and apply it to your heart by faith; for that alone can make you whiter than snow.** But you say, "The surrender of all my idols will break my heart." **This is what is needed. In giving up all for God, you fall upon the rock and are broken.** Give up all for him without delay, for unless you are broken, you are worthless.⁷

How few are aware that they have darling idols, that they have cherished sins! God sees these sins to which you may be blinded, and **He works** with His pruning knife to strike deep and separate these cherished sins from you.⁸

Much fitful, spurious humility is seen among professed Christians. **Some, determined to conquer self, place themselves as low as possible; but they try only in their own strength, and the next wave of praise or flattery carries them up out of sight.** They are not willing to submit wholly to God, and he cannot work through them. Take no glory whatever to yourself. **Do not work with a divided mind, trying to serve God and self at the same time. Keep self out of sight.** Let your words lead the weary and heavy laden to Jesus, the compassionate Saviour. Work as seeing him who is at your right hand, ready to give you strength for service. Your only safety is in entire dependence upon Christ.⁹

When one has tried it, but it doesn't seem to work, a very common cause is that the person attempted to "reform" without giving up self, i.e., "self-will."¹⁰ **In other words, people try to surrender certain sins, but do not make an unreserved surrender of themselves.** In my experience personally, and from years of ministering to others, this is the single most common cause of frustration and defeat in the daily Christian life. It perpetuates "a sense of

⁵E. G. White, *1888 Materials*, 456.

⁶E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (1855-1909), 3:543.

⁷E. G. White, "The Necessity of Receiving the Holy Spirit" [Conclusion of Sermon Preached at Healdsburg, Calif., Sept. 26, 1891], *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 8, 1892, par 2.

⁸E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:543.

⁹Ellen G. White, "The Grace of Humility," *Review and Herald*, May 11, 1897, par. 3.

¹⁰"Trouble does not arise because men have too much will, but because they have too much *self-will*. The will should be wholly sanctified to God. . . . [I]n every one who enters the gates of the city of God, *self must be crucified*" (E. G. White, "Let the Trumpet Give a Certain Sound," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 6, 1892, par. 4).

estrangement from God,” and “bondage to self and sin,” while it neutralizes one’s “efforts for reform.”¹¹

Addressing this situation, Ellen White identifies four common problems to check when one’s spiritual life doesn’t seem to be working. The general problem is that “many make efforts for reform; but they do not crucify self.” This failure to crucify self has four aspects: (1) Lack of surrender: “They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will.” (2) “They are not willing to be molded after the divine similitude”; i.e., they want God’s blessings, but feel no need of being transformed in character. (3) “In a general way they acknowledge their imperfections” (they make vague, nonspecific confession), but (4) “they do not give up their particular sins.” Consequently, “with each wrong act the old selfish nature is gaining strength.”¹²

Clearly the refusal to give up “particular sins” can prevent the surrender of the will. Frank Phillips correctly observes that “This surrender must not be thought of as a trifling experience—something that can be done with little effort or thought.”¹³ “The surrender of the will is represented as plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand.”¹⁴ Note the close relationship between the crucifixion of self and giving up “particular sins”:

You have a set will of your own which must be given up. You must **die to self, crucify self**, gain the victory over self. You cannot be a true follower of Christ unless you take hold of this work resolutely.¹⁵

Let those who are easily irritated refuse to retaliate when words that vex them are spoken. . . . **Crucify self**, in the place of seeking to crucify your brethren. “If any man will come after Me,” Christ said, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt 16:24).¹⁶

Be courteous, tenderhearted, forgiving toward others. . . . Strive to understand the weakness of others. Help the needy, **crucify self**, and let Jesus take possession of your soul, in order that you may carry out the principles of truth in your daily life. Then will you be, as never before, a blessing to the church and to all those with whom you come in contact.¹⁷

A work is before you which you do not comprehend. It is to **die to self**, to **crucify self**. **You have a quick, impetuous temper, which you must subdue.** . . . When you comprehend things aright you are conscientious; but you often move from impulse, without stopping to reflect.¹⁸

I have a message for every family that has been robbing God in smaller or larger sums. Repent! Humble your hearts before God. **Crucify self and selfishness.** No longer use your intrusted means for selfish indulgence. Do all in your power to redeem the past. Show your friends and neighbors and your children that you regard money as too precious to be used for selfish purposes. Give for the advancement of the Lord’s cause the money you would otherwise spend for [nonessentials].¹⁹

Strive earnestly for unity. . . . **Crucify self**; esteem others better than yourselves. Thus you will be brought into oneness with Christ.²⁰

Crucify self. . . . fight constantly against the inclinations of the natural heart.²¹

The cross of Calvary is the great center of the plan of salvation; and we are to begin to **crucify self at once Not an angry word is to fall from the lips of parents.** They are to be constantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. They are to realize that they are the teachers of their children, and that they are to reveal the kindness,

¹¹E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), 48.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Frank B. Phillips, *His Robe or Mine* (<www.justifiedwalk.com>, 2003), 18.

