



Discovering Revelation Baptismal Class

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Baptismal Class Instructions

The *Discovering Revelation* baptismal class handouts are adapted from a baptismal preparation card developed by Gary Gibbs and used by Amazing Facts evangelists. The handouts contain a 19-point summary of the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, broken down into 11 separate handouts. These 11 handouts are designed for 11 baptismal class sessions, each lasting 35 minutes.

Two special considerations allow the classes to begin just after the mid-point of a series of evangelistic meetings (rather than waiting until the series is over) without fear of covering topics prematurely: (1) The topics are organized in such a way that you will not cover a sensitive area in the baptismal class prior to the subject having been presented in your evangelistic meeting; and (2) The baptismal points, rather than being given in one card or booklet, are on separate handouts so that candidates receive only the information being covered in a specific class and are not tempted to “read ahead” prematurely.

It is best to begin a baptismal class as soon as decisions for baptism are made. This ensures that you “strike while the iron is hot” and increases the likelihood of having baptisms soon after your evangelistic meetings have ended. One method of doing this is to schedule your baptismal classes to begin 45 minutes prior to the start of the evangelistic meetings (plan to begin two or three nights after gaining decisions at the baptism presentation). If the baptismal class is 35 minutes, it will allow a 10-minute break between the baptismal class and the main meeting. With this in view, you may want to consider starting your evangelistic meetings at 7:15 p.m. Though guests may be able to arrive earlier than this, you are planning ahead for when you will add your baptismal classes, which if you begin your main meeting at 7:15 could be held at 6:30 p.m.

Before giving more specific instructions as to how to conduct the baptismal class, it is important to understand the value and necessity of careful baptismal preparation.

The Importance of Baptismal Preparation

Preparing someone for baptism is one of the most rewarding and yet challenging aspects of winning a soul to Christ. The baptismal preparation process requires genuine kindness and sympathy for the weaknesses of others. At the same time, it requires courage and strength to faithfully instruct and then urge the candidate to honor God by obeying His will. It is not only a lack of discipleship after baptism, but also a lack of faithful instruction *before* baptism, that results in many new members leaving the church through the proverbial “back door.”

Readiness for baptism involves three main areas:

- **The Heart** – The candidate should have a genuine interest in the Bible and spiritual things, manifesting a love for Jesus that gives evidence of a converted heart.
- **The Mind** – The candidate should understand and believe the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

- **The Actions** – The candidate should manifest a genuine trust in God by being obedient to the clear teachings of Scripture in practical habits and lifestyle.

In most cases, the most challenging of these areas is the *actions*, or practical obedience to God's Word. Learning that we are out of harmony with God's will in some practical area of our daily lives can be an unwelcome surprise. Because of this, instruction is often neglected to avoid offending, creating discomfort, or discouraging someone from continuing toward baptism. However, a great blessing is lost when faithful instruction is not given as someone is contemplating a full surrender to Christ in baptism.

By helping the baptismal candidate to find victory over sinful habits or other obstacles in their lives, we help them to experience what it means to have a saving relationship with Christ – one built on repentance and faith. As practical obstacles are faced and overcome, faith in Christ grows, and Jesus dwells more fully in the heart. A failure to instruct and gain decisions in practical areas before baptism will usually lead to greater problems after baptism. Consider the following counsel:

“Before baptism, there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism” (*Evangelism*, p. 311).

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism ... When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be accepted. But when they show that they are following the customs and fashions and sentiments of the world, they are to be faithfully dealt with. If they feel no burden to change their course of action, they should not be accepted as members of the church. The Lord wants those who compose His church to be true, faithful stewards of the grace of Christ” (*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 164).

“God would be better pleased to have six truly converted to the truth ... than to have sixty make a nominal profession, and yet not be thoroughly converted” (*Evangelism*, p. 320).

While careful preparation is important, we are not to withhold baptism because we perceive a lack of sincerity or wrong motives. We are to examine the fruit of the life, but leave the responsibility of the motive to the candidate:

“There is one thing that we have no right to do, and that is to judge another man's heart or impugn his motives. But when a person presents himself as a candidate for church membership, we are to examine the fruit of his life, and leave the responsibility of his motive with himself. But great care should be exercised in accepting members into the church; for Satan has his specious devices through which he purposes to crowd false brethren into the church, through whom he can work more successfully to weaken the cause of God” (*Evangelism*, p. 313).

