



A unit on the Spirit of Prophecy

# Ellen White: The Journey of Faith

## Module II

### “Meeting God”



A Unit on the Prophetic Gift  
By

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## 1. Introduction

One wonders, so what does it mean to meet God and how does such an experience impact life's journey? Perhaps it allows individuals to discover the One who truly understands the depth of human insecurities but at the same time empowers life with a vision and passion for things that really matter. Quoting Aelred of Rievaulx, Benner writes. "What happiness, what security, what joy to have...one to whom you can entrust all your secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans."<sup>1</sup> Henri Nouwen explores this thought further.

*When we think about the people who have given us hope and have increased the strength of our soul, we might discover that they were not advice givers, warners or moralists, but the few who were able to articulate in words and actions the human condition in which we participate and who have encouraged us to face the realities of life.<sup>2</sup>*

He concludes that their impact flows from the depth of the empathy they share as "they enter so deeply into human suffering".<sup>3</sup> They speak the language of life, the language which expresses emotions, frustrations and pain known so well to us all. In sending His Son Jesus, God touched the depth of human suffering to enable us to face the realities of life (John 1:11), to recapture the vision of what it means to be a child of God (John 1:12) and to rediscover the depth of God's passion (John 3:16).

Such a journey gives birth to a burden and passion for the things that matter to God. No wonder, Hemphill cries out so emphatically. "Vision is not what ignites growth, it's passion. Burden creates passion. Passion fuels the vision, and vision is the focus of the power of passion."<sup>4</sup> The birth of such a passionate burden to see the world through God's eyes inspires "deeper engagements in the burning issues of our time."<sup>5</sup>

In the words of Ellen White, the process of meeting God, listening to God and walking with God involves the highest mode of education. Further, it means more than "preparation for the life that now is". It prepares the students for the joy of service in this world and for the joy of wider service in the world to come."<sup>6</sup> The next three modules explore the continuity of Ellen White's spiritual journey and the impact of God's presence in her life.



## 2. Meeting God – Ellen White’s Reflections

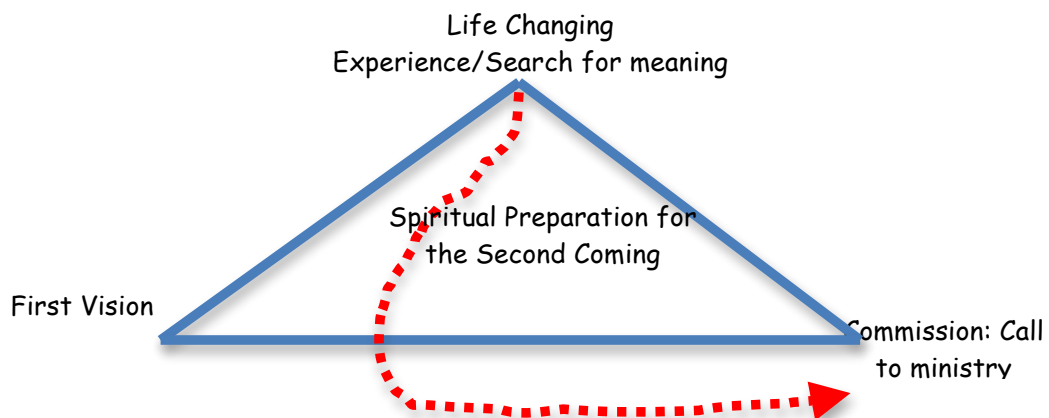
In 1884, at the age of fifty-seven, Ellen White visited Portland, the place of her childhood years. In her diary note, November 25, she wrote.

*While in Portland, in company of Sr. McOmber, I visited the localities of special interest in connection with my early life, among them the spot where I met with the accident that has made me a life-long invalid.<sup>7</sup>*

During this visit she recalled three significant events.

- a) Firstly, she mentions the incident that turned her world upside down inflicting emotional pain and bitterness. More so, in this context, she remembered her childhood dream or *her meeting point with Jesus*. “I passed the spot where the house once stood where Jesus revealed himself to me”.<sup>8</sup>
- b) She continued to recall two other significant and crucial events. She reminisced about the house where she received her first vision and the commission to life-long ministry.
- c) Finally, she describes the spiritual revival in Portland associated with William Miller’s preaching and preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> In other words, she remembered the experiences of special significance. One can refer to them as her special meeting points with God.

*Tracing the Journey:*



*Think It Through:*

Spiritual journey meanders between the rapid currents of life and the special meeting points with God. The dynamically interactive encounters enhance an awareness of His presence in life. Further, they build trust in His unfailing promises, and the reassuring confidence in God's willingness to be with us. "He who is coming will come and will not delay."<sup>10</sup> Such trust should inspire, both young and old, not to give up confidence in "what he has promised".<sup>11</sup> Rather, the resulting confidence in God ignites hope, encouragement, inspiration and strength to focus on the final meeting point with God. "Now the dwelling of God is with them and he will live with them. They will be his people, and he himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will pass away" (Revelation 21:3,4).

The strong longing to meet God, not only in the future, but also in life's journey, creates a movement or an opening of the human heart to the unlimited genius of God's creativity. As suggested by Guelich "Our journey of faith connotes the process of and passages in our responses of God's overture to us."<sup>12</sup> During this process God unfolds the inspirational pictures of His passion, His dream and vision to be with us. Thompson describes this process as a "magnificent choreography of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, moving us towards the communion with both Creator and creation."<sup>13</sup>

Note the progressive stages of Ellen White's meeting points with God.

**a) Growing awareness of God's presence in life (Life changing experience/search for meaning).**

- i) The previous module traced in details the early stages of Ellen White's spiritual journey. Note how some forty years later Ellen White remembered the experience. Think through how she describes her experiences and reflect on their practical application.

*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.<sup>14</sup>*

Further, in this context note the description of her first meeting point with Jesus.

*I passed the spot where the house once stood where Jesus revealed himself to me in power, and I seemed to see his blessed face beaming upon me in divine love and gentleness.<sup>15</sup>*





- ii) Examine the spiritual meaning of the metaphor Ellen White used to describe her journey and discuss its application for contemporary life. What does this metaphor teach us about God?

