

Words of Truth

Proverbs 22: 20 – 21.



“Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?”

Proverbs 22: 20 – 21.



I. Introduction

The truth is never simple in our complex world. But the good news is that, despite the omnipresence of the darkness, God's truth shines for those who search for it and languish for the revelation of God's character

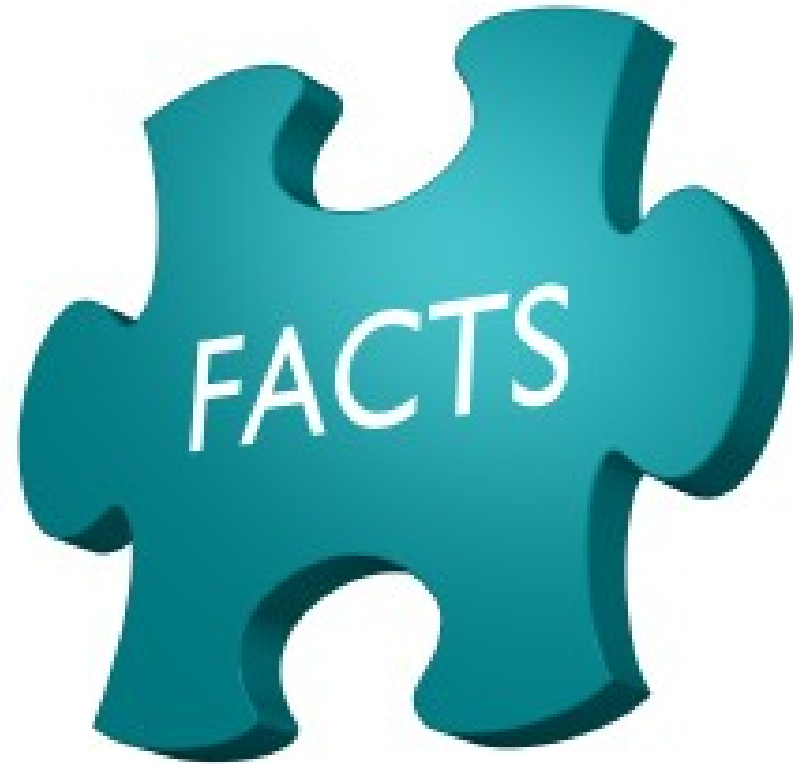


“The truth does not need a number of supporters for authenticity. The truth is the truth irrespective of how many people like to embrace it!”
Israelmore Ayivor



“There is a world of difference
between truth and facts. Facts can
obscure the truth.”

Maya Angelou



"The truth doesn't change
according to our ability to
stomach it."

Flannery O'Connor



"A thing is not necessarily true because
a man dies for it."
Oscar Wilde



"The further a society drifts
from truth, the more it will
hate those that speak it."
George Orwell



“A truth that’s told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent.”

