

REAL-TIME FAITH TEACHER'S GUIDE First Quarter 2004

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WHAT THE LESSONS ARE ABOUT

The emphasis of this curriculum is God's kingdom of grace, being a recruited agent (steward, citizen) of that kingdom, and the battle between it and the kingdom of evil. Being in God's kingdom requires action—being doers and not just listeners (James 1:22) of how to live as God's agents on this earth.

The first lesson of each quarter of the two-year cycle is a different portion of the Sermon on the Mount which is "at once Christ's inaugural address as King of the kingdom of grace and also the constitution of the kingdom" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 322).

After the first lesson of each quarter each of the other twelve lessons (or sets of lessons) are about a different challenge, right, or privilege in the "real-time" of being an agent of God's kingdom. A Christian never knows what he or she will be encountering next.

The curriculum includes a Web site (<http://RealTimeFaith@adventist.org>) at which e-teens can explore each week's topic with other e-teens, and where teachers can access additional resources and exchange ideas.

HOW TO USE THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

- >> **STEP 1:** Read through the entire preparing section of the *Teacher's Guide* to become familiar with the lesson concepts. You will be best able to use the teaching material if you thoroughly understand the core concepts of the lesson.
- >> **STEP 2:** Read the rest of the *Teacher's Guide* material for the week, including the student lesson. Get an idea of the options provided for teaching the concepts. Check to see if there is any additional resource material available at <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org>.
- >> **STEP 3:** Choose the specific options you will use in teaching the lesson. There are more options provided than you will be able to use. Try to choose something from each category: **Beginning, Connecting, and Applying.** Keep in mind that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.
- >> **STEP 4:** Note when and how you will distribute or refer to the student lesson during the program. The student lesson for each week is integral to the teaching process and will be referred to throughout. It is intended to be removed from its binding each week and used during the Sabbath School program. It then supports the students' study throughout the following week at home.
- >> **STEP 5:** Collect the materials you need to conduct the lesson. Once again keep in mind that student participation is vital.
- >> **STEP 6:** Prepare the student lessons. If you keep the student Bible study guides at church, remove the appropriate student lesson for the week and prepare it for distribution. If the students take their Bible study guides home at the beginning of the quarter, make arrangements to be able to teach the lesson smoothly even if the students forget to bring that week's lesson back with them. (Have the necessary Bible references listed on the board, have additional copies of the student illustration available, etc.)
- >> **STEP 7:** Keep the end in mind. Plan to wrap up your lesson with a summary of what the students have learned.

O V E R V I E W



Real-Time Faith Sabbath School for e-Teens

Teacher's Guide

January

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THE TWO KINGDOMS • 7 • / Not Those Boys

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) portray the sharp contrast between choosing life in God's kingdom and the kingdom of evil.

10

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER • 17 • / Make Me Like Joe

Adherence to Christian precepts takes on its fullest meaning when we realize that they are based on eternal principles that are themselves based on the character (personhood) of God.

17

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY • 28 • / The Blind Men and the Elephant

A look at what it means to be caught in the cross fire of the cosmic spiritual battle, and how to safeguard the heart and mind in the quest toward eventual and eternal victory.

24

THE SINNER'S NEED • 38 • / Rock Bottom

Here's basic training on the plan of salvation and choosing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

31

GROWING IN GRACE • 48 • / Wilma Goes for Gold

A look at sanctification as the gracious ongoing work of God in our lives and how the spiritual disciplines serve as tools toward building a life of Christian character.

February

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OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, PART ONE • 57 • / A Case of Missed or Taken Identity

Exploring, understanding, and embracing who you are as a result of Christ's intervention and continuing involvement in your life. Also how this impacts your relationship with Him ("vertical" interaction).

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Knowing who you are in relationship with other people;
your relationship "reference points" ("horizontal" interaction).

21

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28

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TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT • 97 • / A Blue-Ribbon Attitude

Examining and overcoming the natural tendency to build ourselves up at others' expense. Put-downs and an acidic tongue have no place in the Christian's life.

13

HEROES • 107 • / What Happened to the Firing Squad?

