

Obviously there is no way to check on the accuracy of predictions made, until the events take place. *We must not attempt to read into predictions or statements more than is intended to be revealed.* In due time, if we wait and watch, we shall see the full meaning of each prediction set forth by the messenger of the Lord.

Beware of unbalanced and extreme use of testimony material.

The cause of truth will be advanced if all will take a consistent, well-balanced view of the writings, and avoid extreme interpretations.

... There is a class of people who are always ready to go off on some tangent, who want to catch up something strange and wonderful and new; but God would have all move calmly, considerably, choosing our words in harmony with the solid truth for this time, which requires to be presented to the mind as free from that which is emotional as possible, while still bearing intensity and solemnity that it is proper it should bear. We must guard against creating extremes, guard against encouraging those who would either be in the fire or in the water. - *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 227, 228.

We appeal to all, study these inspired writings in their setting, and thus gain the full, consistent, beautiful presentation of the guiding counsel. Above all, give earnest heed to the precious instruction which the Lord has sent to His remnant people.

Lesson 19 will focus on the following:

- Facts concerning the preparation for publication of Mrs. White's writings.
- Was Mrs. White actually the author of all the books that bear her name?
- What was the work of her literary assistants?
- What is the work of the White Trustees?

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE IN THE ADVENT MOVEMENT

PROPER USE OF SPIRIT OF PROPHECY WRITINGS

Test Questions – Lesson 18

1. In the spaces below, please answer frankly:

1. What was your reaction when you first learned about the Spirit of Prophecy as manifested through Ellen G. White?

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2. If you did not immediately accept the Spirit of prophecy, what was the stumbling block in the way?

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2. Of the twelve basic principles governing the use of the Testimonies, name three that you consider especially important. Tell why.

1.

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2.

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3.

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3. Complete these statements:

1. When working with non-Adventists, use of the Spirit of Prophecy as proof is, and often prejudices against the truth.

2. Mrs. White’s writings are not to be used as aand

3. Only by checking with thesources can the reader be certain that statements attributed to Mrs. White are correctly.

4. In Mrs. White’s will was given for making from her writings.



Mark below the yearly study plan or group that best fits your personal need:

1. I am a beginner and would like to start reading the Spirit of Prophecy. I shall use –

Plan 1.

2. I have read many of the spirit of prophecy writings, but I wish to become s systematic reader, starting with –

Plan 2.

Gorup 1.

Group 2.

Group 3.

Group 4.

3. I have read many of the Ellen G. White books, and plan to continue my own systematic plan as outlines here.

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Proper Use of Spirit of Prophecy Writings

18

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE

GUIDING TEXT: Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. - 2 Timothy 2:15.

In this lesson we shall consider some overall principles that should govern our reading, study, and use of the Spirit of Prophecy, including warnings against abuses of these writings. For a helpful background, we suggest that you read Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 654-696.

Opportunity Awaits Your Study

What enlightening revelations lie within the pages of the more than fifty Spirit of Prophecy books! Science, history, prophecy, the purest philosophy and religious truth await your study. But the joys of knowledge and discovery can be yours only as you begin to explore and study for yourself. We suggest a few purely mechanical arrangements that should help you as you read.

1. *Lightly and neatly underline* - in your own books only - statements that impress you.
2. *In the margins make cross references* to Bible texts that are suggested or illustrated by the reading, also to parallel E. G. White statements.
3. *As you read, make notations* of striking statements, on the front or back fly leaf. For example, if you are reading Desire of Ages, and a statement about the faith of Jesus impresses you, jot down on the fly leaf, "Faith of Jesus, p. . . ."
4. *For purposes of comparison and explanation*, be sure to have at hand the Index to the Writings of Ellen White.

Basic Principles of Study and Use

A dozen common-sense principles will provide foundation for study and use of the Spirit of Prophecy writings. Note them carefully.

1. *Spirit of Prophecy counsels may apply to me now as much as to the one to whom they were originally addressed.*
... The object of publishing the testimonies is that those who are not singled out personally, yet who are as much in fault as those who are reproved, may be warned through the reproofs given to others. - *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 687.

Some are more inclined to try to impress the messages upon the hearts of others than to apply them to their own lives. Our first responsibility is to put the counsels into practice in our own daily living; then to teach them to others, kindly, tactfully, and persuasively. It is not our task to *drive home* these truths. That is the work of the Holy Spirit (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 374, 375.) It is unfortunate that sometimes those who wish to make the *Testimonies* an ironclad rule for others do not themselves practice what they preach (*Testimonies* vol. 1, pp. 369, 382-384).

2. *Consistency calls for acceptance of the Spirit at Prophecy writings as a whole.*
We cannot justify accepting part and rejecting part. For example, to accept one of Mrs. White's books of a devotional character while questioning what she has written on doctrine, morals, or health standards, is really accepting one part and rejecting another.

3. *Study Spirit of Prophecy counsels in setting and context.*
Always use an E. G. White statement in its context. Study what goes before and what follows. Its meaning will usually be clear. "Context" comes from a Latin word which means "to weave" or "to join together." "Out of context," then, literally means to tear from its fabric or its setting.