William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

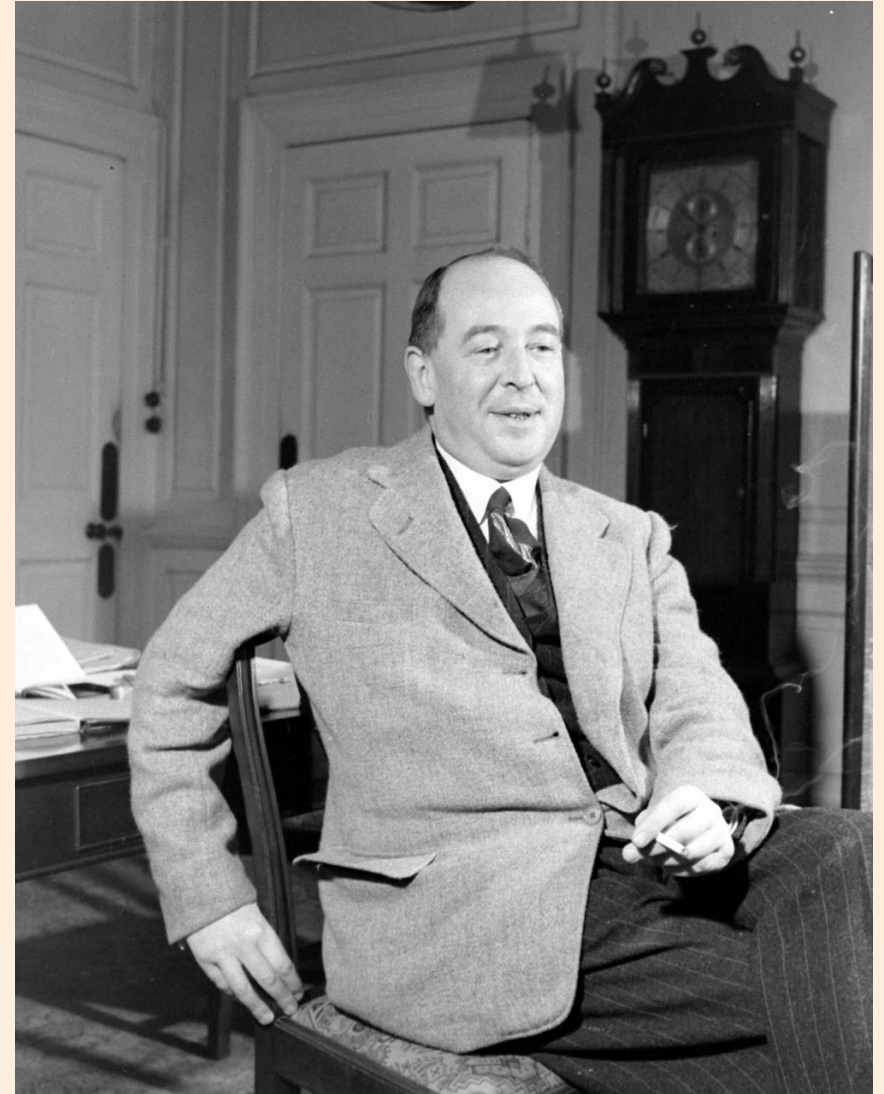


“I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”
Martin Luther King,
Nobel Prize
Acceptance Speech,
Oslo, 1964.



"In religion, as in war and everything else, comfort is the one thing you cannot get by looking for it. If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth - only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with and, in the end, despair."

C.S. Lewis



II. Context



Book of Proverbs – Structure

INTRO	1: 1 – 1: 7	The Fear of the Lord for young man: Purpose of the Book, First lesson
1	1: 8 – 9: 18	Wisdom 101 (Introduction to Wisdom)
2	10: 1 – 24: 34	Wise Children (Proverbs for the Youth)
3	25: 1 – 29: 27	Wise People (Proverbs for general public)
4	30: 1 – 30: 33	Wisdom of Agur
5	31: 1 – 31: 9	Wisdom of King Lemuel's Mother
CONCL	31: 10 – 31: 31	Finding the Virtuous Wife with the Fear of the Lord Conclusion of the Book, Last lesson before marriage

Our text (22: 20 – 21) is introducing the last section of the big collection of Proverbs consecrated to the Youth (10: 1 – 24: 34).

The last section brakes the existing rhythm of individual proverbs.

Beginning with 22: 17 we discover the longer units of several verses together, with some important words of wisdom. The last section (22: 17 – 24: 22) precedes the words of conclusion (24: 23 – 34) for the second and biggest section of the book.



The last section is in fact a long list of prohibited things. Every unit starts with the same formula, DO NOT:

- Do not rob the poor (22: 22 – 23)
- Do not make friendship with an angry man (22: 24 – 25)
- Do not pledge for the debts of others (22: 26)
- Do not remove ancient landmark (22: 28)

WORD OF WISDOM: EXCELLING IN WORK (23: 29)

- Do not be jealous of the ruler (23: 1 – 3)
- Do not overwork to be rich (23: 4 – 5)
- Do not eat the bread of a miser (23: 6 – 8)
- Do not speak in the hearing of a fool (23: 9)
- Do not remove ancient landmark (23: 10 – 11)

