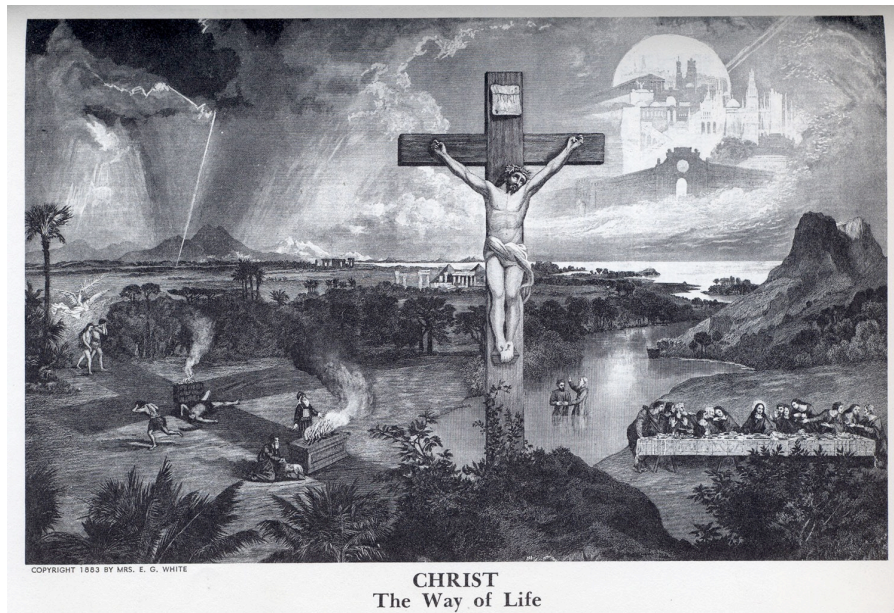


A unit on the Spirit of Prophecy

Ellen White: The Journey of Faith



A Unit on the Prophetic Gift
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1. Introduction:

A spiritual journey with *God* is dynamic. It includes challenges, starts and stops, variety, humdrum, surprises and moments of inspirational surprises. Even more, it includes frustrations, disappointments, anger, denials, emotional pain, wounds and scars, struggles with the unknown, insecurities, moments when words, definitions and logic give way to despair. In such emotionally cold and lonely places people experience what I refer to as "critical meandering". On one hand, they struggle with the fear of the unknown. On the other hand, they strive to reach over the turbulent torrents of life's circumstances searching for someone who cares, someone who offers a temporary home as a place of refreshment and rest. At times, it involves a desperate struggle of faith to be "sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). In moments like this, the childlike trust reaches out for *God's* hand where at least for a moment "we let *God* direct our lives or allow *God* to be *God*. (Hagberg & Guelich 2005, 4)

No wonder, *Jesus* described our journey to eternity or life eternal, a life of never-ending relationship with Him, in terms of knowing *God*. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true *God* and *Jesus Christ*, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Here one hears the definition of eternal life and perhaps even more than a definition. It appears as an invitation to a relationally experiential knowledge which uplifts the human mind above philosophical assumptions and intellectual gymnastics. Such a journey anchors in *God's* self-revelation and guides an individual to an implicit faith-oriented trust and confidence in Him (Psalm 119:105; Hebrews 1:1-3).

The privilege of knowing *God* implies the responsibility to pass on the story. "In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our *God* has commanded?" (Dt 6:20). The response is brief and up to the point. "Tell him, "we were slaves in Egypt..."(Dt 6:21). In other words, share the story of your journey with *God*, the story of His presence, leading and guidance.

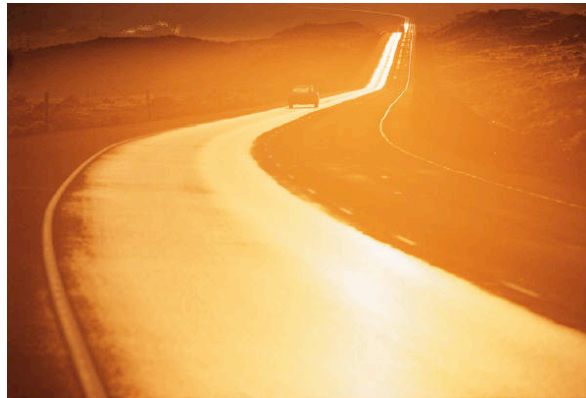
In this first module, which I have entitled "Searching for *God*", I am recapturing the early stages of *Ellen White's* spiritual journey during her childhood years. Let's listen to her story.