It is important to understand that many who desire baptism are not truly ready for baptism until they go through the preparation process itself. By prayerfully guiding the candidate to a more thorough understanding of Scripture and a deeper commitment to Christ, you can significantly

increase his or her likelihood of becoming a faithful, productive, and steadfast disciple of Christ. Furthermore, you can experience a special bond of love and friendship to last throughout eternity.

How to Use the Discovering Revelation Baptismal Class Handouts

1. Present the topic of baptism at your evangelistic meetings and make a decision card appeal. Your decision card should have a place to circle decisions for baptism, rebaptism, and simply to become part of a Sabbath-keeping body of believers.
2. Over the next 1-2 days, visit or call every individual who marked his or her card with one of the decisions referred to in step #1. Invite them all to attend the baptismal class beginning at 6:30 p.m. before the next evangelistic meeting.
3. On the night after your baptism presentation, in addition to personally inviting everyone who marked a decision on a card, make an announcement to the entire audience before the meeting begins. Say, "Last night there were many of you who expressed interest in baptism, rebaptism, or just worshiping with a Sabbath-keeping body of believers. So beginning tomorrow night, we will begin holding doctrinal classes at 6:30 p.m. to help prepare those who have expressed that kind of interest. But even if you did not mark your card because perhaps you are still thinking things through, we want to extend an open invitation to these classes. All are invited and there is no pressure or requirement attached to attending. You are encouraged to just come and listen and learn and be blessed. So that begins ___ night at 6:30 p.m. and we hope that many of you can come. Then there will be a 10-minute break before our *Discovering Revelation* presentations begins at 7:15 p.m."
4. The baptismal classes are not intended to be a comprehensive explanation of every topic. Most of the topics are already covered during the evangelistic meetings and the baptismal class simply reviews these and fills in the blanks for certain other beliefs. The baptismal preparation actually occurs in four complementary ways: (1) Evangelistic meetings; (2) Baptismal classes; (3) One-on-one baptism preparation meetings; (4) Carefully chosen books and other resources.
5. In the pages that follow, a "Baptismal Class Outline" will provide the key points to be shared when teaching the baptismal class (the same points apply to personal baptismal preparation). It is important that some fundamental beliefs not covered in an evangelistic meeting are clearly expressed in the baptismal class (e.g., the Godhead, Creation, etc.).
6. At the conclusion of each class, hand out resources that will reinforce what will be presented in the next class. Especially is this important, for instance, if you are not covering areas of Christian lifestyle or dress in your evangelistic meetings. It is often helpful for them to read about these truths first, rather than being caught off guard in a small group or personal setting. Providing reading material is just one more way to reinforce the presentations/classes and prepare the heart for the reception of truth. There is a list of recommended pocketbooks & tracts given in a chart on the next page, or you may have other favorite resources to reinforce the topics.

7. Explain (during early baptismal classes) that for those who have shown interest in baptism, you will schedule personal appointments toward the end of the classes to help fill in the blanks for any classes that were missed and to help answer questions, etc.
8. When most of the baptismal classes have been completed, schedule and begin meeting personally with any candidates who may already be acquainted with the sensitive topics that have yet to be presented in the baptismal class. Schedule to meet with the others as soon as those topics have been covered. Sensitive truths may be presented in a baptismal class, but many decisions will only be made from personal appeals in a private visit. Of course, never make a visit with someone of the opposite sex without someone else accompanying.
9. Prior to your personal appointment, review the attendance record to determine what topics might still need covered with the candidate due to missing evangelistic meetings or baptismal classes.
10. When meeting personally, briefly review the 19 points on the baptismal class handouts and do a more in-depth study of any that the candidate may not have heard. This process may take only a small portion of one meeting or it may take several meetings depending on how many evangelistic meetings and/or baptismal classes were missed.
11. Now is where you really need to pray earnestly for the candidate. The last decisions are often the hardest! If you do not perceive that there is anything standing in the way of the baptism, simply ask the candidate if there is any doctrine or practical commitment in the baptismal class handouts with which they still feel uncomfortable. If you know there is an obstacle that the candidate is not acknowledging, it is sometimes helpful to ask him or her to take time to carefully read the points at home, and schedule a time to meet again so that you can address any hurdles or objections.
12. Lastly, once a candidate agrees to the points in the baptismal class handouts, and you feel comfortable with the visible evidences of their faith, set a date for the baptism!