WORD OF WISDOM: INSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE (23: 12)

- Do not withhold correction from a child (23: 13 – 14)

WORDS OF WISDOM: THE JOY OF THE EDUCATOR (23: 15 – 16)

- Do not let your heart envy sinners (23: 17 – 18)

WORDS OF WISDOM: GUIDE YOUR HEART IN THE WAY (23: 19)

- Do not mix with winebibbers (23: 20 – 21)
- Do not despise your parents (23: 22 – 25)

WORDS OF WISDOM: FLEE FROM A SEDUCTRESS (23: 26 – 28)

- Do not look on the wine (23: 29 – 35)
- Do not be envious of evil men (24: 1 – 2)

WORDS OF WISDOM: FIND THE KNOWLEDGE OF WISDOM (24: 3 – 14)

- Do not lie in wait against the dwelling of the righteous (24: 15 – 16)
- Do not rejoice when your enemy falls (24: 17 – 18)
- Do not fret because of evildoers (24: 19 – 20)
- Do not associate with those willing to change the king (24: 21 – 22)

A list of 19 forbidden things is not necessarily unusual. From the Jewish perspective the wisdom is not only to affirm the positive values, but also to denounce the danger of the negative realities. In general, this is what our societies are missing.



5 verses of our text introduce the list of forbidden things (22: 17 – 21)

The structure of this small portion confirms the essential aspect of the trusting relationship with the Lord as the essential goal for the education and for the transmission of the values from generation to generation.

“So that your trust may be in the Lord” (22: 19)

The text is confirming that human being will always trust someone, which is unavoidable for our meaningful existence.

However, trusting the Lord above all things is the most important achievement of human being.

Book of Proverbs, Chapter 22: 17 – 21. Structure

A	22: 17	Words of the Wise For your ear and your heart
B	22: 18	Pleasant thing Words of Wisdom within the heart and upon the lips (ORAL FORM)
C	22: 19	TRUST IN THE LORD It is the essential goal of Instruction
B'	22: 20	Excellent things Counsel and Knowledge (WRITTEN FORM)
A'	22: 21	Words of Truth Certainty for you and for your answers

In addition, our text (22: 17 and 21) starts with the words of wisdom and ends with the words of truth. These two are strongly related and it is difficult to imagine wisdom without that ontological connection with Jesus Christ, who is truth and wisdom.



The true wisdom is presented to us through the written form (books of the Bible), as well as the words of those who are around us, if they are trustworthy. This is why every young man is invited to continue to join his voice to the general expression of truth and wisdom. He received the written message of wisdom (22: 20), as well as the pronounced words of wisdom (22: 18). The 'written' and 'oral' tradition have the same goal: helping us to internalize the wisdom and the truth.



III. Benefits of knowing the truth



1. Excellence of truth

The context of our passage teaches us that the words of wisdom and truth are always pleasant and excellent for those who perceive their value (22: 18. and 20)



The main focus on education is to show the immense contrast between the beauty of God's project for human beings and the meaningless of life lived in the absence of God.



“Another principle nearly allied to the former is the moral and spiritual excellence of truth. Truth is not merely speculative, the object of cognition. It has moral beauty. In scriptural language, therefore, knowledge includes love; wisdom includes goodness; folly includes sin; the wise are holy, fools are wicked. Truth and holiness are united as light and heat in the same ray. There cannot be the one without the other. To know God is eternal life; to be without the knowledge of God is to be utterly depraved. Saints are the children of light; the wicked are the children of darkness. To be enlightened is to be renewed; to be blinded is to be reprobated. Such is the constant representation of Scripture.”

Charles Hodge, (1797 – 1878)

Higher goals for a progressive climber

“Truth is an active, working principle, molding heart and life so that there is a constant upward movement.... In every step of climbing the will is obtaining a new spring of action. The moral tone is becoming more like the mind and character of Christ. The progressive Christian has grace and love which pass knowledge, for divine insight into the character of Christ takes a deep hold upon his affections. The glory of God revealed above the ladder can be appreciated only by the progressive climber, who is ever attracted higher, to nobler aims which Christ reveals. All the faculties of mind and body must be enlisted.”