¹⁴E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 61.

¹⁵E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:310.

¹⁶E. G. White, Lt 11, 1905 in *Mind, Character, and Personality* (1977) 2:522.

¹⁷E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:33.

¹⁸E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:423.

¹⁹E. G. White, “Bring an Offering to the Lord,” *Review and Herald*, Nov. 26, 1901, par. 11.

²⁰E. G. White. *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:188.

²¹E. G. White, “Our Duty as Christians,” *Signs of the Times*, September 12, 1900, par. 11.

tenderness, and love of Christ. And yet they are not to overlook the faults of their children. They are not to gratify their wishes simply because they desire gratification. This is not the way to train children for God. Children are made happy by being brought under right control. The most unhappy children I have ever seen were those who had never been brought under control.²²

Let us use the talent of speech aright, speaking only words that will bless and strengthen those who hear. Let us **crucify self**, that in our hearts may grow up a strong love for Christ and for one another.²³

The conditions of salvation brought to view in the work of God are reasonable, plain, and positive, being nothing less than perfect conformity to the will of God and purity of heart and life. We must **crucify self** with the lusts thereof. We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.²⁴

Dear sister, . . . you bring darkness into your own soul by dwelling upon the mistakes and imperfections of others. . . . You need to **crucify self** and to **check the disposition to magnify your neighbors' faults** and to talk thoughtlessly.²⁵

[A]s long as pride and envy and evil-surmising predominate in the life, Christ does not rule in the heart. . . . In the lives of those who are partakers of the divine nature there is a **crucifixion of the haughty, self-sufficient spirit** that leads to self-exaltation. In its place the Spirit of Christ abides, and in the life the fruits of the Spirit appear.²⁶

The grace of humility should be cherished by every one who names the name of Christ; for self-exaltation can find no place in the work of God. Those who would co-operate with the Lord of Hosts must **daily crucify self, placing worldly ambition in the background**. They must be long-suffering and kind, full of mercy and tenderness to those around them. True humility must be seen in all they do.²⁷

O, let us all determine to crucify self and to imitate God! . . . Our work may not be appreciated; we may be misjudged, falsified, and mistreated by those who claim to be Christians; but we are to look to Christ and follow him. Christians are to walk even as he walked. They are to have the mind of Christ, to possess that faith which works by love and purifies the soul.²⁸

That which may be regarded as hard to give up must be yielded. **The overbearing, dictatorial word must be left unspoken**; then a precious victory will be gained. True happiness will be the result of every **self-denial**, every **crucifixion of self**.²⁹

Someone may say: But I've tried to give up my "particular sins" and I don't seem to be able. At the ministers' meeting one morning in Battle Creek, Ellen White addressed this issue.

The promise is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. **Here is a work for individuals to do**, not only to confess their sins but to put them away. **Can they do this in their own strength? No, but this work of crucifixion of self can alone, be done through Jesus Christ our Sacrifice for sin.** We must come to Jesus in faith and rely upon the merits of the blood of Christ.³⁰

²²E. G. White, "The Need of Home Religion," *Review and Herald*, June 22, 1905, par. 12.

²³E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 10:143; cf. idem, "'Take Heed to Thyself,'" *Review and Herald*, Feb. 24, 1903, par. 13.

²⁴E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:440.

²⁵E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:135.

²⁶E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:263.

²⁷E. G. White, "The Grace of Humility," *Review and Herald*, May 11, 1897 par. 2; cf. idem, *That I May Know Him* (1964), 122..

²⁸E. G. White, "Let Us Love One Another," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 23, 1897, par. 9.

²⁹E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:345.

³⁰E. G. White, *Diary*, Oct. 22, 1889, in *1888 Materials*, (1987), 456.

Clearly, the crucifixion of self is impossible, except through Jesus. That's why it is so humbling, because despite its simplicity, we are incapable of doing it—except as we abandon ourselves to the grace of God. This is a process that is learned by experience, and a crucial element in the process is communication with God.