Think It Through

Read John 17:1-3

Psalm 24

- a) What does it mean to know God?
- b) When have you recognized God's presence in your life?
- c) Share your story of how and when you first became aware of God's presence? How did this experience impact your life? What did it mean for you?



Definitions:

"When we speak, however, of the journey of faith, we use *faith*, neither as a noun nor an adjective. *Faith* is a verb, action, the dynamic that drives or gives life to the relationship between us and God. Our response called *faith* is the human recognition, on the one hand, that God is God, and, on the other hand, that each one of us is special.....*Faith* with reference to the journey is simply the process by which we let God direct our lives or let God be God. The more we deliberately choose to let God direct our every thought, word, and action, the more profoundly our journey is affected." (Hagberg & Guelich, 2005)

2. The Journey of Faith in Retrospect

Ellen White (1827-1915), passed away on July 16. A week before her death, her children gathered around her bedside to pray with the affectionate mother and grandmother whose life journey was near the end. She responded to her son and granddaughter's prayers saying, "I know in whom I have believed." (Arthur White, *The Later Elmshaven Years*, 423)

Some months before (Dec, 23, 1914) Ellen White's secretary, Crisler wrote a letter to her son Willie in which he described her response to life's circumstances. "It is in her hours of greatest physical weakness that your mother seems to rise to the highest spiritual heights; and yet in all this she simply does what any of us poor mortals can do - lays hold on the divine promises, and makes them her own, and praises God for the comfort they yield. Thus her heart is filled with overflowing joy, and she has perfect peace."

He continued to observe that "The simplicity of her faith has made a profound impression upon my own mind...Faith in God's power to sustain her through the many weaknesses, attendant on old age; faith in the precious promises of God's Word....A faith such as this would inspire anyone who could witness it" (Ibid, 415-416).

Think It Through

Who was Ellen White?

What do we know about her?

What can we learn from her life's journey?

Resources:

Audio Resources: *Pathway of the Pioneers: Stories of Men and Women Who Founded the Adventist Church*. Segment 116 "The Last Mile (14.10 minutes)

Ellen White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 440-449



3. The Formative Years

To see people as they are, it is necessary to accompany them through the walks of their lives; to trace the manner in which they arrived at their conclusions. (Sylvester Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, iii)

What do we know about Ellen White (nee Harmon) as a child?

"In Ellen, both mental and physical development was rapid and vigorous. While but a child, she displayed a love of study, a quick perception, and a retentive memory. She was of buoyant, hopeful disposition, fond of society, courageous, resolute and persevering. It was but natural that her parents should regard her with peculiar interest and entertain high hopes for her future" (LSms,1, 1915).

Family Background

Ellen White shares little information about her family background. Her biographical sketches include a brief introductory paragraph. She speaks of her parents as devoted Christians members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. They held an active role in leading other people to conversion and were committed to God's work. However, she refers to the important role her parents played in shaping the spiritual lives of their children. "They had the joy of seeing their children, eight in number, all converted." (LSms, 1915, 2,1915)

Another aspect, which deeply impressed young Ellen, was her parents' encouragement of kindness and non-confrontational attitudes. "Our parents taught us never to contend with anyone, but if we were in danger of being abused or injured, to hasten home at once" (Ibid.)

Think It Through

- a) How would you describe Ellen's personality?
- b) Would she be a nice person to have around as a childhood friend?

4. When the World Turns Upside Down

Young Ellen Harmon was cheerful, full of dreams and childhood expectations. At the tender age of nine, her journey of discovering life outside the security of her home was just about to begin. Free to watch and observe. Free to discover and learn. Free from worries and heartaches of life's disappointments. Free to capture her dream. Like any other child she waited to expand her knowledge by attending the school in Portland. Such childhood dreams are aptly described by Ernestine Northover.