*I have read of a little bird that while his cage is full of light never sings the song his master would teach him. He will listen, and learn a snatch of this, a thrill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. But the master covers his cage, and then, in the dark, he listens to the one song he is to sing. He tries and tries again to sing that song, until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody; and then the cage is uncovered, and ever after he can sing it in the light. Thus God deals with his creatures. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the dark shadows of affliction, we can sing it ever afterward.<sup>16</sup>*

**Biblical Reflection:**

- a) Read Genesis 22: 1,2.
- b) How can we recognize God's voice?
- c) Discuss the meaning of the phrase "Some time later God tested Abraham". How does God's mode of testing apply to our life's journey?
- d) Note: When people test God they require evidence of His involvement in life's affairs (Exodus 17:2,7; Psalm 78:18). On the other hand, God's testing creates memories, remembrance of his relational care. Such memories evoke trust in his unfailing promises. Read Deuteronomy 8:2-5. Take time to reflect on the key phrase "Remember how the Lord God led you..."

**Application:**

- a) Discuss how to recognize God's movements in people's life?
- b) Recall the moments of God's leading in your life. What was it like? Share your memories.
- c) Encourage the students to write a song or a poem/prose of gratitude about God's presence in their life.

**For further study:**

- a) Study the following passages
  - i) Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 28:10-15; John 1:48-51.
  - ii) What do they teach us about God's initiative to meet people?

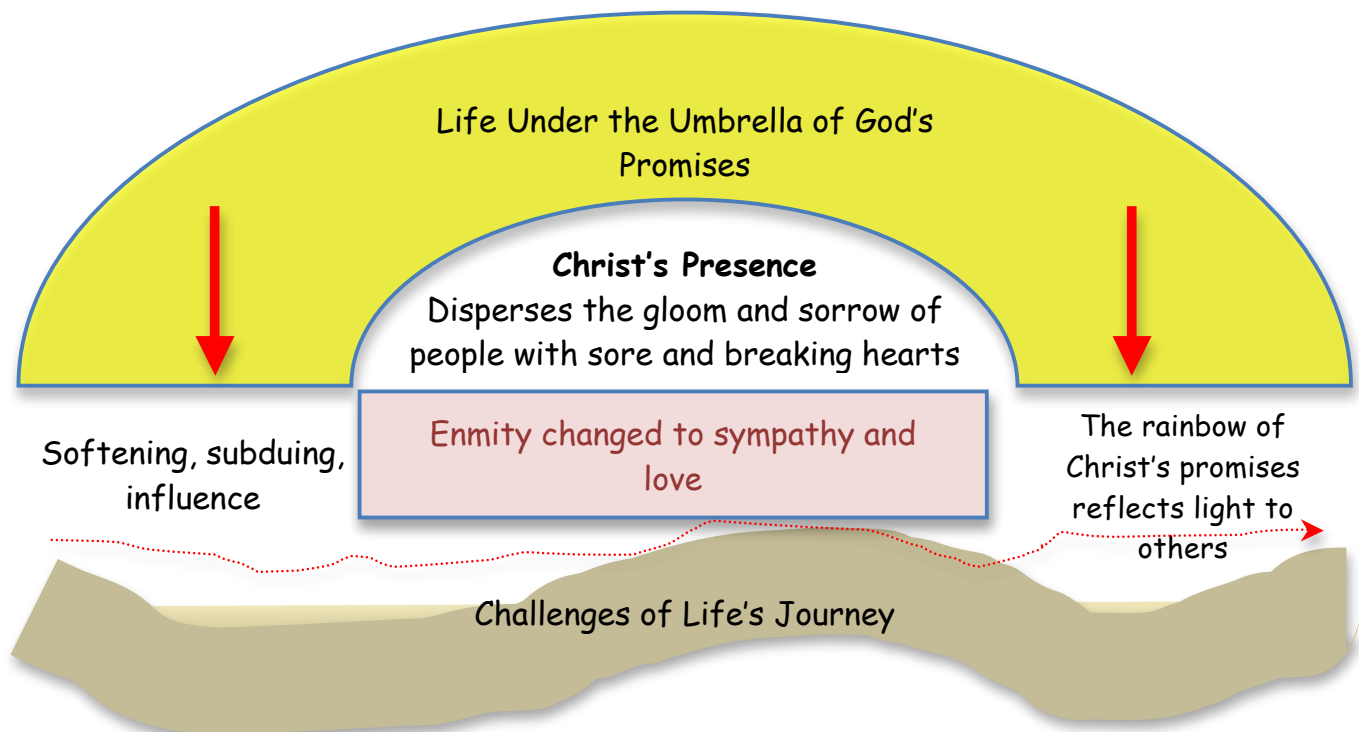


### i. The Impact of God's presence in life

Ellen White's reflections highlight the impact of God's presence in life. Such experience does not leave life untouched. It is transformational as it develops an implicit faith and trust in God's unfailing promises.

Note the following:

- a) *It has been my lot to be chastened by affliction, which has had a softening and subduing influence, removing enmity from my heart, and filling it with sympathy and love. My life of bereavement, pain, and suffering has not been without precious revealings of the presence of my Saviour. My eyes have been attracted to the heavens that shine in beauty above us; I have obtained glimpses of the eternal world and of the exceeding great reward. When all seemed dark, there has been a rift in the clouds, and sunbeams from the throne have dispersed the gloom, God would not have any of us remain pressed down by dumb sorrow, with sore and breaking hearts. He would have us look up to catch the rainbow of promise, and reflect light to others.<sup>17</sup>*



How can we experience "Life under the umbrella of God's promises" today?





Further, note how Ellen White expressed the inspiring passion of God's heart.

- b) *Oh, the blessed Saviour stands by many whose eyes are so blinded by tears that they do not discern him. He longs to clasp our hands firmly, while we cling to him in simple faith, imploring him to guide us. It is our privilege to rejoice in God. If we will let the comfort and peace of Jesus into our lives, we shall be kept close to his great heart of love.*<sup>18</sup>

It may be concluded that "simple faith" is a childlike trust in someone who is sensitive to our struggles, pain, heartaches, frustrations and disappointments. At the same time, such faith inspires individuals to recapture the picture of God's vision for life. In consequence, involvement in God's dream is not a bundle of selfish ambitious undertaking but a selfless quest to reconcile the world to its Creator. At the center of such a dream is the deep burden and passion for people. In other words, the rainbow of Christ's promises reflects light to others.