There is constant need of private communion with God. We must take in the spirit of Christ if we would impart it to others. We cannot meet satanic and human agencies combined unless we spend much time in intercourse with the Source of all strength. **There are times when we should get away from the sounds of earthly toil and human voices, and in retired places listen to the voice of Jesus.** Thus we may taste of His love and imbibe His spirit. **Thus we shall learn to crucify self. This course of action may seem impossible to the human mind.** "I have not time," you may say. But when you consider the matter as it really is, you lose no time; for **when you secure the power and grace that come alone from God, you do not accomplish the work. It is Jesus who is the real worker.** "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." John 15:5. . . . Reflection and earnest prayer will inspire to holy endeavor.³¹

What many are searching for, is a clear understanding of how this works in practice. A major clue is found in Luke 9:23. Notice that the call to take up the cross is given in the context of *following the example of Jesus*. "He said to all, 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'" Thus Christ's crucifixion is the pattern for the believer's crucifixion. Some major insights into how we are to experience crucifixion of self in daily life are found in studying how Jesus surrendered Himself to crucifixion.

First of all, did Jesus try in any way to orchestrate His crucifixion? He sent two disciples to prepare the upper room for the Last Supper, but there's no record of Him sending messengers to Caiaphas, Pilate, or Herod, to schedule His trials and execution. *Desire of Ages* says that "So utterly was Christ **emptied of self**³² that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans." Then follows, "So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will."³³

Evidently Christ made no plans for His crucifixion; He only "accepted God's plans." Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost clearly identified who orchestrated the crucifixion: it was "by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God" that Christ was "delivered" to "lawless hands" to be "crucified" (Acts 2:23).

If God arranged it, what was Jesus' part? "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42 NKJV). Christ's part was to surrender. So it is with us. It is not our responsibility to devise ways of bringing ourselves to crucifixion. We have only to surrender—and keep surrendered—to the Father's love and will.

Why was Jesus able to keep calm and not explode with rage when He was brutally abused by Pilate and the Roman soldiers? Because He rested in the conviction that everything that happened to Him was part of the Father's will. Pilate himself was amazed at Jesus' composure, and demanded, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" (Notice that Pilate's amazement was based on Pilate's assumption that he was the one in control of Jesus' fate.) But Jesus disagreed, plainly declaring that Pilate was **not** the one in control of the situation: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:10-11). This was the secret of Jesus composure under brutal abuse: He knew that the One in control was His Father.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had stated the radical principle He lived by: "I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt 5:39). Before Pilate, He practiced what He had preached. Commenting on this passage, Ellen White expounds the secret of Jesus patience.

The Father's presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission, and "all things" that are permitted "work together for good to them that love God." Romans 8:28.³⁴

³¹E. G. White, *Our High Calling*, (1961), 116.

³²Notice that "being emptied of self" is a parallel expression to "dying to self" or "crucifying self." There are two parts to the process of union with Christ. Being emptied of self precedes being filled with the Holy Spirit, as crucifixion of self precedes resurrection to new life.

³³E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 208.

³⁴E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, (1896), 71.

So the Orchestrator of the crucifixion was God the Father. The devil and his agents could do nothing to Christ without the Father's permission. Whatever God permitted, Jesus accepted as proceeding from the Father's love, and in that acceptance Jesus had perfect peace. We can have the same peace if we will keep surrendered to God and dependant on God as He was.³⁵

Notice the parallels between His crucifixion and ours:

1. Our crucifixion, like His, cannot be self-orchestrated. No one can nail himself to the cross. You cannot commit suicide by crucifixion. Someone else has to do it for you. Crucifixion of self means that the sinful "self" is the recipient of the action, not the initiator of the action. Self cannot crucify self.

2. The method is contained in a single word—"surrender"—continually repeated. Surrender means giving Him title to and control over everything you have and are.

3. This surrender is expressed in various ways: repentance, confession, studying God's Word as a revelation of His will for you, consenting to give up your plans and desires, choosing to conform every aspect of life to God's will for you.

4. But the essence of surrender (based on the conviction that He loves you personally and infinitely)³⁶ is simply trusting Him to the point of totally relaxing in His hands, choosing to live according to His will, and accepting everything that happens to you as proceeding from His loving purpose (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 10:13).

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.³⁷

God's part is to orchestrate circumstances to reveal to us everything in our lives that we love more than we love Him, so that one by one all those areas of life can be brought within the bounds of our surrender to Him. He often tackles our biggest idol right up front, such as when he challenged the Rich Young Ruler to sell all he possessed and give away the money to the poor (Matt 19:21). Others were asked to forsake their business in order to follow Him (Matt 4:18-22; 9:9).

The key is this: because it is His love He offers, and our love He seeks, the only non-negotiable demand is that we renounce every competing love. Any obvious competition for His love He will address head-on. Unconscious competition for our affections He may wait for an opportune time to reveal, but then He requires a decision. The most fundamental competing love is that of self. That's why when self is surrendered, the life is transformed and the heart set free to enjoy loving and serving God.

