

MR No. 696—Testimony or “Social” Meetings

Testimonies Bring Rejoicing in Heaven—Believers on the earth and those who have never fallen in heaven are one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints, who on earth meet to worship God in spirit and truth, and in the beauty of holiness. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimonies of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving that comes from the earth below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sounds through the heavenly court because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam.—Manuscript 52, 1896, p. 5. (Untitled, undated manuscript.)

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name” (Malachi 3:16).

Do the believers who meet in their small assemblies in humble churches or in private houses often look upon this picture framed by the Lord of hosts? Do they hang it in memory’s hall, and contemplate it with hope and joy and courage? What a hope-inspiring picture is this where the Lord is represented as bending down and hearkening to the testimonies borne by His witnesses! What inspiration it should give us to consider the fact that all the heavenly universe is represented as listening with pleasure to the words that are spoken exalting the name of God in the earth. They may not be words of oratory, and they are not words that express doubt, unbelief, and complaint; for such words do not honor the Redeemer. The words to which God and the angels listen with delight are words of appreciation for the great Gift that has been made to the world in the only begotten Son of God. Every word of praise for the blessing of the light of truth which has come in messages of warning, and which has dispelled the darkness of error, is written in the heavenly records. Every word that acknowledges the merciful kindness of our heavenly Father in giving Jesus to take away our sins, and to impute to us His righteousness, is recorded in the book of His remembrance. Testimonies of this kind “show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)....

Although the social meeting is a new thing, yet they are learning in the school of Christ, and are overcoming fear and trembling. We keep before them the fact that the social meeting will be the best meeting in which they may be trained and educated to be witnesses for Christ.—Manuscript 32, 1894, pp. 3-5. (“Meeting at Seven Hills,” July 29, 1894.)

Aid to Unity—I spoke to our people in the afternoon from Luke 13:23, 24. I had freedom in speaking and the people seemed to listen with deep interest. Afterward there was a social meeting. Elder [J.G.] Matteson interpreted to W. C. White and myself the testimonies borne. We could but say, One Lord, one faith, one baptism. The brethren in Sweden have the very same experience as our brethren in America. This was a good meeting.—Manuscript 65, 1886, p. 5. (“Second Visit to Sweden,” June 19, 1886.)

Solution to Problems of Despondence and Criticism—When our church members during the week act their part in the service of the Lord, they will be roused from the despondency that is ruining many, body and soul. As they work for others, they will have much that is helpful to speak of when they assemble to worship God. The Sabbath meeting will be like meat in due season; for all will bring precious offerings to the Lord. When God’s people see the great need of sinners being converted, turned from the service of Satan to serve the living God, the testimonies they bear in the Sabbath service will not be dark and gloomy, but full of joy and courage, life and power. Instead of thinking and talking about the faults of their brethren and sisters, and about their own trials, they will think and talk of the love of Christ, and will strive earnestly to become more efficient workers for Him.—Manuscript 127, 1903, p. 6. (“A Call to Service,” October 27, 1903.)

A Different Atmosphere—By His Holy Spirit, God has spoken to me, His messenger, from time to time, and I am bidden to give the word to the people. What His servants shall teach has been clearly outlined. If fewer words of human wisdom, and more of the words of Christ were spoken, if there were fewer sermons, and more social meetings, we would find a different atmosphere pervade our churches

and our camp meetings. Seasons of prayer should be held for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then let the leader of the meeting, by a few appropriate remarks, open the way for the church members to bear witness to their love of God.—Letter 292, 1907, p. 4. (To J. E. White and wife, September 21, 1907.)

Confession Essential Though Humiliating—I spoke with much freedom Sabbath forenoon.

The people seem to be hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of salvation. The Lord gave me much of His Holy Spirit. I was very free in the Lord. Hearts were touched, for the Spirit of the Lord rested upon the people. We had a very excellent social meeting, which lasted until after sundown. This was indeed a good day for this church. Confessions were made by some, very humiliating to the soul, but essential for them, that the fruits might appear unto righteousness.—Manuscript 18, 1889, p. 5. (Diary, February 23, 1889.)

Recommendation of Our Doctrines—A gentleman and lady entered when I was nearly through. They listened with deep interest. They remained through the social meeting and listened to sensible testimonies that were a recommendation to the doctrines we profess to believe.—Manuscript 65, 1886, p. 11. (“Second Visit to Sweden,” June 26, 1886.)