(<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/childhood-the-21st-century/>)

Our childhood was filled with thoughts of joy and gladness,
We lived our lives, oblivious to the world,
And all the hardships, wars, griefs and sadness,
We stood waiting for our lives to be unfurled

Suddenly, unexpectedly young Ellen's world turned upside down. She described it as "an accident which was to affect my whole life".

Note the brief description:

"At the age of nine years, an accident happened to me, which was to affect my whole life. In company with my twin sister and one of our schoolmates, I was crossing a common in the city of Portland, ME, when a girl about thirteen years of age, becoming angry at some trifle, followed us, threatening to strike us. Our parents had taught us never to content with anyone, but if we were in danger of being abused or injured, to hasten home at once. We were doing this with all speed, but the girl followed us rapidly with a stone in her hand. I turned my head to see how far she was behind us, and as I did so, she threw the stone and it hit me on the nose. I was stunned by the blow, and fell senseless to the ground." (LSms, 2)

Think It Through

- a) What dreams do you have for your life?
- b) How would unexpected accidents, such as sudden sickness, a serious car accident, death of close friends or family members, impact your feelings, your view of life and of God?



5. The Inward Journey

a) Beginning of Spiritual Struggles

Spiritual loneliness, mistreatment, poor health, unfulfilled dreams and frustrations invaded her childhood dreams. When the freak accident changed her childhood hopes, life for young Ellen was not to be the same. In fact, she faced two choices. She could have changed into a bitter, angry and frustrated person throwing the notion of God's presence out of her life or she could have opened her mind to the spiritual life, a journey in search of meaning.

She was physically disfigured for the rest of her life. Note how she describes her condition. "Every feature of my face seemed changed. The sight was more I could bear. The bone of my nose proved to be broken. The idea of carrying my misfortune through life was insupportable. I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared" (2 SG,9).

After the accident, she was in a coma for three weeks and turned almost to a skeleton. Meeting her father, who was away at the time of the accident, added to her emotional dilemma for he did not recognize her. "This cut my feelings deeply, but I tried to appear cheerful, though my heart was breaking." (LSms 5.2)

How did the unfortunate experience change her life?

- a) Her face was disfigured
- b) She experienced constant pain and depression
- c) She struggled with rejection by friends

Think It Through

Read, Genesis 37: 12-36

Imagine experiencing a major setback in your life's journey, how would you react? How would you feel about those who were unkind to you? How would it impact your view of God?

David G. Benner writes, "Can I be still enough that I can hear God's call to me to join him in my inner garden? The reason he wants to meet me there is that this is where he wants the transformation to begin. But so often, fearing meeting him or myself in my depths, I try to arrange a rendezvous with God in some safer place outside myself. And then I wonder why God does not seem to be there." (Benner, *Sacred Companions*, 47).

A contemporary writer, Marjorie Thompson defines spiritual life as, "the increasing vitality and sway of God's Spirit in us. It is a magnificent choreography of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, moving us toward communion with both Creator and creation." (Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 6). Such intimate choreography between human spirit and God's Spirit comes alive in critical moments, in times of frustration, anger and doubts. Ellen White recalled the painful and lonely moments of her critical journey. Moments of such solitude are frightening. They raise questions about, life and its meaning, people and God. Yet, the journey carved on the pathway of solitude and stillness of the heart is not "a state of relaxation. Nor is it simply a matter of being alone." It arises from human "attentiveness to the presence of God." It is an inward search for "one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans" (Benner, 48). The inward journey, which includes struggles with personal doubts, insecurities, frustrations, setbacks and disappointments, involves human search for the authenticity of God's presence.

Think It Through

Read: Psalm 42:1-3; John 1: 4-42; 3:1-21

- a) Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet God and speak to Him face to face?
- b) In view of what you have heard about God in the past and what you have learned about Him describe your picture of God.
- c) What kind of God are you longing to know?



b. Experiencing Withdrawal and Rejection

Note the progressive pathway of Ellen's distancing from friends and family. It is evident the intensity of the trauma was personal and unknown to others.