Precious are the promises made to those who seek Christ and crucify self.

Let us not spare ourselves, but carry forward in earnest the work of reform that must be done in our lives. **Let us crucify self.** Unholy habits will clamor for the mastery, but in the name and through the power of Jesus we may conquer. To him who daily seeks to keep his heart with all diligence, the promise is given, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).³⁸

"True happiness will be the result of every self-denial, every crucifixion of self."³⁹

"The path to freedom from sin is through crucifixion of self, and conflict with the powers of darkness."⁴⁰

³⁵See E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 208.

³⁶"The very first step in approaching God is to know and believe the love that He has to us (1 John 4:16); for it is through the drawing of His love that we are led to come to Him" (E. G. White, *Mount of Blessing*, 104).

³⁷E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 668.

³⁸E. G. White, *God's Amazing Grace* (1973), 223.

³⁹E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:345.

“All who will with determined effort seek help from above, and subdue and crucify self, may be successful in this world, and may gain the future, immortal life.”⁴¹

“If now we crucify self, and live for Christ, God will give us a place in the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him.”⁴²

In conclusion, please consider Col 3:1-17, a passage that directly connects the crucifixion of self with the moral issues of the visual entertainment media. That the basic presupposition of the passage is the believer’s dying to self is shown a few verses earlier: “**Having been buried with him** in baptism, **you also have been raised with him** through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12 NET).⁴³

3:1 Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:2 Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth, 3:3 for **you have died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 3:4 When Christ (who is your life) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him. 3:5 So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: **sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry.**

That last verse, Col 3:5, strikes directly at the use of popular visual media as entertainment for Christians. Entertainment implies enjoyment, and to enjoy watching others sin is to mentally participate in their sins. Jesus said in Matt 5:28 that the one who gazes lustfully at another person has already committed mental and emotional adultery. A recent study indicates scientific confirmation of Jesus’ words.

Ever watched someone grimace after they sniffed a carton of sour milk? Even though you were spared a whiff of stinky milk, to your brain, you might as well have been sniffing the milk yourself, a report from Italy suggests. . . .

Researchers used a tool called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to monitor the brain activity of 14 men as they watched short movies of people smelling pleasant, disgusting and neutral odors. Brain activity was also monitored while participants themselves smelled a variety of odors.

The researchers found that a part of the brain called the anterior insula, which previously has been linked to feelings of disgust, *was activated not only when participants smelled something disgusting but also when they watched others* take a whiff of something stinky.⁴⁴

The thoughts and feelings (which make up the character)⁴⁵ are molded, trained, and can be corrupted, not only by what we do, but by what we watch others do.

Let me remind you again that we are talking here about principles, not about rules; about what goes on in the heart, not mere external behavior. Not every movie or TV program has these characteristics and effects, but many do. Nor can we withdraw from contact with the world if we are to reach the world for Jesus (see 1 Cor 5:9-10). But there’s an essential difference of motive between the unavoidable encounter with evil that we immediately repel and flee from, and the deliberate choice to dwell on evil for entertainment.

Paul continues with another list of character traits the Christian must “put off”: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, and lying; all kinds of prejudice and class consciousness such as pride of nationality, race, or ethnicity; and status based on social, economic or educational differences (Col 3:8-11). Are these things found in the entertainment media? They are so common in the media as to be typical of them.

Finally, in Col 3:12-17, Paul sets forth a description of Christian culture, the culture of Christlike love that should

⁴⁰E. G. White, *Our High Calling*, (1961), 321.

⁴¹E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:339.

⁴²E. G. White, “The Days of the Son of Man,” *Signs of the Times*, April 17, 1901, par 18.

⁴³Translation from The NET Bible (<www.netbible.com>: Biblical Studies Press, 1997-2003), all emphasis added.

⁴⁴Merritt McKinney, “Brain Hard-Wired for Empathy,” citing the journal *Neuron*, Oct. 30, 2003, http://preventdisease.com/news/articles/brain_hard-wired_empathy.shtml, accessed May 9, 2005. I am indebted to Ron du Preez for calling this to my attention.

⁴⁵“If the thoughts are wrong, the feelings will be wrong; and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character” (E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:310).

be the identifying characteristic of the church.

3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 3:13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. 3:14 And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. 3:15 Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

These are the characteristics of *real disciples*. We dare not be otherwise in this uncertain world than *real disciples*. If *real discipleship* is my consuming passion, these are the characteristics that will be increasingly seen in my life. Whatever hinders me from developing those characteristics must automatically be called in question. Again, I'm presenting principles. I'm not seeking to be more stringent than is Scripture. But I am inviting you to assimilate these biblical principles and let the Holy Spirit guide you in applying them.