*Reflection:*

- a) Study and reflect on John 21:15-17.
- b) Imagine that Jesus asks you the same question. "Do you truly love me?" How would your respond?
- c) How would you express your love for Jesus in challenging life circumstances, relationships and the attainment of your personal goals?

*Think It Through:*

David Banner suggests. "If we are to become great lovers, we must return again and again to the great love of the Great Lover. Thomas Morton reminds us that the root of Christian love is not the will to love but faith to believe that one is deeply loved by God. Returning to the great love - a love that was there for us before we experienced any rejection and that will be there for us after all the other rejections take place - is our great spiritual work."<sup>19</sup>

*Application:*

- a) Compile a list of God's promises both in the Old and New Testament.
- b) Discuss what they reveal about God and the depth His love.







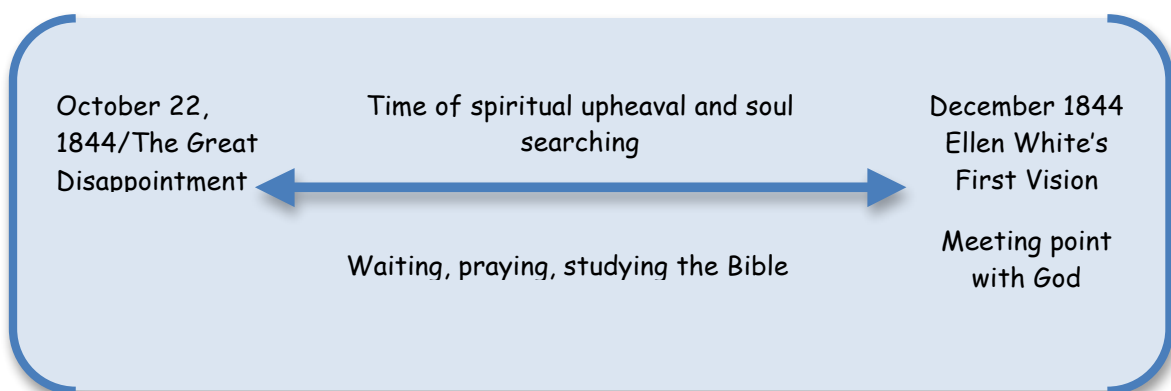
## b) First Vision/Meeting the God of Hope

Recalling the early stages of her childhood journey, Ellen White remembered the house where she received her first vision. At the time of her visit, the surrounding scenery has changed. "The railroad buildings have crowded out many dwellings that used to stand in this locality."<sup>20</sup> However, it is clear that the memory of this dramatic experience, when she received her first vision, has not changed. It left a lasting impression on her mind. The question remains why?

Note how Ellen White described the time of waiting and anticipation for the fulfillment of Christ's promised return.

*Those who sincerely love Jesus can appreciate the feelings of those who watched with the most intense longing for the coming of their Saviour. 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.<sup>21</sup>*

The Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844 shattered the faith of many believers. Time was passing by and for many it was a period of spiritual upheaval and soul searching. Note how Ellen White describes the intensity of the disappointment. "It was hard to take up the cares of life that we thought had been laid down forever. It was a bitter disappointment..."<sup>22</sup> Then sometime in December 1844 (the exact day is not known), during a prayer meeting with a group of young friends, Ellen White received her first vision.





## i) Meaning of Ellen White's First Vision - Encounter with God is full of surprises

Ellen White's first vision divides into two significant parts. First, she saw God's people on the journey to a destination. Second, the vision reaffirmed the promise of Christ's Second Coming. The Second Coming was a given, as God's promises never fail. However, the vision focused on the journey.

### a) Journey towards the destination

*While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when the voice said to me, 'Look again, and look a little higher. At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were travelling to the city, which was at the further end of the path. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, "Alleluia!" (E.G. White, Early Writings, 14.)*

### b) The Second Coming of Jesus

*Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, and became lighter, glorious and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing the most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man... (Ellen White, LS, 65).*

### Think It Through:

God is full of sensitivity, compassion and surprises. At the time of crisis, He met people at the point of their greatest need to inspire, encourage and to ignite hope. He invited the discouraged believers to focus on the journey where His presence would provide an environment of trust and confidence. Such a journey would empower them to discover their uniqueness and potential.





*Reflection:*

- a) What does the first vision reveal to us about God?

It meant that life's journey would continue for sometime to come and that the journey involved the possibility of confronting discouragement and weariness, as "the city was a great way off". However, the vision focused on Jesus for the following reasons.

- i) The bright light set behind them shone light along the path. Faith in Jesus did not remove the possibility of misunderstandings but at the same time it reminded and reassured the believers of His guiding presence. Note how Ellen White described Christ's presence during this crucial time of preparation for the Second Coming. "We were surprised that we felt free in the Lord and were so strongly sustained by His strength and grace."<sup>23</sup>
- ii) The focus on Jesus gave assurance of His continual presence, support and comfort on the ongoing journey to heaven. "If they kept their eyes on Jesus, who was just before them leading them to the city, they were safe."

- b) The impact of the vision on Ellen White

*After I came out of vision, everything seemed changed; a gloom was spread over all that I beheld. Oh, how dark this world looked to me! I wept when I found myself here, and felt homesick. I have seen a better world, and it had spoiled this for me (Ibid., 68)*

*Application:*

- a) Explore Biblical examples where God revealed himself at a time of personal or national crisis.
- b) How did such an encounter impact people?



## ii. The Challenges on the Spiritual Journey with God

Hagberg and Guelich suggest, "Whereas a trip focuses primarily on a destination, a journey has a significance when seen as a whole."<sup>24</sup> Rightly, they claim. "A journey involves process, actions, movement, change, experiences, stops and starts, variety, humdrum and surprises."<sup>25</sup> It's not an occasional sporadic trip between A and B. Firstly, it may be observed that God communicated with Ellen White in a language she could understand as she was already experiencing her own spiritual journey. This included the following.