"I concealed my feelings from my friends, fearing that they would not understand me. This was a mistaken course. Had I opened my mind to my mother, she might have instructed, soothed and encouraged me....." (LS 1880, 135)

"I gained strength very slowly. As I became able to play with my friends, I was forced to learn the bitter lesson that one's personal appearance often makes a difference in the treatment he receives from his companions" (LSms 6.3)



"Many times in those childhood days, I was made to feel my misfortune keenly. My feelings were unusually sensitive and caused me great unhappiness. Often with wounded pride, mortified and wretched in spirit, I sought a lonely place and gloomily pondered of the trials I was daily doomed to bear" (LMsn 7.1)

"I locked my secret agony within my heart and did not seek advice of experienced Christians as I should have done. No one conversed with me on the subject of my soul's salvation and no one prayed with me" (LS 1880, 136).

c. The Pain of Shattered Dreams:

The frustration increased with the realization that her dreams and ambitions were now completely shattered. It is evident in her emotional frustration with God.

“My health seemed to be hopelessly impaired.....My hand trembled so that I made but little progress in writing, and could get no further than simple copies in coarse hand....It was the hardest struggle of my young days to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must give up my studies, and relinquish the cherished hope of gaining an education. I did not attend school after I was twelve years old”



“My ambition to become a scholar had been very great, and when I pondered over my disappointed hopes, and the thought I was to be an invalid for life, I was unreconciled to my lot, and at times murmured against the providence of God in thus afflicting me. The future stretched out before me dark and cheerless. Had I opened my mind to my mother, she might have instructed me, soothed and encouraged me; but I concealed my troubled feelings from my family and friends, fearing they would not understand me.” (LSms11.1.2.3)

Think It Through:

- a) Describe the moments of your disappointment with God. What did it feel like? Were you angry and frustrated with God?
- b) Have you faith and trust in God fallen apart?

d. The question one may ask and where to now?

Benner suggests that spirituality in terms of a journey refers to a faith response to the invitation of "following and trusting God as he leads us on the adventure he has planned for us" (Benner, 25,26). However, the journey does not simply imply deliverance from adverse circumstances, Rather, it implies a journey of deliverance from oneself and one's misconceptions about God. In the Bible, God's people were not called simply to a journey to another country but they were called to a journey of transformation. Such a journey leaves people "changed forever" (Benner 26). Often, God's invitation confronts individuals at the point of struggles and frustrations, shattered dreams and hopes, moments of despairs and loneliness. At the deepest level of human brokenness, God's healing power leads to a deeper understanding of God's love, His presence and shared hope. (Genesis 3:7-9)



What did this mean for Ellen White?

Some 50 years later while visiting the spot where she met with the accident, she wrote, "that which for a time seemed so bitter and was so hard to bear, has proved to be a blessing in disguise. The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven. I might never have known Jesus, had not the sorrow that clouded my early years led me to seek comfort in Him" (RH, November 25, 1884)

Think It Through:

"As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness (Jesus) that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ" (SC, 68).

Discuss the meaning of this statement and its implication to life's journey.

6. Searching for God

Ellen White experienced the trustworthiness of God's promises in a life of pain, loneliness, discouragement, failures, disappointments, frustrations and the entire plethora of human brokenness. Beside God's initiative to communicate with her through visions, she felt His comforting presence in places where the rubber meets the road. Here, she tuned in to God's invitation "be still and know that I am God". In the moments of stillness, she began to grasp the full measure and unlimited compassion of God's love. In such places of stillness one tunes in to God who will call to forgive us and to heal us. Basking and experiencing the warmth of His grace Ellen White shared the hope and acceptance one finds in Jesus. Let's follow her childhood search for God.

a) Painful Memories

In moments of personal discouragement, doubts and feelings of rejection, Ellen describes the changeable nature of human friendship

"How changeable the friendship of my young companions. A pretty face, dress or good looks are thought much of. But let misfortune take some of these away, and the friendship is broken. (SG Vol.2, 11).