Ellen G. White, MS 13, 1884. (HC 68.)

It is impossible to retard the progress of truth

“So the imprisonment of Paul brought the gospel before kings, princes, and rulers who otherwise would not have had this light. The efforts made to retard the progress of truth will serve to extend it.

The excellence of truth is more clearly seen from every successive point from which it may be viewed. Error requires disguise and concealment. It clothes itself in angel robes, and every manifestation of its real character lessens its chance of success.”

Ellen G. White, 5T p. 453.

2. Certainty of truth

There is obviously an increase in knowledge, as predicted by the prophet Daniel. At the same time, there is also a decrease of certitudes. It is hard to find solid, indestructible references. This is why the goal of the biblical education is to promote the certainty of God's truth, and not of human theories.



"Truth never lost ground by
enquiry."

WILLIAM PENN,

Some Fruits of Solitude



"I imagine God to be like my father. My father was always the voice of certainty in my life. Certainty in the wisdom, certainty in the path, certainty always in God. For me God is certainty in everything. Certainty that everything is good."
Yehuda Berg



Questioning is the right attitude in order to build certainties.

"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties."

Francis Bacon, *The Advancement Of Learning*

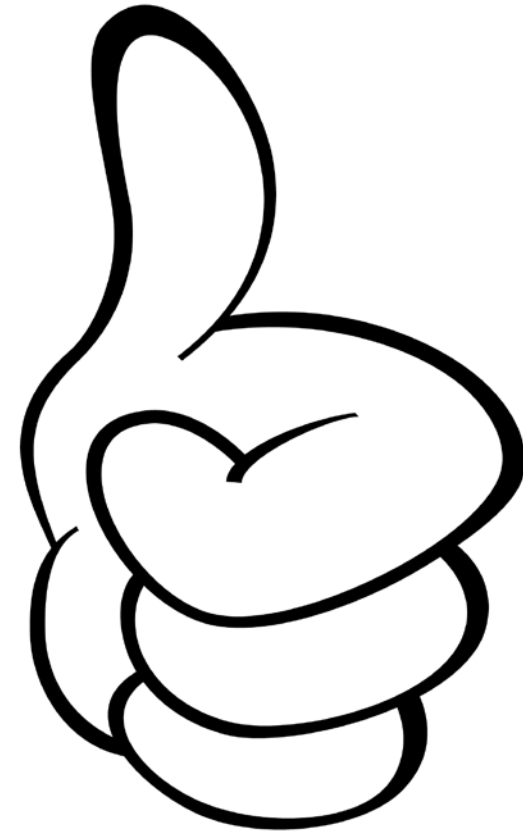


“Faith is not belief without proof,
but trust without reservations.”
Elton Trueblood



"It is ludicrous to suppose that the more sceptical we are the more we see good in everything. It is clear that the more we are certain what good is, the more we shall see good in everything."

G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*



3. Answering the words of truth

The words of wisdom and truth are always pleasant and excellent for those who perceive their value (22: 18. and 20.)



"The presentation of the truth, in love and simplicity, from house to house, is in harmony with the instruction that Christ gave His disciples when He sent them out on their first missionary tour. By songs of praise, by humble, heartfelt prayers, many will be reached. The divine Worker will be present to send conviction to hearts. "I am with you always," is His promise. With the assurance of the abiding presence of such a helper, we may labor with faith and hope and courage."

Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9T, p. 34.



Sowing only the seed of the word of God

“The teachers of Israel were not sowing the seed of the word of God. Christ’s work as a teacher of truth was in marked contrast to that of the rabbis of His time. They dwelt upon traditions, upon human theories and speculations. Often that which man had taught and written about the word, they put in place of the word itself. Their teaching had no power to quicken the soul. The subject of Christ’s teaching and preaching was the word of God. He met questioners with a plain, “It is written.” “What saith the Scriptures?” “How readest thou?” At every opportunity, when an interest was awakened by either friend or foe, He sowed the seed of the word. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Himself the living Word, points to the Scriptures, saying, “They are they which testify of Me.” And “beginning at Moses and all the prophets,” He opened to His disciples “in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” John 5:39; Luke 24:27. Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 38.