Those who are not watching in the light of the message may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and, by separating these statements from their connection, and placing them beside human reasoning, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn. - Letter 208, 1906; quoted in *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 86.

4. *Before forming conclusions, study all available Spirit of Prophecy counsels on a given topic.*
At times persons have quoted a portion of a sentence in support of some assertion; whereas if they had quoted it fully in its context, it would have shown their reasoning to be fallacious.

Why will not men see and live the truth? Many study the Scriptures for the purpose of proving their own ideas to be correct. They change the meaning of God's Word to suit their own opinions. And thus they do also with the testimonies that He sends. They quote half a sentence, leaving out the other half, which, if quoted, would show their reasoning to be false. God has a controversy with those who wrest the Scriptures, making them conform to their preconceived ideas. - MS 22, 1890; quoted in *Messenger*, p. 88.

Gather from all sources the counsel pertaining to the same subject, *put it all together*, and then draw your conclusions *on the basis of all* the counsels. Another advantage in studying all the counsel on a given point is that one statement may help to explain another which may seem difficult of understanding.

... The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture. *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 42.

This principle, as we all know, has been recognized by most Biblical scholars from the earliest times. At the birth of Protestantism by the Diet of Spires in 1529, the princes went on record in their declaration :

Each text of the Holy Scripture ought to be explained by other and clearer texts. – D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, Book 13,chap. 6 (vol. IV, p. 75).

There are some problems in the sacred Scriptures, as all Bible scholars admit. We recognize that there are also some problems in the writings of Ellen White. However, if these principles of interpretation are applied, they will help to meet such problems.

5. Consider time and place of publication or application of specific counsels.
Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but *time and place must be considered*. - *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 51.

While *general principles always hold*, some messages have specific application, and do not apply at all times or in every case. Take a Bible example. Read in Numbers 15:38 the record of how God instructed the children of Israel to put fringes on their garments, and a ribbon of blue. Does this mean that today every Christian must wear fringes and a blue ribbon on each garment? Certainly not; but in the dress of the Christian there should be a distinction from that of the world.

It can easily be seen that even though some specific bit of counsel may not fit every individual, or every age, something helpful to every person is contained in all instruction. At one time, in the interest of health, Mrs. White counseled Seventh-day Adventist women to shorten their skirts. Obviously such counsel would apply only at a time when skirts were too long for convenience or health. At another time she counseled that, in the interest of comfort, health, and economy, sanitarium buildings should be of wood and not of stone or brick. Marked changes in cost of materials, and in methods of construction and heating, are deciding factors in selection of building materials today, to provide, at moderate expense, buildings which are comfortable and healthful. These are the basic principles enunciated. We must search out the applications that fit us and our times. Which brings us to perhaps the most fundamental rule of all!

6. Study counsels to find and apply today the underlying principles.
I was then directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time *specify the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals, that all might be warned*, reproved, and counseled. - *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 660. Italics supplied.

Mrs. White made specific applications of principles, as she pointed out the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals; thus illustrating the manner of applying principles. It is intended that all should be warned through the instruction given to a few.

Principles set forth in the Spirit of Prophecy are:

1. Universal in scope

The Testimonies were never intended to serve only one group of believers in one country, or one race of people or national group. They are world-wide in their scope. The *principles* apply to all, though some *specific* applications may not fit all places. *Discovering the principles* in the writings aids in applying the counsel in any kind of situation. Mrs. White had an understanding of situations in many countries, for she had spent several years overseas. But the matter is even broader than that. *The human heart is much the same the world over*. God knew what His people everywhere would need, and gave instruction adaptable to every person, time, and place.

2. The principles of the Spirit of Prophecy are always up to date. They are not outmoded or antiquated. They apply today.

. . . Time and trial have not made void the instruction given, The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to escape the snares which we have been plainly told will cause the rejecters of light to stumble, and fall, and be snared, and be taken. - *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 41.

3. The Spirit of Prophecy counsels are Scientifically sound. (Review Lesson 11.)
Emanating from the source of all truth, the Spirit of Prophecy statements relating to science are accurate, and may be relied upon. In certain areas they are ahead of scientific discovery.

4. Evidence for certainty is abundant.
The Lord has not removed every opportunity for doubt; for if He did, faith would not be required. Yet the evidences for unwavering confidence are overwhelming. Every moot question may be answered if it is studied in the light of principles set forth in this lesson.

While God has given ample evidence for faith, He will never remove all excuse for unbelief. All who look for hooks to hang their doubts upon, will find them. And those who refuse to accept and obey God's word until every objection has been removed, and there is no longer an opportunity for doubt, will never come to the light. - *Great Controversy*, p. 527.

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence. God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith. - Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 675, 676.

5. Remember your own attitude reacts favorably or unfavorably upon yourself and upon others.
The chilling influence of pent-up doubt and unbelief, like the cold air in a refrigerator - will escape every time the door is opened! On the contrary, the warmth of trust and faith radiate hope and confidence. And faith and reverence are attitudes that can be recognized and appreciated. Remember, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Romans 14:7.