- a) Growing awareness of God's presence in her life.
- b) Growing awareness of and unfailing trust in His promises.
- c) Growing awareness of what it means to believe in God's name
- d) Growing awareness of what it means to be God's child

The journey which surrounded her first meeting point with God in her childhood dream included a process, actions, movements, change, experiences, stops and starts, variety, humdrum and surprises. Her second meeting with God, which included God's initiative to tangibly evidence His presence, ignited the sparkles of burden and passion. It provided a process for nurturing perseverance to do the will of God and to recapture the vision of what really matters to God (Hebrews 10: 36). The second meeting point in her life's journey was important for two reasons.

- a) It's easy to become weary and disillusioned during the journey
- b) It's easy to lose sight of Jesus.

### *Reflection and Application:*

- a) Reflect on Ellen White's experience as highlighted on page 6 and consider how easy it was for her to become weary and discouraged.
- b) Reflect on your journey and make a list of experiences that turned your attention away from Jesus?
- c) How did such experiences impact your life?





### iii. Preparation for the Second Coming

While remembering “the experiences of forty years ago” Ellen White devoted a considerable space to recall the spiritual revival in preparation for Christ’s Second Coming. Note her reflections.

*It was here [Portland] that I received my first impressions in regard to the speedy, personal coming of our Lord. Here my father’s family, including myself, were excluded from the Methodist church for cherishing this blessed hope...A large company accepted the faith, and rejoiced in the glad tidings that Jesus was soon coming. RH, November 25, 1884*

Note how she describes the spirit of revival.

- a) Probably between one and two hundred have professed conversion at our meetings; and now the fire is being kindled through this whole city and all the adjacent country.
- b) A number of rumsellers have turned their shops into meeting-rooms.
- c) Prayer meetings were established in every part of the city by different denominations and individuals....I was conducted into a room over one of the banks, where I have found about thirty or forty men of different denominations, engaged in prayer, with one accord at about eleven o’clock daytime.<sup>26</sup>

It’s important to consider the spiritual nature of the revival. It included the following.

#### a) Prayer and reflection

The believers spent time in prayer examining their thoughts and emotions.

“With diligent searching of heart and humble confession we came prayerfully up to the time of expectation. Every morning we felt it was our first duty to secure the evidence that our lives were right with God.”<sup>27</sup>

#### b) Caring attitude

“Our interest for one another increased. We prayed much with and for one another.”<sup>28</sup>

#### c) Prioritized interest

“The joy of salvation was more for us than food and drink.”<sup>29</sup>

#### d) Assurance of Forgiveness and Acceptance.

“If clouds obscured our minds, we dared not rest or sleep till they were swept away by the consciousness of our acceptance with the Lord.”<sup>30</sup>

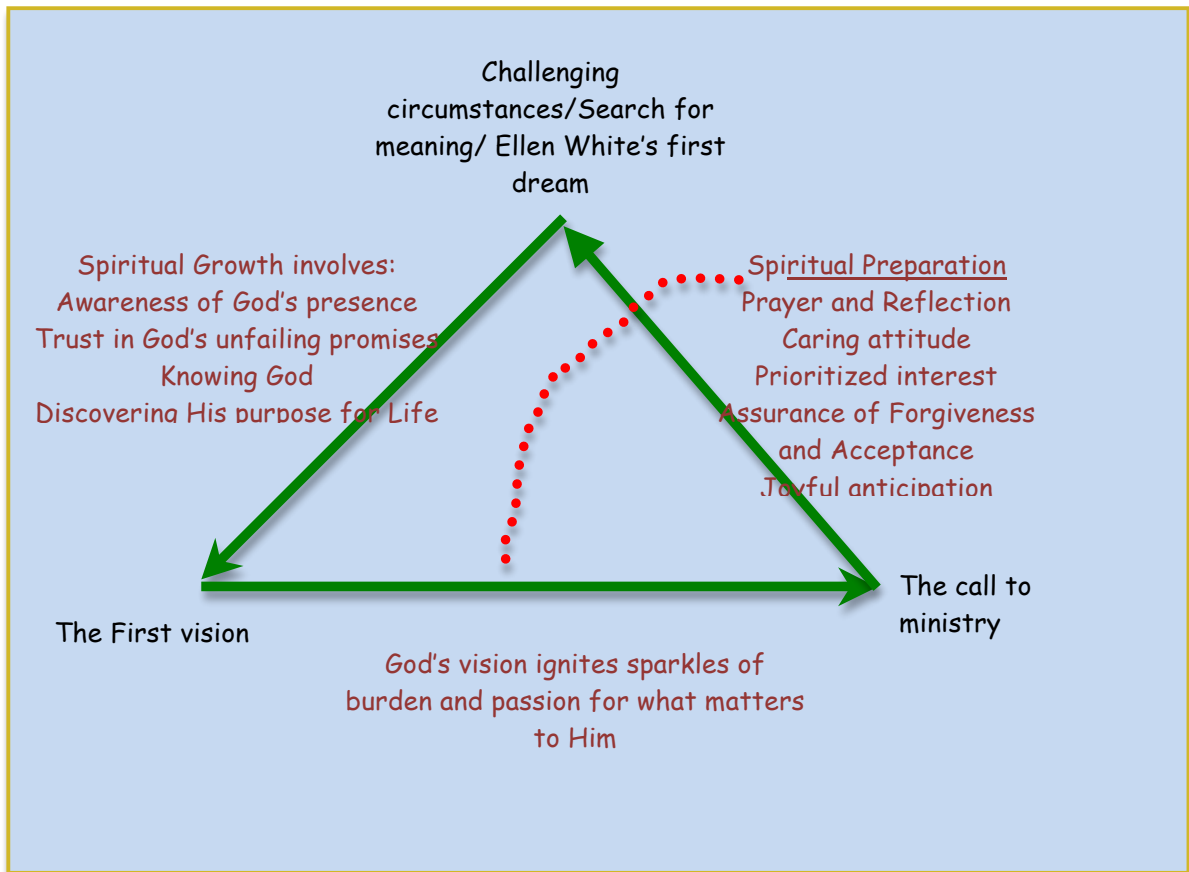
#### e) Joyful Anticipation

“The waiting people of God approached the hour when they fondly hoped their joys would be complete in the coming of the Saviour.”<sup>31</sup>



*Application:*

The nature of the preparation for Christ's Second Coming intergraded with Ellen White's own spiritual development and the progressive growth of her burden and passion.