Focuses on helping the student identify, in heroes, characteristics worthy to emulate rather than focusing on who the heroes are.

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JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO • 117 • / We Know Him!

Jesus found His purpose and identity by the time He was 12. He is our hero. Through Him we can find our true identities.

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Finding the spiritual motivation to see the hero potential that God sees in us. Being a dedicated disciple of Jesus can turn humans into heroes.



THE TWO KINGDOMS

Not Those Boys

January 3, 2004

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) • “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Psalm 41:1 (NIV) • “Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble.”

Psalm 84:12 (NIV) • “O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.”

Psalm 112:1 (NIV) • “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.”

Psalm 119:1, 2 (NIV) • “Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.”

Psalm 128:1 (NIV) • “Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.”

Proverbs 8:32 (NLT) • “And so, my children, listen to me, for happy are all who follow my ways.”

“There are two kingdoms in this world, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. To one of these kingdoms each one of us belongs. In His wonderful prayer for His disciples, Christ said, ‘I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world’ (John 17:15-18)” (*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 97).

(See additional passages in student material. Also: *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 509; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 77.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “THE TWO KINGDOMS”

Followers of Christ live “in the world” but are loyal citizens of “another world.” The place where God’s rulership begins is in the hearts and minds of people.

There is one guiding principle that characterizes God's kingdom—that is love. And the struggle for us is to actually live out God's grace. In the kingdom of this world one principle seems to rule supreme—self first. And the struggle is for success. The focal point of one kingdom is self-interest. The focal point of the other is pleasing God.

The by-products of pleasing God are unmistakable—joy, peace, power, security, happiness. C. S. Lewis, in *Surprised by Joy*, notes that the pursuit of joy/happiness usually ends up in despair and disappointment. The kingdom of this world claws its way to happiness, only to have it slip right through its hands. But true happiness comes to those who are living their lives to put a smile on God's face. The Beatitudes describe people who are happy. And why are they happy? The Beatitudes are the constitution of God's kingdom. Citizens of God's kingdom are described as people who are "blessed," when they are living a life true to the constitution of their heavenly kingdom.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "THE TWO KINGDOMS"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand the nature and purpose of the Beatitudes.
2. Discover the benefits of citizenship in God's kingdom.
3. Practice these selfless principles in this self-centered world.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) paper, markers, other art supplies; (Activity B) towel, basin, or plastic-covered table; raw egg, cup of water, scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream); means of cleaning up.

Connecting • Bibles, chalkboard or flipchart, student lessons.

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Ask them which verse they chose to learn from Wednesday's portion of their lesson. Give them opportunity to say their verses from memory.
2. Give the students opportunity to "quote" themselves, using what they wrote in the Monday portion of their lesson. Be sure to debrief them about any quotations that might not reflect the Christian life accurately. Quotations of this nature do not occur in every lesson.
3. Review responses that they and others made to the scenario that was posed on Sunday. If possible, download responses from the bulletin board at <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org>. Discuss the variety of responses, ending with thoughts from last week's What's to Be Said About . . . in the teacher lesson.

If you have a very large group, have adults available to process this section with smaller groups of students.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Teen Mission at <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org>)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point in the program you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will be having the students, divided into manageable groups, create an advertisement in one of the following forms that work best for your setting: radio commercial, bumper sticker, T-shirt, billboard, infomercial, political campaign advertisement. You might assign the form randomly or have students choose the one they will use from “a hat.”

Be sure that they understand that (1) they are communicating citizenship in God’s kingdom over the kingdom of this world (or perhaps advertising the kingdom of this world satirically) and (2) they need to include the message of the Beatitudes in the ad or as many of the Beatitudes as possible.

Get set • Have the students all find, and ask volunteers to read aloud **Matthew 5:3-12**. Then, in your own words, summarize the major thoughts in What’s to Be Said About God’s Kingdom in the Preparing section above.

Go • Say: **How would you advertise citizenship in the kingdom of God to someone else? Based on your understanding of the Beatitudes, what would be your tag line, your advertising gimmick, your approach to selling people on the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of this world? Include the positives and negatives (we want to be truthful in our advertising) of the kingdom.** Give them a time limit.

When the time is up, call them back together to share their creations.