It does not become anyone to drop a word of doubt here and there that shall work like poison in other minds, shaking their confidence in the messages which God had given, which have aided in laying the foundation of this work, and have attended it to the present day, in reproofs, warnings, corrections, and encouragements. To all who have stood in the way of the Testimonies, I would say, God has given a message to His people, and His voice will be heard, whether you hear or forbear. Your opposition has not injured me; but you must give an account to the God of heaven, who has sent these warnings and instructions to keep His people in the right way. You will have to answer to Him for your blindness, for being a stumbling block in the way of sinners. - Selected Messages, Book I, p. 43.

6. God's blessing upon you will be in proportion to your belief in and loyalty to the instruction He has sent to guide and guard His people.
How abundantly the Lord can and does bless those who wholeheartedly accept the counsels given, and bring their lives into harmony with the light He has caused to shine upon our pathway.

Common Abuses of the Spirit of Prophecy to Be Avoided

1. It is not wise to use the E. G. White writings as authority in presenting truth to unbelievers.
Prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. - 1 Corinthians 14:22, last part.

Some have taken an injudicious course; when they have talked their faith to unbelievers, and the proof has been asked for, they have read a vision, instead of going to the Bible for proof. I saw that this course was inconsistent, and prejudiced unbelievers against the truth. - *Testimonies*, vol. I, pp. 119, 120.

This is not to be construed to mean that unbelievers cannot be benefited by the E. G. White books, but that they should not be used as proof or authority.

2. The E. G. White writings are not to be used as a club or a whip, when the power of love, reason, and sound argument are at our disposal. (Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 369)

There are many whose religion consists in criticizing habits of dress and manners. They want to bring every one to their own measure. They desire to lengthen out those who seem too short for their standard, and to cut down others who seem too long. They have lost the love of God out of their hearts; but they think they have a spirit of discernment. They think it is their prerogative to criticize, and pronounce judgment; but they should repent of their error, and turn away from their sins Let us love one another. Let us have harmony and union throughout our ranks. Let us have our hearts sanctified to God. Let us look upon the light that abides for us in Jesus. Let us remember how forbearing and patient He was with the erring children of men. We should be in a wretched state if the God of heaven were like one of us, and treated us as we are inclined to treat one another. - E. G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 27, 1889, p. 530.

3. Spirit of Prophecy not to be used to uphold and support personal views and preconceived ideas.

... I know that many men take the testimonies the Lord has given, and apply them as they suppose they should be applied, picking out a sentence here and there, taking it from its proper connection, and applying it according to their ideas. Thus poor souls become bewildered, when could they read in order all that has been given, they would see the true application, and would not become confused. Much that purports to be a message from Sister White, serves the purpose of misrepresenting Sister White, making her testify in favor of things that are not in accordance with her mind or judgment. - *Selected Messages*. Book I, p. 44.

We have all read privately-issued pamphlets in which this license has been indulged. *Only by checking with original sources can the reader be certain that Mrs. White is represented correctly*. If one feels that he must study such materials compiled to prove somebody's pet theory, let him look up all quotations and read them in their original context. The importance of such checking cannot be overestimated.

4. Especially reprehensible is unauthorized use of personal testimonies.
E. G. White compilations by others than those whom she designated, and circulation of unauthenticated statements.

a. Note three points in particular:

Unauthorized use of Testimony matter:

Through the years some have come into possession, in whole or in part, of testimonies of personal counsel and reproof sent by Ellen White to individuals, or communications dealing with specific situations. These have been copied and passed on to others, sometimes they have even been sent out broadcast, inferring that the messages were of general application and intended for all. Those who engage in such unauthorized circulation of these testimonies are usually unacquainted with the circumstances under which they were written, and reach conclusions which cannot be maintained or are not in harmony with the facts in the case. Mrs. White strongly reproved this type of work. See *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 33.

Publication of unauthorized compilations:

While Mrs. White was living, she could not grant free use of her writings by those who wished to publish their own compilations of her messages. She wrote of this rather fully in a statement entitled, "The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church." While she did not question the motives of those who asked to make compilations, she feared that "the extracts [might] give a different impression than that which they would were they read in their original connection." *See Selected Messages*, Book I, pp. 55-58.

The Trustees of the White Estate are the appointed custodians of Mrs. White's writings, and in her will Mrs. White gave instruction for making future compilations from her writings. A number of books have been published since her death, making available to the church certain detailed lines of counsel not heretofore available in permanent form. Examples: *Evangelism, Christian Service, Temperance, The Adventist Home, Child Guidance, Welfare Ministry, Selected Messages, Books I and II*, and *The Faith I Live By*.

Unauthenticated statements and rumors:

Some sincere believers have passed on certain statements purporting to be from Mrs. White, which, upon investigation, were found to be spurious.

Excellent counsel on this point is given in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 692-696. Limited space allows us to quote only the last paragraph of the article; but you would do well to read the complete article.

And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said. - *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 696.

If you cannot give the source of a "favorite E. G. White passage," don't use it! Be sure of your sources, and people will be sure of you.

There is danger in reading into predictions or statements more than is intended.