Yet, her young heart longed for acceptance, encouragement and words of comfort. In this context, one discovers moments of awakening, the beginning of the journey of knowing God and Jesus.

"But I began to turn to my Savior where I found comfort. I sought the Lord earnestly and received consolation. I believed that Jesus did love even me."
(SG, Vol.2, 11)

Think It Through:

Read: John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:3

- a) What does it mean to be loved by Jesus and to find His comfort?
- b) When do we most experience doubts in His love?

b) Struggles with Personal Insecurity

Mulholland defines spirituality in the following words. It is "a process of being conformed to the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world - in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did" (Mulholland, 1993, 25). Such a journey springs out of a painful struggle which eventually shatters the chains of personal insecurities and inherited cultural misconceptions about God. Gradually, the process allows God to take control. Mulholland notes, "In the final analysis there is nothing we can do to transform ourselves into persons who love and serve as Jesus did except make ourselves available for God to do that work of transforming grace in our lives." (Ibid. 26)

Struggles and Confusion:

"I desired to become a Christian and prayed earnestly for the forgiveness of my sins. A peace of mind resulted. I loved every one, and felt desirous that all should have their sins forgiven, and love Jesus as I did." (LSms 6.1)

"The happy confidence in my Saviors' love that I have enjoyed during my illness was gone. My prospect of worldly enjoyment was blighted and heaven seemed closed against me. (LSms 11.2)

"At times my sense of guilt and responsibility to God lay so heavy upon my soul that I could not sleep, but lay awake for hours, thinking of my lost condition and what was best for me to do." (LSms 11.4)

"Religion seemed too holy and sacred for me to obtain. I was ashamed to reveal the lost and wretched state of my heart. No one conversed with me on the subject of my soul's salvation, and no one prayed with me. So, I locked my secret agony within my heart..." (LSms 12.1)

Think It Through:

Read: Psalm 13:1-4

Sometimes God feels so close and sometimes He seems so distant, why?



C) Impact of Religious Misconceptions

Thompson points out that spiritual life is grounded in a dynamic relational interaction. It has to do with "God's way of relating to us, and our way of responding to God" (Thompson, 6). However, a variety of influences impacted her human view of God. In her childhood experience, Ellen White struggled with the prevailing views of her time. These tainted her mind with a distorted view of God. Note a few of her recollections.

"Many had a vague idea that they must make some wonderful effort to gain the favor of God" (LS80, 17).

"I can now look back upon my youthful experience and see how near I came to making a fatal mistake. I had read many of the religious biographies of children who had possessed numberless virtues and lived faultless lives. I had conceived a great admiration for the paragons of perfection there represented. But far from encouraging me in my efforts to become a Christian, these books were as stumbling-blocks to my feet. I despaired of ever attaining to the perfection of the youthful characters in those stories who lived the lives of saints and were free from all doubts, and sins, and weaknesses under which I staggered.....if this is true I could never be a Christian. I can never hope to be like those children. Later experiences have convinced me that these biographies of immaculate children mislead the youth." (Biographical Sketch, ST, February 3, 1876)

"Our Heavenly Father was presented before my mind as a tyrant who delighted in the agonies of the condemned; not the tender, pitying Friend of sinners who loves His creatures with love that is past all understanding and desires them to be saved in His kingdom" (LS, 30)

Think It Through:

Read: John 1:10-11.

- a) When have you been confused about God?
- b) What is your image of God?
- c) Have you felt your picture of God change? When? What influenced this change?

d) Conversion and Spiritual Healing

Conversion involves a response of loving obedience and commitment to God and His service. It is not just an intellectual decision rather it involves a heart-response to the awareness of God's acceptance, forgiveness and involvement in human life. In all, it places Christ at the centre of one's being. Conversion includes a change in a person's central allegiance and personal commitment to follow Christ in life and in death.

Ellen White's Journey to Conversion

"My hope was so small and my faith so weak....yet I longed for someone to tell me what I should do to be saved, what steps to take to meet my Savior and give myself entirely up to the Lord." (1T, 17)

"It is only by connecting with Jesus through faith that the sinner becomes a hopeful, believing child of God. These words comforted me and gave me a view of what I must do to be saved.' (Ibid.)