Analysis of Ellen White experiences unfolds a pattern of dynamic development. The spiritual preparation that preceded Christ's Second Coming illustrates the importance of the spiritual vigil among the pilgrims. Such a nurturing environment provides a safe haven for the weary and for those who tend to lose sight of Jesus. Focusing on Jesus means to become His extended hands. Prayer, caring for one another, sharing forgiveness and acceptance characterized the spiritual state of those preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus. In the first vision God stressed that the journey to heaven would continue and so should the spiritual vigil and nurturing environment among the pilgrim. The pilgrims are to become Christ's extended hands to provide support and encouragement.



### c) Call to Ministry (Meeting the God of Purpose)

A week after her first vision, Ellen White received a second vision, her third meeting point with God. Note how she describes the experience. "The Lord gave me a view of the trials through which I must pass, and told me that I must go and relate to others what He had revealed to me."<sup>32</sup> Firstly, God's call was specific. "Relate to others what He had revealed." Secondly, God confronted the young seventeen-year Ellen with the challenges she would meet in this ministry. "It was shown me that my labors would meet with great opposition, and that my heart would rent with anguish; but that the grace of God would be sufficient to sustain me through it all."<sup>33</sup> Here we see the authenticity and transparency of God's heart.

Take note of Ellen White's fears.

- a) My health was poor
- b) I was small and frail unused to society and timid.
- c) It was difficult for me to meet strangers<sup>34</sup>

Forty years later, the moments of her anguish seemed so vividly impressed on her mind.

*In the chamber of the last-mentioned house, I once passed a night of anguish at the thought that I must go out and relate to others the things that God had presented before me. I shrank from this work in timidity and fear; the cross seemed so heavy that it would crush me. How clearly I remembered the experience of forty years ago, when my light went out in darkness because I was unwilling to lift this cross, and refused to be obedient. I shall never forget the agony of my soul when I felt the frown of God upon me. I was urged to attend a meeting in my father's house. The brethren and sisters bore me in the arms of their faith to a pitying Redeemer. I surrendered my will, feeling that I would do anything if the Lord would once more let his light shine upon me. I was delivered from darkness and despair, and restored to the favor of Heaven. I then lifted my cross, and have not since tried to exchange it for a lighter.<sup>35</sup>*





*Reflection:*

Spiritual journey moves beyond the boundaries of a self-oriented experience. Meeting God means to rediscover the meaning of life's purpose from God's point of view. He created life for a specific purpose, for enjoyment and for success. In the process of rediscovering the awareness of God's presence, developing an implicit trust in His unfailing promises and recapturing the sparkles of the burden and passion for what matters to Him, the meaning of success raises above the boundaries of personal attainments. Following Christ's leadership through life's journey, success means the following.

- a) Knowing and understanding God's purpose for life.
- b) Growing to reach ones highest potential.
- c) Sowing seeds that benefit others.

No wonder Mulholland suggests. "When spirituality is viewed as a journey, however, the way to spiritual wholeness is seen to lie in an increasingly faithful response to the One whose purpose shapes our path, whose grace redeems our detours, whose poverty liberates us from crippling bondages of the prior journey and whose transforming presence meets us at each turn in the road."<sup>36</sup> He defines spirituality as "the process of 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 in the world - in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did."<sup>37</sup> Response to God's call demands a humble recognition of ones own limitation and it allows to tune in to God's voice.

Ellen White's spiritual journey demonstrates how the key transitional meeting points with God contributed to the process of her own growth in understanding God's purpose for life.