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Baptismal Class Outline

Baptismal Class – Session 1

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, the standard of both doctrine and conduct. **2 Timothy 3:15- 17; Matthew 4:4.**
2. There are three members of the Godhead - the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit. **Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19.**

Baptismal Class – Session 2

3. Jesus Christ, because of His love for us, died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins of breaking God's holy law. **John 3:16; 1 John 3:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3.**
4. Our response to Jesus Christ is to repent of our sins and accept Him as our personal Savior. **Acts 20:21; Revelation 3:20.** Because of His death in our behalf, Jesus freely forgives our sins and gives us the gift of eternal life. **Matthew 26:28; Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:11-13.**
5. Another part of our response to Jesus is to surrender our lives to be ruled by Him and His truths. It is important for us to grow in our relationship with Him by personal Bible study and prayer. **Romans 6:16-18; John 14:15; 1 John 3:22.**

Baptismal Class – Session 3

6. Those who love Jesus will choose to keep the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:3-17; John 14:15. We obey through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 7:7,12; 8:4; Revelation 14:12; 22:14.**
7. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord." **Exodus 20:8-11.** Jesus' followers will keep the Sabbath holy "according to the commandment" (**Luke 23:56**) from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. **Nehemiah 13:19; Leviticus 23:32; Mark 1:32; Isaiah 58:13,14.**

Baptismal Class – Session 4

8. Jesus' second coming in the clouds of Heaven will be audible, personal, literal, and "every eye shall see Him." **Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:9-11.** God's people prepare for His coming. **Matthew 24:44.**
9. The dead are asleep unconsciously in their graves awaiting the resurrection. **Ps. 13:3; Eccl. 9:5-6; Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 2:29,34; 1 Cor. 15:51-54.**

Baptismal Class – Session 5

10. Sequence of end-time events: (1) Resurrection of saved at Second Coming. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.** (2) Desolation of earth and Satan bound for 1000 years. **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23-26; 25:30-33; Revelation 20:1-3.** (3) Righteous in heaven for 1000 years. **Revelation 20:4.** (4) Resurrection of the wicked and Satan loosed at end of 1000 years. **Revelation 20:5,7.** (5) Final destruction of Satan and wicked in lake of fire. **Revelation 20:15; Malachi 4:1-3.** (6) Creation of new heaven and earth. **Revelation 21:1,4,5.**

Baptismal Class – Sessions 6 & 7

11. There is a sanctuary in heaven where Jesus is ministering now during the judgment. **Hebrews 8:1-2; Revelation 11:19; Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 14:7.**
12. The Seventh-day Adventist Church fulfills the prophetic description of the remnant church whose mission is to prepare people for Jesus' second coming. **Revelation 12:17; 14:6-16.** We believe in church organization (**1 Corinthians 12:28**), and in the importance of church attendance. **Hebrews 10:25.** We wish to follow the example of Jesus, who "as His custom was, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." **Luke 4:16.**
13. The gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of God's last day people, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes this gift in the ministry of Ellen G. White. **Revelation 12:17; 19:10; 22:9.**

Baptismal Class – Session 8

14. Jesus established the foot-washing service and the Lord's Supper. **John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.**
15. Baptism by immersion (**Matthew 3:16,17**), symbolizes the burial of my old life of sin and resurrection to a new life in Jesus. **Romans 6:3,4.** Baptism makes the believer a member of a "body," or church. Following Jesus in baptism at the conclusion of your preparation will make you a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. **1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:41, 47; 19:1-5.**

Baptismal Class – Session 9

16. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31.** As a result, we will abstain from unclean foods (**Genesis 7:2; Leviticus 11**), and addictive, non-prescription drugs such as alcohol (**Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-33**), tobacco, caffeine, and illegal drugs. **Exodus 20:13.** God's grace will help us to live healthy lives. **3 John 2.**

Baptismal Class – Session 10

17. By connection with Christ, we desire to overcome the sinful ways of the world. **1 John 2:14-17.** We will avoid reading, watching, and listening to sinful things that the Bible condemns. **Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 5:19.** We will follow in the humble steps of Jesus and not wear jewelry or immodest clothing. **1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:3-4.**

Baptismal Class – Session 11

18. Marriage between a man and woman was affirmed by Jesus and should be formally recognized by the laws of the state. **Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4.** We should not be involved in "common law" relationships. **Matthew 19:3-9; John 2:1-11.**
19. The Bible teaches about returning tithes and offerings. **Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 23:23; 2 Corinthians 9:7,8.** Desiring to be good stewards of all God has given us, we support the Lord's work according to our ability. And as good stewards, we also refrain from gambling.