Note her recollections.

"While bowed at the altar with others who were seeking the Lord, all the language of my heart was: "Help, Jesus, save me or I perish! I will never cease to entreat till my prayer is heard and my sins forgiven!" I felt my needy, helpless condition as never before. As I knelt and prayed, suddenly my burden left me, and my heart was light. At first a feeling of alarm came over me, and I tried to resume my load of distress. It seemed to me that I had no right to feel joyous and happy. But Jesus seemed very near to me; I felt able to come to Him with all my griefs, misfortunes, and trials, even as the needy ones came to Him for relief when He was upon earth. There was a surety in my heart that He understood my peculiar trials and sympathized with me. I can never forget this precious assurance of the pitying tenderness of Jesus toward one so unworthy of His notice. I learned more of the divine character of Christ in that short period when bowed among the praying ones than ever before." (Ibid.,17. Emphasis added)

Think It Through

Read: John 3: 1-16; TC, Vol 1, 18-21



Focusing on healing, commitment and change

"My life appeared to me in a different light. The affliction that had darkened my childhood seemed to have been dealt me in mercy for my good, to turn my heart away from the world and its unsatisfying pleasures, and incline it toward the enduring attractions of heaven." (Ibid., 19)

In the stillness of such critical yet challenging moments of change and transformation, God moulds champions not wimps. He raises bold visionaries, dreamers, builders of hope and courage. From a troubled, insecure, emotionally scarred, shy, uneducated, simple young woman, God's grace transformed Ellen White to an inspirational champion of faith. She was a bold visionary who pointed people to the source of her own spiritual strength, the source of her own education - the Bible and Jesus. She expressed the power of such a transformational nature of her journey in the following words.

"My views of the Father were changed. I now looked upon Him as a kind and tender parent rather than a stern tyrant compelling men to a blind obedience. My heart went out toward Him in a deep and fervent love. Obedience to His will seemed a joy; it was a pleasure to be in His service. No shadow clouded the light that revealed to me the perfect will of God. I felt the assurance of an indwelling Savior and realized the truth of what Christ has said: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life....I could even praise God for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity." (Ibid., 31,32)

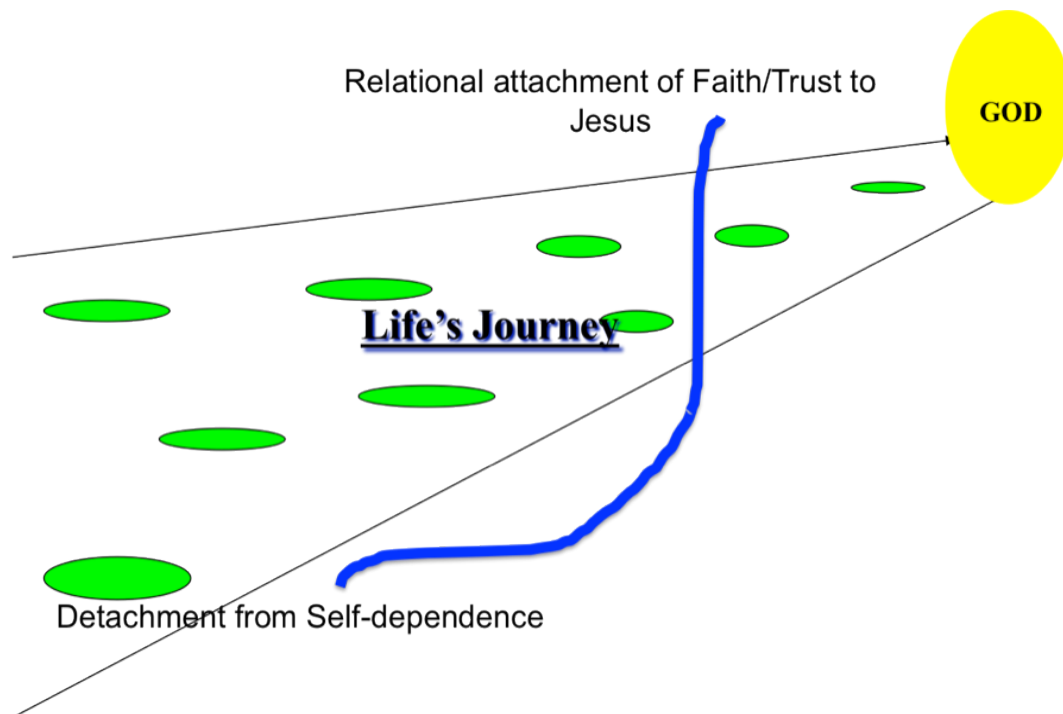
Reflection:

Reflect on your feelings about coming closer to God. Are you aware of any anxieties? If so name them and share how your new view of God helped you to deal with your personal worries and anxieties.

7. The Challenge of an Ongoing Journey

a) Towards Radical Alternative

The journey towards a relationship with God and Jesus empower individuals to embrace what Mulholland refers to as a "radical alternative" (Philippians 4:5). He defines it as "living according to an established structure of reality in the face of alternatives, especially threatening ones." (Mulholland, 89). Paul seems to suggest that in the face of adverse circumstances, trust in God provides a secure ground for contentment. It grows from the reassuring and invigorating promise of Christ's presence (Philippians 4:13). Mulholland suggests, "The Christian's identity and value do not reside in the fragile order and tenuous control that she or he imposes upon life. Identity and value are found in a vital and living relationship with Christ as the Lord. This relationship liberates Christians from dependence upon their little systems of order and fragile structures of control" (Ibid.).



In other words, the radical alternative is the awareness of God's presence. It challenges us to confront life's journey in a partnership with God. As the relationship with God deepens, one begins to choose God's ways and purposes. This process leads us away from self-dependence to a relational attachment of trust, faith and dependence on God. In consequence, it leads to a gradual reversal of human attitudes.

b) Waiting to Meet Jesus

In 1842 Ellen continued to attend "The Second Advent" meetings in Portland and became fully convinced the Lord was coming. However, she felt unprepared to "meet her Saviour." (1T, 21). During this time, she continued to struggle with many of the prevailing views. "My mind constantly dwelt upon the subject of holiness of heart. I longed above all things to obtain this great blessing and feel that I was entirely accepted of God." (Ibid.,22) It is evident that her emotional struggle continued to play a major role in her search to understand what it means to be in God's presence. Note the following ideas.

- a) Sanctification was coined with the experience of "loss of physical strength under the influence of strong mental excitement."
- b) Believe in Jesus now! Believe that He accepts you now!
- c) Struggle to reach some higher attainment before one could be sure of eternal life.
- d) God proposed to save none but the sanctified.

Read: 1T, 22-26

Commenting on the journey towards a closer relational intimacy with God, Thompson points out that "it is natural to feel certain reservations." (Thompson, 14). She notes the following restrainers.

- a) We may feel too small and insignificant for God to bother with or not feel at all sure God loves us as we really are.
- b) We may be afraid what we would encounter if we came too close to God. It is one thing to be told what God is like; it could be another truth to discover the truth about ourselves.
- c) Perhaps, we feel anxious what God may demand from us if we got too close

However, the pathway to the radical alternative does not depend on how much we know about God, but on what God is really like.

Reflection:

Which of the above points do you consider as the most challenging?



While waiting for the Second Advent, young Ellen longed to know what God is like. She wondered what it means to know Jesus. Listen, how she describes her journey to the point of her radical alternative.