Debriefing • Ask: **Based on the ads, what could you say about the character qualities of each kingdom?** (When we advertise God’s kingdom, there are some potential negatives, but the outcome is something we can sell.) **How do you think citizenship in God’s kingdom is best advertised?** (People. These qualities are seen only in people.) **How are the ads for the kingdom of this world different from the way the world advertises?** (The world doesn’t show you the final outcome, only what you get now for thinking first about yourself.)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will be using three students and some props to point out the tentative nature of happiness, and the likelihood of its slipping away if that is what you are trying to get hold of.

You can use any or preferably all of the following: an egg that has been cracked over a saucer, water in a glass, a scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream). Do the activity over basin, towel, or covered table. Have a means of washing students’ hands nearby. Try to choose volunteers who will not grandstand and take the attention from the point of the activity.

Get set • Ask for three volunteers. The object is to have the students try to get a secure hold of the items. The fact that these are, or will be soon, liquid makes it hard for them to be held on to.

Go • Water—ask the volunteer to hold out one hand while you pour a small amount ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) into it. They might be able to cup their hand and contain some of the water. Pour enough so that water begins to leak through their fingers.

The egg—with the egg out of its shell on a small saucer, ask the volunteer to pick up the egg without lifting or tipping the plate.

The scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream)—again, have the volunteer hold out their hand as you place a full scoop of crushed ice in it. In time the ice will begin to melt and drip.

Debriefing • Ask: **What was it like to try to hold on to these items?** (From the start I knew there was no way to be able to hold the water. Your hand is absolutely the wrong tool to try to contain water, eggs, or ice.) **In what ways is happiness hard to secure and hold on to?** (Sometimes I’m happy, sometimes not—it’s all about how you look at life. Or happiness might come to you at times, but so do the hard times as well.) **What are the obstacles to happiness?** (Selfishness. I think people who are all about themselves rarely find happiness.) **To what degree do you think people are really “happy” in**

their struggle for happiness? (I think some people are happy, but everyone gets disappointed sometimes and is not as happy as they hoped they would be.) **Is it possible to be perpetually happy in this life?** (Maybe, if you have the right attitude. Or, I don't think anyone can be perpetually happy as long as sin is still here.)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

What Will My Reward Be? One day a fisherman was lying on a beautiful beach, with his fishing pole propped up in the sand and his solitary line cast out into the sparkling blue surf. He was enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sun and the prospect of catching a fish.

About that time a businessman came walking down the beach, trying to relieve some of the stress of his workday. He noticed the fisherman sitting on the beach and decided to find out why this man was fishing instead of working harder to make a living for himself and his family. "You aren't going to catch any fish that way," said the businessman to the fisherman. "You should be working rather than lying on the beach!"

The fisherman looked up at the businessman, smiled and replied, "And what will my reward be?"

"Well, you can get bigger nets and catch more fish!" was the businessman's answer.

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman, still smiling.

The businessman replied, "You will make money, and you will be able to buy a boat, which will then result in larger catches of fish!"

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman again.

The businessman was getting a little irritated with the fisherman's questions. "You can buy a bigger boat and hire some people to work for you!" he said.

"And then what will my reward be?" repeated the fisherman.

The businessman was getting angry. "Don't you understand? You can build up a fleet of fishing boats, sail all over the world, and let all your

employees catch fish for you!"

Once again the fisherman asked, "And what then will my reward be?"

The businessman was red with rage and shouted at the fisherman, "Don't you understand that you can become so rich that you will never have to work for your living again? You can spend all the rest of your days sitting on this beach, looking at the sunset. You won't have a care in the world!"

The fisherman, still smiling, looked up and said, "And what do you think I'm doing right NOW?" —Wayne Rice, *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 171.

Ask: What do you think is the central lesson of this story? (What some people strive after, others have already. The world can be a rat race.) **To what degree do you think people consider the long-term effects of the way they live their lives?** (I think in some areas of life they consider long-term outcomes, but for the most part I think people are just trying to get through the day.) **Why do you think the businessman was getting so mad?** (He saw someone who had a different value system, and it is easier to look down on someone than it is to learn from them.)