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Baptismal Class Topics & Teaching Tips

This outline explains important areas to emphasize during the baptismal class.

1. Bible

- a. "ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We believe in Old & New Testaments. We don't believe in picking and choosing.
- b. We take Bible literally unless metaphoric or symbolic language is used. For example, we believe in the literal 6-day creation and a literal worldwide flood. The Bible is trustworthy even when popular science disagrees.

2. Trinity

- a. The Father and Jesus are equally loving – "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 14:9.
- b. Jesus is fully divine and has always existed – "His goings forth are from everlasting." Micah 5:2.
- c. Jesus is fully man and was "in all points tempted as we are." Hebrews 4:15.
- d. The Holy Spirit is a person and fully God. Jesus called the Spirit "He" and "Him" continually, denoting a person (John 14 and 16). The Spirit can be insulted (Heb. 10:29) and grieved (Eph. 4:30), denoting feelings. The Great Commission was to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20)—the Holy Spirit here included as an equal member of the Godhead.
- e. The Trinity, or Godhead (Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9), consists of 3 individual persons with different roles but equally all-powerful and all-knowing. Three individual persons, but one God – or Godhead. The Bible says, "Then God said, 'Let US make man in OJoP image.'" Genesis 1:26.

3. The Cross

- a. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins. Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3.
- b. Jesus' death was different from normal death. He died the sinner's death of separation from God – the weight of shame. This is why He was sorrowful, "even unto death." Matt. 26:38. It is why He sweat "great drops of blood." Luke 22:44. The sorrow and shame caused by carrying our sins as if they were His own (Isa. 53:4-6) was causing Jesus' physical death. On the cross, He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" because He could not see the Father's assurance through the guilt of our sins.

4. Repentance & Forgiveness

- a. We cannot manufacture repentance. We have to come to Christ just as we are. His love and goodness leads us to repentance. Repentance is a gift. Romans 2:4; Acts 5:31.
- b. God is faithful and just to forgive. 1 John 1:9.

- c. Receiving forgiveness happens as we forgive others. Matthew 6:12, 14 – inquire as to anyone with whom bitterness may be harbored rather than a spirit of forgiveness.

5. Growing with Jesus Christ as Lord

- a. We cannot accept Jesus as Savior without also accepting Him as Lord. Jesus isn't divided.
- b. Prayer is the breath of the soul. It must be honest – like talking to a friend. Try praying on your knees to encourage humility and out loud to encourage faith. Prayer isn't for God to learn about us but to bring us into a spiritual frame of mind that is in harmony with God.
- c. Personal Bible study is not an optional practice for the Christian – it sustains spiritual life (spiritual hunger, interest, etc.). The Word is living (Heb. 4:12); the words Jesus speaks are spirit and life (John 6:63); man is to “live” by every word that proceeds from God (Matt. 4:4).
- d. Daily prayer and Bible study should be part of the new life with Christ. If the candidate does not already have this habit, help him or her to begin building it now.

6. The Ten Commandments

- a. The law is still valid in the New Testament – Romans 2:21-23, 7:12, 14; Ephesians 6:1-3; James 2:10-12; 1 John 3:4.
- b. The Spirit is given to overcome obstacles to obedience when we choose to obey – John 14:15-17; Acts 5:32.

7. Sabbath Observance

- a. Sundown to sundown – Genesis 1:5 – evening was first part of day, then light part. See also Leviticus 23:32 – which is speaking of a ceremonial sabbath but still makes the point that it is to be celebrated from evening to evening. See Mark 1:32 for a definition of evening.
- b. Exodus 20:8-11 – You nor your servant nor anyone within your gates is to work on the Sabbath (i.e. don't hire out work on Sabbath, don't work on Friday night, etc.). It is lawful to do good on Sabbath (Luke 6:9), but the context is saving life – emergencies or relief of suffering – not building a deck for a neighbor or some other work that could be done on any other day.
- c. No buying or selling – Nehemiah 13:15 – leads us to prepare for Sabbath by fueling our cars and buying our groceries on Friday (Preparation Day – Mark 15:42) and not eating out or going shopping on Sabbath.
- d. Isaiah 58:13-14 – the Sabbath principle text. The Sabbath is for delighting in the Lord. Personal hobbies and pleasures (football games, etc.) should not occupy us on the one day the Lord has asked us to keep holy for building our relationship with Him. The Sabbath is for spiritual things.
- e. Give possible approach to common Sabbath challenges – parties, work outings, etc.