Essential for a Living Church—Some of those who are newly come to the faith know not how to bear testimony, for they had never done this; but I presented the matter before them, and urged them to be earnest, interested workers for the Lord Jesus, and to serve Him. This they must do if they had a living church; everyone must bear his share of the responsibility. If they would exercise their ability God would give them increased power, and this was the way to let their light shine out to the world. Well, fifteen testimonies were borne. Some had never before opened their lips in meeting, although they were intelligent men.... The blessing of the Lord rested upon all present.—Letter 50, 1894, p. 3. (To Harmon Lindsay, June 14, 1894.)

One Man Should Not Do All the Talking—I spoke again to the people assembled in conference from Malachi 3:16, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another,” etc. I dwelt upon the importance of making our social meetings interesting; that one man wasn’t to do all the talking, but everyone should bear his testimony. It has been the habit of one man to get up and talk from one half hour to an hour. This is called meditation. Then the interest of the meeting is gone and no one feels that he has any testimony to bear. One or two make a few remarks and the meetings close; and there had not been the habit of having social meetings in Europe. But we are seeking to educate them on this point, that it is the duty of everyone who loves God and the truth to speak to one another words of experience and of comfort, and to tell of God’s goodness, His love, and His great mercy in giving His Son Jesus Christ to die for us while we were enemies to God.—Manuscript 29, 1887, p. 8. (“Labors in Switzerland, No. 8,” February 22, 1887.)

Work Cheerfully, Make Social Meetings Interesting—The work done for the spiritual interest of the workers in the office should be done with cheerfulness. It is not to be looked upon as a burden, but as a privilege. Those who do this work are not to wear long faces, as though they were going to a funeral. Their countenances should be lighted up with the joy of serving Christ.

Keep this idea uppermost. Make the social meeting as interesting as possible. Let each one feel that he has a duty to perform in the meeting. This will help the workers. Cooperate with the heavenly angels, who are trying to make a right impression on every worker. They are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.—Manuscript 81, 1901, p. 6. (Talk Given by E. G. White to Board of Directors of Pacific Press, August 21, 1901.)

Sermon Should Be Short—The preaching service should generally be short, so that an opportunity may be given to those who love God to express their gratitude and adoration. Prayer and praise offered to God by His believing children honors and glorifies His name.—Manuscript 32a, 1894, p. 2. (Untitled Manuscript, July 30, 1894.)

All Should Have Opportunity on Sabbath to Bear Testimony—I have had my mind drawn recently to the subject of our Sabbath meetings. The work of the Sabbath School needs to be elevated. The leader appointed to conduct the church service should study and learn how to interest others. On this one day in the week, all who love God and are striving to keep His commandments should be given

an opportunity to bear their testimony. Do not plan to have a discourse that shall occupy all the time, while those who assemble are given no opportunity to confess Christ.

Our brethren would receive a blessing in dispensing with or deferring one meal of the day, if necessary, in order that an hour or more might be devoted to testimony meeting. We used often to make the Sabbath a day of fasting and prayer, and we were greatly blessed in our worship.

The Sabbath day should be spent to the glory of God. Let everyone take time to humble his heart before God, and clear away all the rubbish from the soul temple. If bitter feelings have been cherished, or there are wrongs to be confessed, let every barrier be removed. Has anyone spoken evil of his brother, or placed an occasion of stumbling in his brother's way? Let him realize that this is a sin to be repented of.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:1-2).

There should be a spirit of confession to God, and an acknowledgment of His blessings, with thanksgiving. Our worship should be so filled with praise and thanksgiving that the angels of heaven will rejoice with us.—Letter 279, 1905, pp. 2, 3. (To Clarence Santee, October 4, 1905.)

In conclusion I would say, On the Sabbath, when the people assemble for worship, let the discourse be short, and let all be given an opportunity to bear testimony.—Letter 187, 1904, p. 2. (To Brethren Butler and Haskell, June 3, 1904.)

In Connection With Sermon and Lord's Supper—I spoke to our people upon Sabbath with much freedom. A social meeting followed where many bore testimony for the truth and expressed gratitude for that which they had heard, and said they meant from that time to be more earnest and interested in the work and cause of God than they had been heretofore. At the close of the meeting the Lord's supper was administered.—Letter 21, 1880, p. 2. (To James White, April 15, 1880.)

A Social Meeting—Wednesday night we had a social meeting. There was a good little number represented, and the Lord was in our midst and that to bless. All seemed so thankful for a little help and so pleased with the spirit of the meeting.—Letter 23, 1882, p. 2. (To W. C. White, December 1, 1882.)