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: Probably the most devoted citizen of any kingdom is a soldier. Soldiers believe in and live by a code of honor that protects and builds the kingdom. Their personal comfort and needs come second to the well-being of the kingdom, so much so that they are willing to give their lives for the kingdom. What is clear about soldiers is that they are loyal to their country and well aware of the nature of their enemy.

Ask: What other professionals put their duty before their safety and security? (police, firefighters, kindergarten teachers!)

Say: John writes this message to a church full of Christians who are struggling to distinguish the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world. “Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NLT).

Ask: How do you feel about this strong statement John makes about God? (It sounds a bit harsh, but I think God doesn’t want us to get deceived.)

Say: As citizens of God’s kingdom our code of honor is about how we relate to God and how we relate to the world around us. The “be-attitudes” are but declarations of “be-ing.” *Blessed* means “Oh, the happiness of the one who . . .” The Beatitudes are descriptions of “who you are and what you are like” because of the kingdom code (or rules) you live by. In a way, the Beatitudes are like a commercial on the benefits of being in the kingdom of God. Have the students find and read **Matthew 5:3-12** together.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from the student lesson. Have them present it now. When it is completed, **ask:** What relevance does this story have to our topic today? Encourage students to notice how both the students and the group leader had a change of heart. **What do you think caused the changes in their attitudes?** (The experience of thinking of others rather than themselves, their opportunity to serve others.) **Which of the Beatitudes do you feel are illustrated by this story?** Have the students turn to **Matthew 5:3-12** to find and justify their responses.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Stacey wants to live her life boldly as a citizen of God’s kingdom. It is so hard to walk the fine line between being a positive influence and getting swept into her friends’ critical conversations. They can be horrible to others, saying spiteful things behind their backs and often to their faces. She doesn’t want to seem arrogant or better than they are, but she feels guilty for not standing up for her beliefs about treating others with compassion. She wants to include others who don’t have many friends but who would definitely be the subject of misunderstanding or scorn. But these critical people are her friends! What does she do? She feels guilty. She feels ashamed. But she also feels committed to be true to Christ.

Distribute this week’s student lesson hand-out. Have the students refer to the Bible verses in the Wednesday section. **Say:** Based on these verses and the Beatitudes we’ve been reading in **Matthew 5:3-12**, let’s list what we know about both kingdoms. **Ask:** What do we know about God’s kingdom? What does it look like? What are the rewards? As the students discover them and call them out, list the qualities where all can see.

- >> Has eternal rewards—**Matthew 5:3-12**
- >> There will be trouble—**John 16:33**
- >> It is totally different from the world—**John 14:27**
- >> We will win/overcome—**1 John 4:4**
- >> People know grace firsthand—**Matthew 5:7; Psalm 32:1, 2**

Ask: What do we know about the kingdom of this world? What does it look like? What are the rewards?

- >> The world will promote its ways as right—**Proverbs 16:25**
- >> Passes away—**1 John 2:15-17**
- >> Promises peace—**John 14:27**
- >> Will persecute and falsely accuse those who are different—**Matthew 5:11**

Ask: How do you see the principles about life in both kingdoms relating to Stacey's problem? (The connection is clear, but it is definitely hard to make the right choice. Your friends are everything.) **In light of those principles, what do you think she should do?** (I think she should divide and conquer her friends—it's easier to talk to them privately than in a group. It seems as if in a group it's hard to be really honest about how you feel. Who knows, some of her friends may feel the same way.) **Can you think of similar scenarios that these principles apply to in your life?** (Honesty with grades, cheating, lying, and covering up stuff for friends. Everyone expects you to be loyal rather than honest.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Ask: Why are the words "In the beginning . . ." famous? (for introducing the Bible, for introducing people to the beginning of the world as we know it) **The Beatitudes are also one of the most memorized sections of Scripture. Why do you think that is? While the words of Christ to His citizens who choose to live in His kingdom are popular, they are rarely internalized.**

Divide the students into eight groups. Have each group paraphrase one of the beatitudes (one of the "blesseds" from **Matthew 5:3-12**) in their own words. (See the Reader's Choir script at <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org>.) You can give the tip that "blessed" means "happy" but instruct the students not to use any of the main words in the passage as it is now (they will have to use the same words necessary to construct sentences—are, they, will, etc.). Direct them to the Monday and Wednesday sections of the student lesson to give them ideas.