Answering the words of truth with the renewed vocabulary:
the same truth, the new words, adapted to the new reality

"Words, especially religious words, words that have to do with the depth of things, get tired and stale the way people do. Find new words or put old words together in combinations that make them heard as new, make you yourself new, and make you understand in new ways. "Blessed are the meek" are the words of the English translators—words of great beauty and power—but over the years they have become almost too familiar to hear any more. "Heureux sont les debonnaires" are the French words—Blessed are the debonair—and suddenly new beauty, new power, flood in like light..."

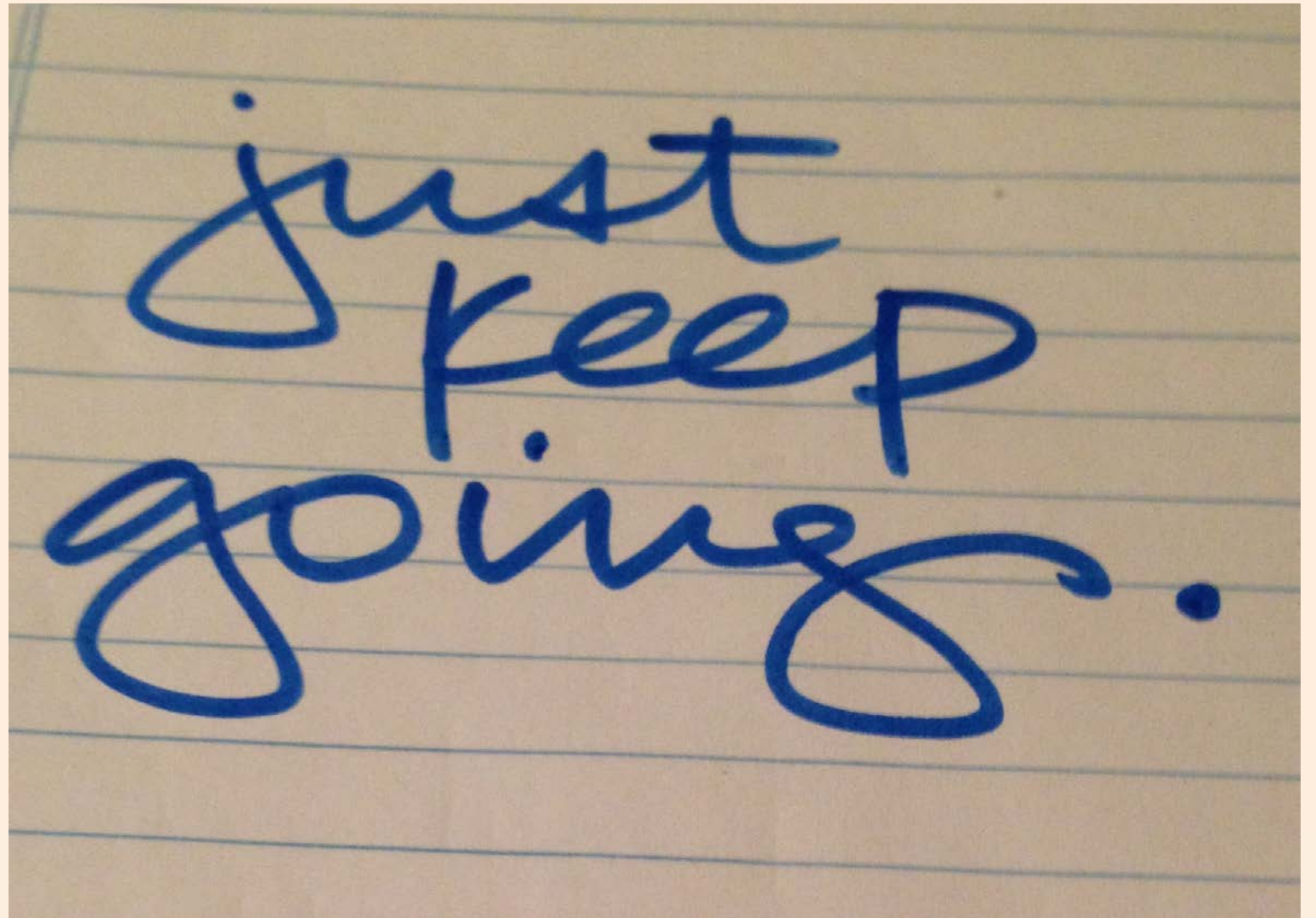
Frederick Buechner, Now and Then