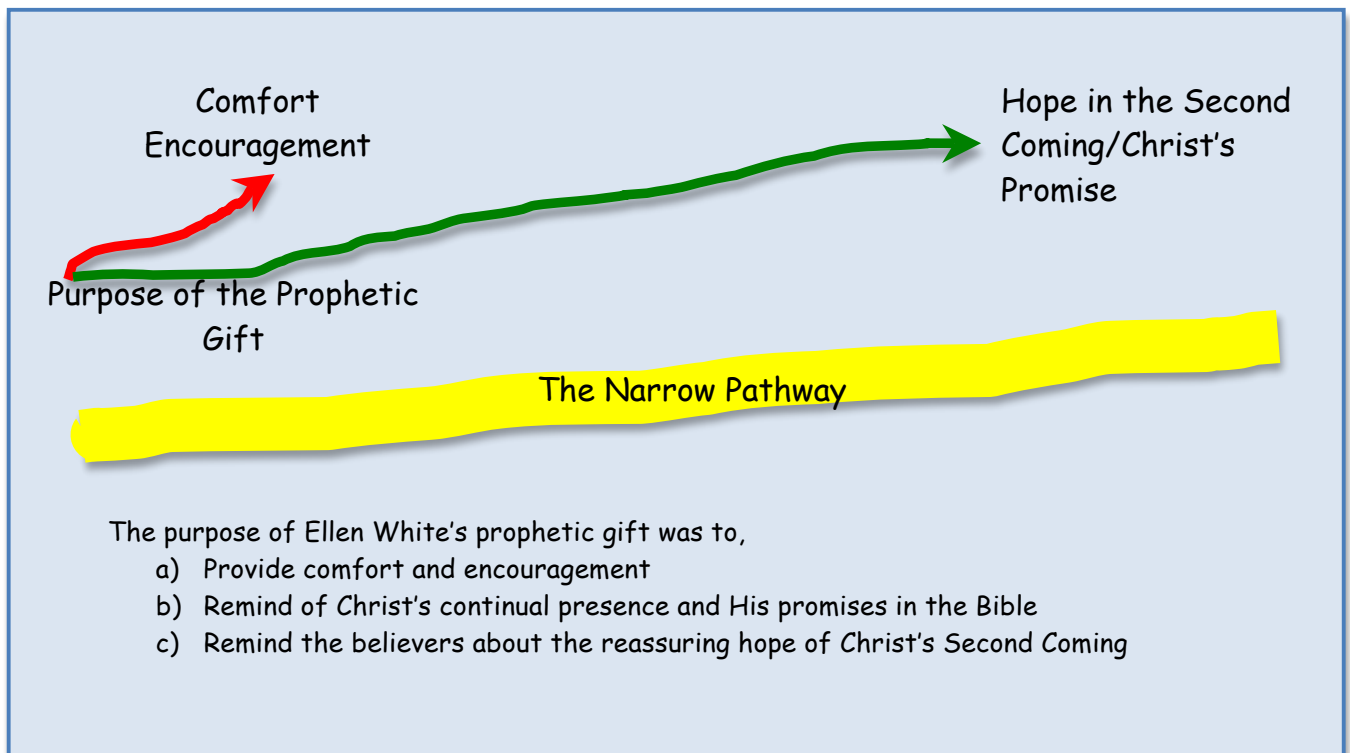




Her words encapsulate the transforming power of God's grace which enables the individual to look beyond the fear of personal limitations. "When the Spirit of God had urged me to duty, I had risen above myself, forgetting all fear and timidity in the thought of Jesus' love and the wonderful work He had done for me."<sup>38</sup> God's call ignited in her life the burden to share encouragement and hope. During her entire life and ministry she continued to develop the profound meaning of God's grace and passionate trust in God's love and His unfailing promises.

She describes the impact of her early ministry in the following words. "I related this vision to the believers in Portland, who had full confidence that it was from God. They all believed that God had chosen this way, after the great disappointment in October, to comfort and strengthen His people."<sup>39</sup>

### 3. The purpose of Ellen White's Prophetic Ministry



*Think It Through:*

In what way can the outlined model of Ellen White's prophetic ministry impact the pathway of spiritual journey today?



### a) Practical Application:

- i. From the beginning of her childhood years and through her entire life, Ellen White developed an implicit trust and confidence in God. In one of her last letters, she reminds the readers about the confidence all should have in God.

*My dear Sister:*

*The Lord has given me a message for you, and not for you only, but also for other fruitful souls who are troubled by doubts and fears regarding their acceptance by the Lord Jesus Christ. His Word to you is, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." You desire to please the Lord, and you can do this by believing His promises. He is waiting to take you into a harbor of gracious experience, and He bids you, "Be still, and know that I am God." You have had a time of unrest, but Jesus says to you, "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest." The joy of Christ in the soul is worth everything. "Then are they glad," because they are privileged to rest in the arms of everlasting love.*

*Put away your distrust of our heavenly Father. Instead of talking of your doubts, break away from them in the strength of Jesus, and let light shine into your soul by letting your voice express confidence and trust in God. I know that the Lord is very nigh you to give you the victory, and I say to you, Be helped, be strengthened, be lifted out of and away from the dark dungeon of unbelief. Doubts will rush into your mind, because Satan is trying to hold you in captivity to his cruel power; but face him in the strength that Jesus is willing to give you, and conquer the inclination to express unbelief in your Saviour.*

*It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life to save me. Nothing so dispels doubt as coming in contact with the character of Christ. He declares, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," that is, there is no possibility of My casting him out; for I have pledged My word to receive him. Take Christ at His word, and let your lips declare that you have gained the victory.<sup>40</sup>*





- ii. She continually reminded both young and old to focus on Jesus. However, her words had a challenging practical application. Note

*He [Jesus] went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.*

*Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love.<sup>41</sup>*

Ellen White spoke from her heart. Her knowledge and understanding of God came from three main sources.

- a) Her lifetime search for meaning in her personal journey. Here she developed a heart-oriented and intimate understanding of God's presence and involvement in human life.
- b) Her lifetime study of the Bible. As she reminisced about her meeting point with God, she wrote, "Genuine faith is founded on the Scriptures."<sup>42</sup> In this context, she continued to recapture the practical beauty of Christ's ministry.

*In every human being He (Christ) discerned infinite possibilities...Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened for its attainment, both desire and faith.<sup>43</sup>*

- c) Last but not least, her contact with God through inspiration. God took the initiative to communicate through the humble human instrument. From the time of her first vision in December 1844, Ellen White received approximately 2000 visions. No doubt such a close connection with God had an impact on her life.

*After I came out of vision, everything seemed changed; a gloom was spread over all that I beheld. Oh, how dark this world looked to me! I wept when I found myself here, and felt homesick. I have seen a better world, and it spoiled this for me.<sup>44</sup>*



iii. Ellen White reminded the believers of the Hope in Christ's Coming.

The longing for Christ's Second Coming moved beyond the descriptive details of the events, important as they are. Her belief in Christ's Coming continued to permeate the entire journey of her life for it stemmed from the passion ignited by her childhood dream to see Jesus and to be in his presence.

*I well remember one night in winter when the snow was on the ground, the heavens were lighted up, the sky looked red and angry, and seemed to open and shut, while the snow looked like blood. The neighbors were very much frightened. Mother took me out of bed in her arms and carried me to the window, I was happy; I thought Jesus was coming, and I longed to see him. My heart was full, I clapped my hands for joy, and thought my sufferings were ended. But I was disappointed; the singular appearance faded away from the heavens, and the next morning the sun arose the same as usual.<sup>45</sup>*