Give them a few minutes to write out their group's beatitude, then have each group read their part in order. Collect all the parts to be written up as your class Beatitudes. (You might prepare this in an artful manner and post it in the room.)

Discuss with the students what they found in-

sightful or particularly meaningful about your class paraphrase. Be sure to affirm each response.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the short-term benefits of belonging to the kingdom of this world? to the kingdom of God?
2. What are some of the long-term benefits of belonging to the kingdom of this world? to the kingdom of God?
3. What are some real-life examples of people you know who live by the Beatitudes?
4. Think of someone you know who seems to be a living example of one of the beatitudes. Who are they and how do you see the beatitude lived out in their life?
5. What beatitude seems to be the hardest to do? Why?
6. Rank the beatitudes in the order that you think they are needed in your world today. Explain your order.
7. In the Beatitudes Jesus doesn't promise more than He can deliver. What promises does "the world" make that it can't deliver?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words conclude with the following ideas:

If you contrast Satan's "empty promise kingdom" with God's "real world kingdom" the difference is clear. Jesus delivers an engaging, exciting future for those who choose to be citizens of His kingdom. God does not promise that we will never face trouble. As a matter of fact, He all but guarantees trouble. But the benefits of citizenship in His kingdom are still far better than the cheap, temporary, and virtually unreachable rewards that the world promises. The kingdom of the world advertises perpetual bliss but gives only short-term satisfaction. Anyone who looks long enough at the way of life that Satan advertises can see that behind

the cheese is a dangerous trap—a promise of fulfillment that never gets delivered. Satan’s kingdom is a sham to be exposed. How many athletes, movie stars, models, and media heroes do you think lie awake at night wonder-

ing why they aren’t happy? Can you think of anyone who was a citizen of God’s kingdom and regretted it at the end? God is honest about the “real world” and what we can expect, both short-term and long-term.



STUDENT LESSON

THE TWO KINGDOMS Not Those Boys

January 3, 2004

>>KEY TEXT: Choose one of the texts from Wednesday’s portion of the lesson. Write it here and memorize it this week.



NOT THOSE BOYS

(This is an illustration. It is only an illustration. If it were the “real” lesson it would be from the Bible.)

“Dear God, please don’t send those boys to my van.”

God wasn’t listening, I concluded.

Several times a year the school devoted a day to community service. From my viewpoint, Kenny or Chris were not “service project” material. Popping into the seats Chris complained, “Where are we going?”

Kenny chimed in, “Why do we have to do this?”

Although I wanted to say something else, I calmly replied, “We’re going to work at the battered women’s shelter.”

“Work?” Kenny snorted. “I didn’t even sign up for this. I think it is stupid!”

It occurred to me that God was not answering my prayer. We arrived at the shelter and I met the director while the boys waited anxiously in the van.

“We really need help planting flowers and playing with the kids while the women go to a group session.” She peered into the van and asked nervously, “Can your team do that for us?”

Team? I thought. The two stringy-haired, saggy-dressed teenagers who were half asleep in the van were anything but a team.

“Come on, gentlemen,” I exaggerated. “I’m going to paint. Kenny, you are going to play with the kids. And Chris, you are going to plant the flowers.”

I prayed one final prayer for God to stop punishing me, saying, “God, if You are there, I’m begging You . . .”

My prayer was interrupted by six screaming children running up to the van, chanting, "Duck, duck, goose!" Kenny was being pulled from the van to play a marathon of children's games. He looked back desperately for help as his best friend watched helplessly. I smiled and waved.

Chris looked in horror at the flats of flowers that littered the sidewalk where the fertile ground waited for their arrival. After the shock wore off, he examined the site and soberly began to plant.

As we got ready to leave, children were still clinging to Kenny's arms and legs as he dragged them laughing in the grass. Chris was washing his hands by the side of the house as the women came out of the building to a garden of flowers. I watched his eyes as he accepted their gratitude. All three of us received a passport to another world that morning. It occurred to me that being self-absorbed has many faces.