"Soon after this I had another dream. I seemed to be sitting in abject despair with my face in my hands, reflecting like this: If Jesus were upon earth, I would go to Him, throw myself at His feet, and tell Him all my sufferings. He would not turn away from me, He would have mercy upon me, and I would love and serve Him always. Just then the door opened, and a person of beautiful form and countenance entered. He looked upon me pitifully and said: "Do you wish to see Jesus? He is here, and you can see Him, if you desire it. Take everything you possess and follow me..... In a moment, I stood before Jesus. There was no mistaking that beautiful countenance. That expression of benevolence and majesty could belong to no other. As His gaze rested upon me, I knew at once that He was acquainted with every circumstance of my life and all my inner thoughts and feelings. I tried to shield myself from His gaze, feeling unable to endure His searching eyes, but He drew near with a smile, and, laying His hand upon my head, said: "Fear not." (Read, 1T,28,29)

The journey towards a radical alternative is simply a journey to God's presence. It answers the question, what is God like? What is Jesus like? At this point, one experiences an awakening as to what really matters to God. God's presence impacts God's human attitudes, behavior and view of life (Roman 5:1-5)

Think It Through:

Read John 1: 35-40

Reflection:

- a) If you had opportunity to a day with Jesus, how would this experience change your life?
- b) What did Jesus' words "Fear not" mean to young Ellen? What do these words mean to you?

c) Dealing with The Great Disappointment

Disappointments can be frightening, shattering and emotionally draining. They leave us dry, confused and separated from God. Note how Ellen White describes the emotionally heightened moments of waiting for the Second Coming and how she dealt with the experience of the Great Disappointment.

"Those who sincerely love Jesus can appreciate the feelings of those who watched with the most intense longing for the coming of their Savior. The point of expectation was nearing. The time when we hoped to meet Him was close at hand. We approached this hour with a calm solemnity. The true believers rested in a sweet communion with God--an earnest of the peace that was to be theirs in the bright hereafter. None who experienced this hope and trust can ever forget those precious hours of waiting." (Ibid.,51)

Well, the predicted date 22 October 1844 came and passed by and Jesus did not come. She said, "but the time of expectation passed." So, how did she handle the strain of such a great discouragement? Many people gave up on God and the Bible. At this point, her statement has a profound meaning and application to life's journey.

"We were perplexed and disappointed, yet did not renounce our faith. Many still clung to the hope that Jesus would not long delay His coming; the word of the Lord was sure, it could not fail. We felt that we had done our duty, we had lived up to our precious faith; we were disappointed, but not discouraged." (Ibid. 52).

One asks faith in what. I suggest that the early formative stages of Ellen's spiritual journey role model the value of relational attachment to God and its transformational power. Here is the hub of the radical alternative. It demonstrates that search for God encounters God's involvement in human life. On this pathway, God shapes the trustworthiness of His unfailing promises. Indeed, such a journey is critical for it is critically needed. As someone said, because of what you learn from Him and of Him, you'll always have something to hang on to - and it won't be by your fingernails. It involves reliance on the promises of an unfailing friend.

8. Conclusion

The early formative stages of Ellen White's spiritual journey shaped the hub of a continually expanding process which marked the seventy years of her ministry as God's messenger. No wonder that eyewitnesses testified to her love for Jesus. "I have never heard any other person speak of love for Jesus, as I heard her speak. Many times I have heard her exclaim, 'I love Him, I love Him, I love Him'. Her entire life was devoted to winning others to love him and serve Him with all their heart..."(LS, 452). Meeting Jesus changed her life and inspired her to rise above all the disappointments, setbacks and discouragements. On this journey, she had time to grow and gain understanding of each new phase and challenge she met along the way. The dream of her childhood passion, to know God and Jesus, gave her hope and helped her to develop an implicit trust in His presence. A life journey with such a friend means deliverance from all fears, and such a journey leaves us changed forever.

The future modules, "Meeting God", "Listening to God" and "Walking with God" explore the dynamics of Ellen White's spirituality during her lifetime. I conclude this section with words, which in the contemporary language summarise the ethos of an authentic journey with God and its impact on life.

"Life in Christ is different from the patterns of the world we know so well. In place of degradation and abuse, it means reverence and respect for all life. Instead of politics and power, it embodies humble and joyful service. In place of retribution and revenge, it offers forgiveness and reconciliation. Beyond the forces of disease and death, it holds out healing and life. Instead of fear and anxiety, it offers trust in God. Life in the Spirit means release from idols and freedom from addictions. Christ provides realistic hope for a realistic life. He is the wellspring for our thirst, the bread for every hunger of the human heart. "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8

Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 16

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