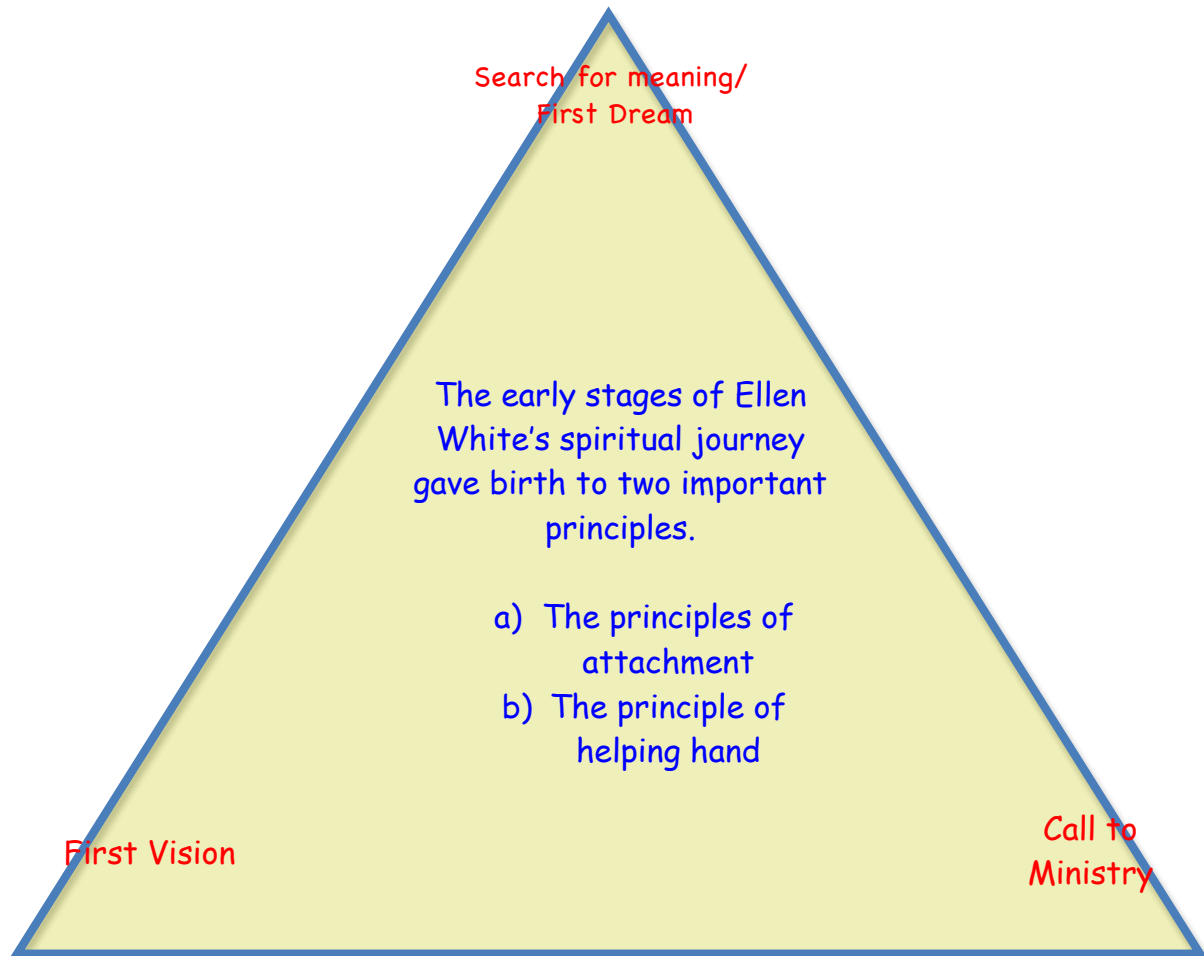
Her dream continued for as she describes, one day in state of depression and despair, she reflected. "If Jesus was upon the earth, I would go to Him, throw myself at His feet and tell Him all my suffering. He would not turn away from me."<sup>46</sup> (Read the full story) Ellen White's belief in the Second Coming weaved through the challenges of her personal journey giving her hope and courage. Indeed Jesus led and guided her. He also promised to be present in the lives of all those who travel towards the same destination. Her role, although challenging and difficult, was to share hope and courage.

The letter most probably written by her husband James to Edson and Emma, perhaps reflects the passion of her own heart. Here the longing for Christ's Second coming is expressed in the terms of life's journey with all its challenges and heartaches. Note a few excerpts.

*I think our enjoyment of the summer time is heightened by the memory of the long, cold month of winter; and on the other hand, the hope of summer helps us to endure more cheerfully the winter's reign... The Christian sojourn (journey) in this world may be fitly compared to the long, cold winter. Here we experience, trials, sorrows and disappointments, but we should not permit our minds to dwell upon these. Let us rather look forward with hope and faith to the coming summer when we shall be welcomed to our Eden home, where all is light and joy, where all is peace and love...The summer of peace and joy, and eternal gladness soon will come. Then Christ will dwell with us and will lead us to fountains of living waters, and will wipe all tears from our eyes.<sup>47</sup>*



#### 4. The Principles Emerging from Ellen White's Meeting Points with God



##### a) The principle of attachment.

The motto imprinted on the pathway of her life's journey was "trust wholly in the mighty God of Jacob." Her spiritual journey reveals a progressive growth in her experience of 'knowing' Jesus as her friend. Commenting on Christ's definition of eternal life (John 17:3), she expands the meaning of relational attachment to Jesus. "This is the true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, transforms man into the image of God" and opens "the rich treasures of the universe". On this journey Ellen White role-models spiritual authenticity and transparency.



b) The principle of helping hand

Hagberg and Guelich point out that "faith in reference to the journey is simply the process by which we let God direct our lives or let God be God."<sup>48</sup> On this pathway Ellen White continued an advancing relational encounter with God. In consequence, she translated her implicit trust in His presence and involvement in life into the language I refer to as faith reactions. In all this she demonstrated her dependence on God's love and care rather than human wisdom. She wrote. "Above the distraction of the earth He sits enthroned, all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."<sup>49</sup> Faith in God's presence carried her above, disappointments, discouragement, doubts, frustrations and lack of patience. By focusing on Jesus, she learned and demonstrated the practical aspects of the Christian life.

### 5. Practical Application.

Concluding her reflections in 1884, Ellen White pointed out that those who desire to follow Jesus will study the Scripture, "that they may know of a surety that they are listening to the voice of the true Shepherd and not that of a stranger." (RH, November 25, 1884, par.22)

So, the question remains what do we hear him say? How does spiritual growth and development contribute to the ongoing challenges one encounters in life journey? How does it impact our relationships, professional choices and our sense of identity? How can children and young people discover and experience the authentic presence of Jesus? How can the community of faith through homes, churches and schools provide a place of nurture and safety? How can generations speak to their posterity with empathy from the depth of human suffering?