With Bible Study—Let small companies [in our publishing houses] assemble together in the evening or early morning to study the Bible for themselves. Let them have a season of prayer that they may be strengthened and enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This is the work Christ wants to have done in the heart of everyone who is engaged in any department of the publishing work. If you will do this a great blessing will come to you.... What testimonies you should bear of the loving acquaintance you have made with your fellow-workers in these precious seasons when seeking the blessing of God. Let each tell his experience in simple words. This will bring more comfort and joy to the soul than all the pleasant instruments of song that can be produced in the tabernacle. Let Christ come into your hearts.—Letter 2, 1900, pp. 3, 4. (To Brother and Sister Sisley, January 3, 1900.)

Tell What Jesus Has Done For You—Satan will work against us by laying stumbling blocks in our way. We must remember home religion. We must have the meekness of Christ at every step. Christ must abide in us, and then when we come into the meeting, no matter where it is, how many there are or how few, we will have something to say. It is because you have Christ formed within you, and you cannot keep Him boxed up in the heart. You can't do it. You must reveal Him. You will tell what Jesus has done for you, how He has worked for you. Why He is first and He is last. You love Him—and how can you help it.—Undated Manuscript 70, p. 18. ("A Talk to Parents," Undated Manuscript.)

Honor the Lovely Jesus—One cannot row another's boat. We must strive for heaven with all our might. Everyone has a part to act and something to do in the cause of God. None of you should keep silent in your meetings. Surely everyone who has tasted of the powers of the world to come can say something in honor of the lovely Jesus.—Letter 30, 1850, p. 2. (To Brother and Sister Loveland, December 13, 1850.)

Confession Plays a Part—Monday I attended five-o'clock meeting but found it a tract and missionary meeting, the same as I had found Sunday morning, and had to beat a retreat. The work of

reformation, of seeking God, seemed to be dropped. I attended the nine -o'clock meeting. It was a social meeting. After several had spoken, I felt the burden of testimony, and I spoke with great plainness and power for about one hour, and the words were felt by the people. I called them forward and the center of the seats in the large tent was quickly filled. Then confessions were made one to another. The testimony I bore was in reference to their backslidings from God. Many tears were shed. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon ministers and people. It was a good season. I labored hard but with pleasure and freedom.—Letter 5a, 1881, p. 5. (To W. C. and Mary White, June 14, 1881.)

The church needs the fresh, live experiences of members who have habitual communion with God. Old, dry, stale testimonies and prayers, without the manifestation that Christ is in them as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, are no help to the church.—Letter 118, 1896, p. 5. (To Addie and May Walling, November 17, 1896.)

Thankfulness and Resolution—We had a precious social meeting. Many intelligent testimonies were borne, which Brother Matteson interpreted. These testimonies expressed their thankfulness that the Lord sent them help from America and expressed their gratitude to God for the truth and for the increased light Sister White had given them. They could see, they said, as they had not done before, the necessity of greater strictness in keeping the Sabbath and could sense the offensive character of sin, and they would make earnest efforts to put sin away. Some expressed with tears their regret that they could not communicate with us, but were thankful that when we reach heaven we can all have one language and enjoy each other's society. They spoke of receiving great light from the writings of God's servant, but they never expected she would visit them. The testimonies were all given in a tender, melting spirit, and it was evident that these precious souls had indeed a love for the truth, and the very similar experience to all brethren in America.—Manuscript 26, 1885, p. 5. ("First Visit to Sweden," October 15, 1885.)

At Portland, Oregon—The Lord gave me great power before the people on Sabbath. About fifty came forward for prayers. Many of that number were seeking the Lord for the first time. Backsliders came back with confessions, well wet down with tears....

[Later] I arose and talked a short time telling them we had waited for these leading men to take a position which God could approve and let His Spirit into the meeting.... I had two front seats cleared, and asked those who were backslidden from God and those who had never started to serve the Lord, to come forward. They began to come. Other seats were cleared and finally there was the whole body of seats of the tent filled; about one dozen were in the side seats. Then the Spirit of God like a tidal wave swept over the congregation. Such solemnity; deep, earnest, heartfelt confessions were made. These men who had stood like icebergs melted under the beams of the Son of Righteousness. They came right to the point. They made thorough work. Confessions were made with weeping and deep feeling. We had a most solemn, blessed season of intercession and then closed the meeting and took our breakfast and assembled again at eight o'clock to finish the work. Parents confessed to children and children to parents, husbands to wives and wives to husbands, brothers to sisters, and sisters to brothers. It seemed like the movement of 1844. I have not been in a meeting of this kind for many years. After the hard-fought battle, the victory was most precious. We all wept like children.

Brother Boyd spoke of his gratitude while the tears rained from his face. Oh, I praise the Lord, I praise Him, for He is to be praised.—Letter 20, 1884, pp. 3, 6. (To Uriah Smith, June 27, 1884.)

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