8. The Second Coming

- a. No secret rapture – “every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1:7.
- b. Literal, audible, personal – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.
- c. We need to be ready and not be lulled to sleep by the “cares of this life.” Luke 21:34.

9. Death

- a. The dead sleep until the resurrection. Psalm 13:3; John 11:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.
- b. Those who die do not go straight to heaven or hell. Acts 2:29-34.
- c. There is no consciousness in death. Ecclesiastes 9:5-6.

10. Resurrection, Millennium, Lake of Fire, New Earth

- a. Resurrection of the righteous at Jesus coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
- b. 1,000 years of desolation on earth with Satan bound and no one for him to deceive. Revelation 20:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23-26.
- c. Righteous have “judgment” committed to them in heaven during 1,000 years. This doesn’t determine saved or lost, but the saints demonstrate agreement with the righteous judgment of God. Revelation 20:4; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.
- d. Unrighteous are resurrected at the end of 1,000 years, surround holy city, and are devoured by the lake of fire. The wicked are not burned for all eternity but are totally destroyed – brought to ashes by the fire. Revelation 20:15; Malachi 4:1-3.

11. The Heavenly Sanctuary and Judgment Hour

- a. Jesus is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews 8:1-2.
- b. Jesus is interceding for sinners and serving as our “advocate” in the heavenly judgment described in Daniel 7:9-14 and in the words “cleansing of the sanctuary” in Daniel 8:14.
- c. The judgment, or cleansing of the sanctuary, began at the conclusion of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, or in 1844. This is why God’s people can say that the hour of His judgment “has come” in Revelation 14:7.
- d. Judgment precedes the coming of Jesus because when He comes His reward is with Him. Revelation 22:12.

12. The Remnant Church, and

13. The Spirit of Prophecy

- a. Revelation 12:17 teaches last-day church will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the prophetic gift (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9).
- b. God always worked through the law and the prophets, but when His people rejected His law He ceased given them instruction through prophetic visions (Isaiah 8:20, Ezekiel 7:26; Lamentations 2:9). When God wanted to restore the truth of the Sabbath (the Law), He also restored visions (the Prophets). God gave prophetic visions to point people back to the Bible and His law that they had neglected to follow.

- c. The SDA Church recognizes that time is needed to fully have confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. When one is baptized he or she commits to recognizing that the prophetic gift is one of the identifying marks of the last day church and that the gift of prophecy is still available to the church through the end of time. Eph. 4:11-13; Joel 2:28-31. While not having much experience with Ellen White's writings, a candidate for baptism should be inclined to believe rather than doubt the authenticity of her prophetic gift.
- d. Matthew 24:14 predicts the gospel going to the entire world before the end comes. Revelation 14 shows the fulfillment of this with the gospel in verse 6 and the end coming in verse 14, with detail given in verses 7-13 as to what that gospel must include. Seventh-day Adventists recognize the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14 as representing the last message we are to deliver to the world. These messages include a call to worship God as creator (the Sabbath), a call that judgment has come (cleansing of the sanctuary), a call that Babylon is fallen (error exposed by truths about death, hell, second coming, etc., being restored), and a warning against worshipping according to tradition instead of the commandments of God (mark of the beast).
- e. The special calling of the SDA Church leads its members to:
 - Regularly attend church just like Jesus. Luke 4:16. The importance of attending Sabbath School and Prayer Meeting should also be explained.
 - Embrace the mission of sharing this end-time message in our personal sphere of influence and beyond.

14. The Lord's Supper and Foot-washing

- a. John 13:14-17 – We wash one another's feet because Jesus told us to do so.
- b. We use grape juice and not fermented wine for the Lord's Supper since wine was a term used to refer to both fermented and unfermented juice. Isaiah 65:8. Context must be considered to determine which was meant.
- c. We practice "open communion," meaning that Christians of any denomination are invited to participate in the ordinance.
- d. The Lord's Supper is a believer's ordinance like baptism. Just like we don't have infant or early childhood baptism, we don't have infant or early childhood participation in the Lord's Supper. Parents are encouraged to maintain the sacredness of the service by choosing to educate their children through observation rather than participation until they are of age to discern the true meaning of the symbols. 1 Corinthians 11:27-28. Since that is the same time that baptism becomes meaningful, we simply encourage young children to be baptized before partaking in Communion.