I thanked God for not answering my prayer.



Sunday HERE'S WHAT I THINK

Imagine it's your first day at high school. There are a few people you recognize but many you don't. You start watching to see which kids hang out together. Which groups would you try to make friends with? Which groups would you feel uncomfortable to be a part of? What is the group you would like to join like? What are the groups you would not like to join like? Why do you think you are making the choice you are?

Log on to <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org> to post your response. Be up-front and honest. Say what you think.



Monday WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY?

Warning: The opinions expressed in this portion of the lesson are not necessarily those of the editors, your church, or God.

Different people, different opinions. What's

yours? Look over the quotations below and decide how you feel about what they are saying. How do they compare with what God is saying in His? At the end of this section, write a statement that captures your belief. Be prepared to "quote" yourself at Sabbath School.

>> It has been said, "He who dies with the most toys wins." It has also been said, "He who dies with the most toys still dies."

>> "The losing of things is the mercy of God: it comes to teach us to let them go." —George MacDonald, Scottish preacher, teacher, novelist.

>> "Never seem more learned than the people you are with. Wear your learning like a pocket watch and keep it hidden. Do not pull it out to count the hours, but give the time when you are asked." —Lord Chesterfield, eighteenth-century British author.

>> "Wise men and women in every major culture have maintained that the secret of happiness is not in getting more but in wanting less." —Phillip Slater, contemporary author.

>> "It's my life/It's now or never/I ain't gonna live forever/I just want to live while I'm alive." —Bon Jovi in *It's My Life*.

>> "When I look at the television, I want to see me staring right back at me/We all want to be big stars, but we don't know why and we don't know how/But when everybody loves me, I'm going to be just about as happy as I can be." —*Counting Crows in Mr. Jones*.

>> "A man is about as happy as he makes up his mind to be." —Abraham Lincoln, American president.

Write your own quotation.
WHAT I SAY IS . . .



Tuesday
SO WHAT?

The whole idea of a “kingdom” may seem “unreal” today. But even though God’s kingdom isn’t something you can touch with your hands, it is real. Jesus would even say it is more real than the world you are living in. The freedom you feel when you forgive someone is real. The joy people feel when they devote their whole lives to service in the mission field is real.

That’s what makes the kingdom of God real.

Just look at the “real” world around you. Depression is common. Suicide is on the rise. Consider the music and movies that are popular today. Are people claiming to be happy, fulfilled, full of joy and certainty, meaning and purpose? No, a lot of them are uncertain or disappointed about life.

Citizens of God’s kingdom face many things, but always with certainty of their future. Always with the knowledge that suffering will end.

Always with the joy that being of service in a forever kingdom is better than trying to be king of one that is coming to an end. Is it possible that so many people can be misled as to which kingdom is real and which kingdom is temporary? Obviously they are, and it is for that very reason that we should wear our citizenship right out where everyone can see it.



Wednesday
GOD SAYS . . .

>>Psalm 32:1, 2 (NLT)

“Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!”

>>Proverbs 16:25 (NLT)

“There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.”

>>John 16:33 (NIV)

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

>>John 14:27 (NIV)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

>>James 2:5 (NLT)

“Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn’t God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren’t they the ones who will inherit the kingdom God promised to those who love him?”

>>1 John 2:15-17 (NLT)

“Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.”

>>1 John 4:4 (NIV)

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

(More: Psalms 4:1; 84:12; 112:1; 119:1, 2; 128:1; Proverbs 8:32; Matthew 5:3-12.)



Thursday
WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

The desire you have for joy and happiness is there because God put it in you. Life in God’s kingdom may seem foreign now, but the more you think about it the more real it will seem. The opposite kingdom is a place where there is never mercy, only a love of power. It’s where everyone looks out for their own interests and never thinks of others. It’s a pretty scary place.

In the Beatitudes God seems to be sneaking us a peek of our future home in heaven. It is almost as if God is reminding us, “Don’t make yourself at home in this world, because your home is somewhere else.” Consider the rewards of being part of that kingdom—heirs to the King, children of an awesome Father. God wants us to