The purpose of the transformation journey is twofold:

- a) To uplift and restore human dignity and value.
- b) To help people discover their God-given uniqueness and potential





Examine the following story from Ellen White's childhood experience

*I now confided all my sorrows and perplexities to my mother. She tenderly sympathized with and encouraged me, advising me to go for counsel to Elder Stockman, who then preached the advent doctrine in Portland. I had great confidence in him, for he was a devoted servant of Christ. Upon hearing my story, he placed his hand affectionately upon my head, saying with tears in his eyes: "Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work.*

*He then told me that even if I were a person of mature years and thus harassed by doubt and despair, he would tell me that he knew there was hope for me through the love of Jesus. The very agony of mind I had suffered was positive evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was striving with me. He said that when the sinner becomes hardened in guilt, he does not realize the enormity of his transgression, but flatters himself that he is about right, and in no particular danger. The Spirit of the Lord leaves him, and he becomes careless and indifferent or recklessly defiant. This good man told me of the love of God for His erring children; that instead of rejoicing in their destruction, He longed to draw them to Himself in simple faith and trust. He dwelt upon the great love of Christ and the plan of redemption.*

*Elder Stockman spoke of my early misfortune, and said it was indeed a grievous affliction, but he bade me believe that the hand of a loving Father had not been withdrawn from me; that in the future life, when the mist that then darkened my mind had vanished, I would discern the wisdom of the providence which had seemed so cruel and mysterious. Jesus said to His disciples, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." John 13:7. In the great future we should no longer see as through a glass darkly, but come face to face with the mysteries of divine love.*

*"Go free, Ellen," said he; "return to your home trusting in Jesus, for He will not withhold His love from any true seeker." He then prayed earnestly for me, and it seemed that God would certainly regard the prayer of His saint, even if my humble petitions were unheard. My mind was much relieved, and the wretched slavery of doubt and fear departed as I listened to the wise and tender counsel of this teacher in Israel. I left his presence comforted and encouraged.*

*During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained more knowledge on the subject of God's love and pitying tenderness, than from all the sermons and exhortations to which I had ever listened.<sup>50</sup>*

*Reflection:*

- a) Discuss the impact of Elder's Stockman's ministry to young Ellen?
- b) How did he help her to recognize her value and potential?"
- c) Note Ellen's summary of the experience. "During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained more knowledge on the subject of God's love and pitying tenderness, than from all the sermons and exhortations to which I had ever listened." Discuss how Elder Stockman nurtured the child's spirituality?
- d) How can we apply these principles creatively today? (Consider places such as schools, homes and churches)

**6. Conclusion**

The special meeting points with God pave the process which leads to the discovery of one's true identity and surrender to God's will. It's a painful experience for it takes individuals through the rough terrain of all emotional insecurities and predispositions to self-reliance. It confronts life with the awareness, recognition and discouragement of how "impoverished is my love of both God and others." However, such meeting points with God are inspirationally transformational. They change the focus of attention uplifting the mind to the empowering source of spiritual life. This process is so adequately expressed by Benner.

*My first response to the limitation of my love is always the same - try harder. I pray for love with more fervor. And I try to love with more diligence. But nothing seems to change. Then I recall that once again I have got it all backwards. God doesn't want me to try to become more loving. He wants me to absorb his love so that it flows out from me. And so I return again to knowing myself as deeply loved by God. I meditate on his love, allowing my focus to be on him and his love for me, not me and my love for him. And slowly things began to change.....I begin to experience new levels of love for God. And slowly imperceptibly, I begin to see others through God's eyes of love. I begin to experience God's love for others.<sup>51</sup>*

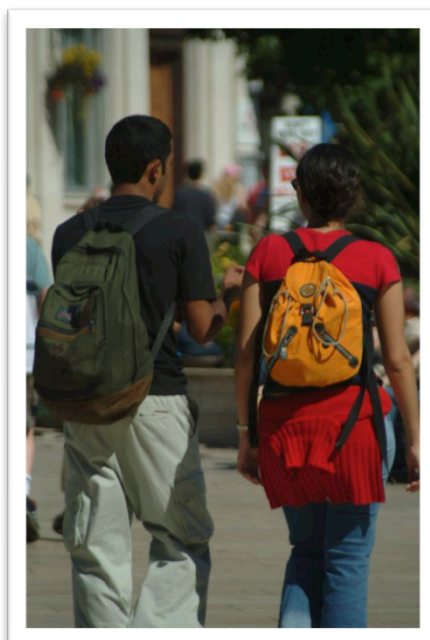


Note how Ellen White described this experience.

*The next day I had recovered sufficiently to go home, but a great change had taken place in my mind. It seemed to me that I could hardly be the same person that left my father's house the previous evening. This passage was continually in my thoughts: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. My heart was full of happiness as I softly repeated these words. Faith now took possession of my heart. I felt an inexpressible love for God, and had the witness of his Spirit that my sins were pardoned. 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 towards him in a deep and fervent love.'<sup>52</sup>*

Such meeting points with God inspired Ellen White to recapture the intensity and depth of God's love in her own life. Further, it helped her to focus on what matters to God. Here she discovered and explored the principles of God's attitude to people as expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus. "He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention...He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke truth, but always in love...He bowed with tenderest regard to every members of the family of God. In all He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save."<sup>53</sup> In all, Jesus became God's extended hands to the world. Here we discover the pictures of ministry par excellence, the vision and inspiration of what it means to become God's extended hands in the world.

The next module explores the challenges associated with listening to God. So what do we hear Him say?





<sup>1</sup> David Banner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of Spiritual Life* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1875), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ken Hemphill, (Ministry in Nuts and Bolts.

<sup>5</sup> Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1903), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen White, *Diary Notes*, Review and Herald, November 25, 1884

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 10:37.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 10: 35,36.

<sup>12</sup> Janet O. Hagberg & Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2005), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Thompson, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1884.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> David Benner, *Sacred Companions*,34.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen White, RH, November 25, 1884.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen White, *Testimony for the Church*, Vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 51.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 1, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 69.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ellen White, RH, November, 25, 1884.

<sup>36</sup> Robert, M Mulholland Jr, *Invitation to a Journey" A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen White, Lt 2, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1892), 12.

<sup>42</sup> Ellen White, Review and Herald, November 25, 1884.

<sup>43</sup> Ellen White, *Education*, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 67,68.

<sup>45</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches, Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience and Extensive Labours of Elder James White and His Wife Mrs Ellen White* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1880), 133.

<sup>46</sup> Ellen White, TC Vole 1, 28.





<sup>47</sup> Letter, May 13, 1875.

<sup>48</sup> Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 8, 273.

<sup>50</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 36, 37

<sup>51</sup> Banner, *Sacred Companions* 34.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 1888 ed , 160.

<sup>53</sup> Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, 12