15. Baptism

- a. Represents dying to old ways and committing to new ways. Romans 6:3-4.
- b. Someone being baptized is baptized into the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13. To be in a body you must be connected with other parts of the same body. Baptism, therefore, makes someone a part, or member, of the body of believers with whom they agree concerning the fundamental teachings of the Bible – in this case, the SDA Church. By

being baptized, we join ourselves with a local body of believers (local SDA church) who are also joined with a worldwide body of believers (worldwide SDA Church). There is no such thing as a “lone ranger” Christian. 1 Cor. 12:20-22. The early church was organized (elders, deacons, leadership conference in Acts 15, etc.) and we should not be afraid of organization – only corrupt organization.

16. Health

- a. Health is important, but as a church we recognize that improvement in health is progressive (increased exercise and water, improved nutrition, etc.). The progressive element of health improvements is recognized with the exception of two areas – these two areas we believe to violate the Scriptural injunction to not defile the body temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19) and should therefore be entirely abstained from when we make our commitment to follow Christ:
 - Unclean foods – Leviticus 11 – this distinction existed in the time of the flood (Genesis 7:1-2), which was before God instructed the Jewish nation with temporary, ceremonial laws.
 - Addictive and mind-altering substances (non-prescription) – Alcohol, tobacco, caffeinated beverages, etc. These are mind-altering and addictive. Try substituting with things that are not addictive or artificially stimulating. God wants our minds to be clear so that we are more attentive to the voice of conscience and stronger to resist temptation.

17. Christian Behavior

- a. Avoid reading, watching, or listening to sinful things. Philippians 4:8 should be the filter through which all our entertainment passes (i.e. TV, movies, music, internet, video games, etc.). Hollywood does not appeal to the spiritual nature but to the carnal. Caution is needed because even non-“sinful” amusements can blunt our interest in spiritual things.
- b. Christians should dress modestly – avoiding clothes that are too revealing, clothes that are overly priced just because of a label, or jewelry (a watch or tie clip that is functional we do not consider jewelry). 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4 (the word “merely” in some translations is added); Revelation 12:1 compared with Revelation 17:4. A wedding band, while symbolic, is not considered necessary by many. Others, however, view it as imperative in our country and as a symbol of virtue. If someone feels this way and can wear a simple wedding band conscientiously, it should not be considered a hindrance to baptism. However, if the motive is truly to have a symbol of marriage and not ornamentation – it should be a modest, simple band (a watch is functional, but a \$2,000 watch is ornamentation!).

18. Marriage

- a. The family comes first after our commitment to God, then the church.
- b. There is no biblical justification for divorce with the exception of adultery. Matthew 5:32.

- c. Physical relationships outside of marriage is called fornication and clearly spoken of as sin in the Bible. Galatians 5:19-21. If a couple is living together outside of marriage, they should consider separating or marrying after getting the appropriate pre-marital counseling. This needs to happen before they are baptized.
- d. Encourage family worship, which helps to bind families together. A sample family worship consists of prayer, a Bible passage, a song, and closing prayer. It will preferably be no longer than 10 or 15 minutes. The Father, as the spiritual servant leader of his family, can ensure that the family is taking time together with God.

19. Tithes & Offerings

- a. Malachi 3:8-10 says that withholding tithes and offerings is robbing God.
- b. Leviticus 27:30 says tithe is holy to the Lord. Returning tithe is not a matter of generosity, but honesty. Deut. 14:22 says that tithe is on our increase. Tithe means tenth. So one tenth of our increase – our gross income – belongs to God and should be returned to Him. It is not ours to determine how to use.
- c. Numbers 18:21 says that the tithe was exclusively for the Levites – the full-time ministers. God sacredly guarded the tithe for that purpose.
- d. The tithe was placed in a storehouse and then distributed to the Levites. In the same way, SDA churches send their tithe to the local conference, which in turn uses that for the support of full- time ministers, Bible workers, and other clear ministry functions. All ministers get the same base salary – it is not affected by the tithe of the local church.
 - e. Offerings are above and beyond the 10% and are given liberally as a person is able. Systematic giving (some % of gross income) is recommended. The local church does not get any of the tithes because God commanded it to be used for the “Levites” – the full-time ministry. Local church operating expenses require support from offerings. “Combined Budget” is a recommended place to give the greatest portion of a systematic offering. Conference and world budget offerings are also worthwhile. Start with a certain percentage and as time goes by consider increasing. When we come to the end, we won’t regret giving to God’s cause.
- f. Visually describe how to use tithe envelope – especially the “tithe” line for 10%.
- g. Gambling is addictive and a poor investment of God’s resources and should be avoided by Christians.