"God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them."
George Whitefield



"Jesus excitement is good and needed, but Christian commitment is an absolute necessity. Don't substitute cheers for deeds, words for the way, or language for a life. Lasting evangelism is the issue."

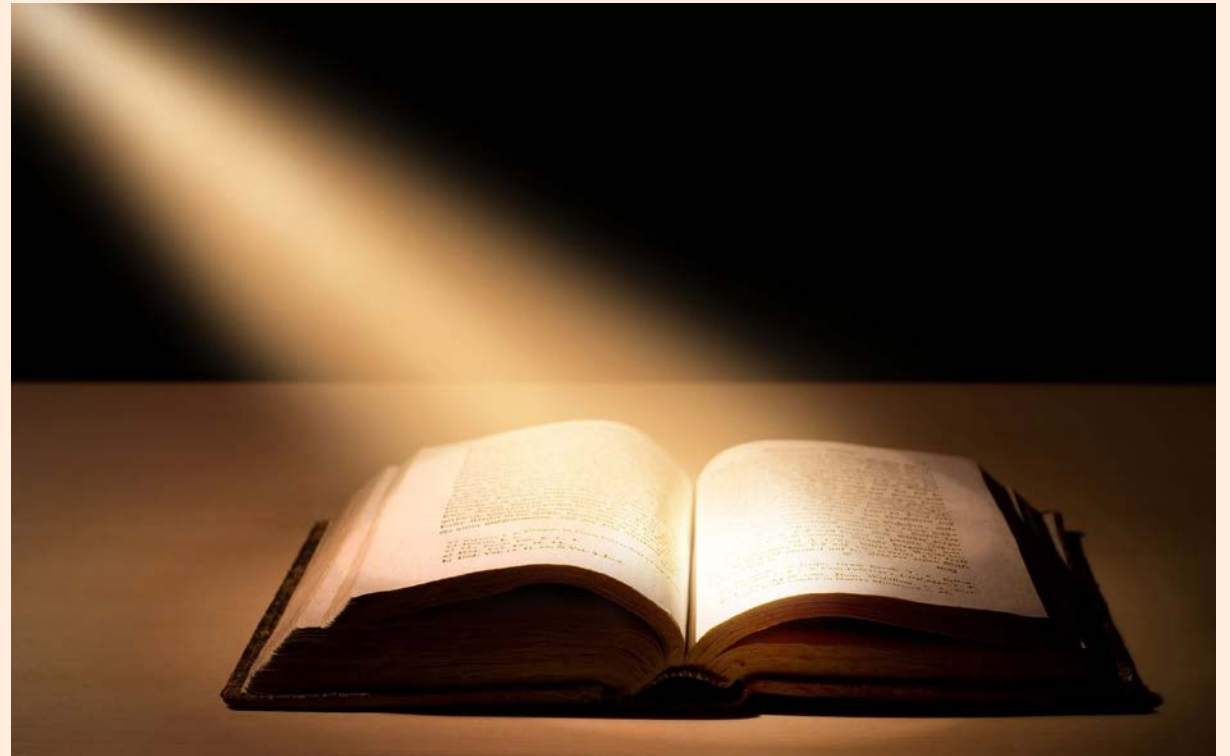
Bailey E. Smith, *Real Evangelism*



V. Conclusion



“To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsakes us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few, this will be our test.” Testimonies vol. 5, p. 136.



“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import,—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”
Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 119.



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