

VISITING PROGRAM TRAINING CLASS

Eleventh Class

February 9, 1969

FORMAT:

1. Open with prayer.
2. World news discussion and drill (5 - 8 minutes).
3. Difficult scripture drill (30 minutes).
4. Sermonettes and evaluations (30 minutes).
5. Recess (10 minutes).
6. Lecture (one hour).
7. Assignments for next class.

DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

1. Disprove: God gave Israel laws which were not good (Ezek. 20:25).

- A. This verse cannot be referring to God's law. The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good (Rom. 7:12). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . . the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart . . ." (Ps. 19:7).
- B. Then what are these statutes? They are man's laws and statutes. Speaking about the same situation, God says in Psalm 81:11-12: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would have none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels."

In other words, since the Israelites would not follow God's laws and statutes He gave them over to their own laws and statutes, which were not good -- which ended in death (Prov. 14:12). The actual translation of Ezekiel 20:25 is better rendered "gave them over to statutes that were not good."

God did not give Israel or any other nation laws that were bad. God's righteous law was Israel's wisdom and understanding in the sight of all nations (Deut. 4:5-8). He commanded Israel to keep His laws for their good always (Deut. 6:24).

2. Disprove: It was Paul's custom to observe Sunday (Acts. 20:7).

- A. First of all, this scripture does not say Paul observed Sunday as a day of worship. If this were an example for us today, we would be starting the services on Saturday night -- not on Sunday morning. Verse 7 shows Paul preached to them until midnight. Also services would have to continue till dawn (Verse 11).
 - B. Next, we need to realize that the breaking of bread was not a religious service, but merely the eating of a meal. Acts 27:33-38 proves this. Notice Paul's situation. He was a Roman prisoner in the midst of many Gentiles on board a ship (Acts 27:1-2). Obviously Paul was not holding a religious service. The men ate for their health (Verses 33-34).
 - C. Acts 20:3 does not describe a regular service. Notice the context. Paul was en route from Greece to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-3, 16). Since he did not know when he would see the brethren again, he wanted to teach them as much as possible. The people were more than willing to listen. So, after the Sabbath Paul remained behind teaching the brethren, while his ship sailed around the peninsula (Verse 13). He remained talking with them till midnight and continued after a short meal until daybreak (Verse 11). Then after Paul had stayed as long as he could, he left them to walk across the peninsula to meet the boat (Verses 13-14). He worked on that Sunday by taking this long walk of some 19 miles!
 - D. There is nothing in the above scripture to indicate it was Paul's custom to observe Sunday. In fact, all through the book of Acts we see it was Paul's custom to observe the Sabbath (Acts 17:2; 13:14-15; 42-44).
3. Disprove: All meats are fit to eat (Gen. 9:3).
- A. This scripture does not say God made all meats for human consumption. God explained what He meant by the phrase "Every moving thing that liveth." Genesis 9:2 shows that He was referring to the four classifications of animals: the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, all that move upon the earth, and the fish of the seas.
 - B. Genesis 9:3 shows that not every animal is clean and good for food. A qualification is added, "even as the green herb have I given you all things." Not all green herbs are good for food. You wouldn't think of eating poison ivy or poison oak. In addition, oleanders (an evergreen shrub) are poisonous -- even though they have fragrant flowers.
 - C. Just as all plants are not good for food, neither are all animals. Noah was well aware of that fact. Genesis 7:2, 8 proves that God had revealed which animals were clean and which were not. Here a definite distinction was made between clean and unclean meats.

Later God had Moses codify the law of clean and unclean meats which had been in effect since Creation. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 state which animals may be eaten and which may not.

- D. God knew that man could find out for himself which herbs were good for food and which ones were not. But, He had to reveal to man which animals were fit to eat and which were not. The Bible is God's instruction book for man, providing him with the knowledge he could not discover for himself.

THE ROLE OF AN ASSISTANT

I. THE CRITICAL NEED FOR MORE MANPOWER

The Philadelphia Era of God's Church has been given the most important job ever entrusted to any group of people in the entire history of the human race. The very future of all mankind depends upon our success in finishing this Work (Mal. 4:5-6).

Ever since the days of Jesus Christ and the apostles, God's Work has been hindered by a critical shortage of qualified manpower. Jesus Christ Himself highlighted this urgent need when He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. PRAY YE therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). This need has never been greater than it now is. God's Church has entered the home-stretch of its commission. We are now standing on the very threshold of a gigantic harvest of human lives in the next few years, yet there just aren't enough laborers working in this harvest. Too few are in the field.

While God's Work desperately needs more ministers, all of these laborers do not have to be ordained in order to render an effective service. The office of the ministerial assistant is not merely a human concoction, but a divinely-ordained function within the Church. Notice the various responsibilities God has set in the Church: ". . . first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, HELPS, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28). The term "helps" could just as accurately be translated "helpers" or "ASSISTANTS."

Right now, God's Work needs literally dozens of dedicated ministerial assistants, working either part time or full time. Within the next few years, this critical need will swell to HUNDREDS. One of the purposes of the Visiting Program Training Class is to help fill this need. You can personally become a part of the answer to the request for more laborers Christ commanded His Church to pray for. But first you must learn how to be an assistant.

II. THREE BASIC KEYS TO SUCCESS

A. Develop a Spirit of Service

1. What is the accurate measure of true greatness? The carnal mind doesn't know. Usually, we associate greatness with wealth, power or prestige. However, these are not the measure of greatness. Jesus Christ rebuked His disciples for their petty power struggle and then went on to show them the way to true greatness. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant); and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (slave)" (Matt. 20:26-27).
2. All too often, this is NOT the approach among the leading men in God's Church. Many times, there are power struggles and jealousies among the deacons or Spokesman Club members. Too many are seeking an office and don't have a real spirit of service. When someone is appointed to a position by the minister, others are jealous or upset because they weren't chosen. There is too much of this in God's Church, and it must be STAMPED OUT. Anyone who covets an office for carnal motives has automatically disqualified himself as long as he has this approach.
3. At this point, you may be thinking that this doesn't apply to YOU. You may be saying to yourself, "I want to serve. I want to help in God's Work." Well, you need to realize that it is easy to kid yourself you "want to serve." But WHY do you want to serve? - What's your motive - - the hidden motive - - the REAL motive? Have you ever taken the time to probe deeply into your innermost motivations? Well, now is a good time to start.
4. Before we go any farther in this lesson, you -- each of you -- need to stop and honestly face the fact that your motives for service have not all been pure and honorable. You need to admit to yourself that there has been an awful lot of SELF involved. You've thought about how much you would be able to GET out of the opportunity to serve as well as how much you might be able to give. This selfishness is inherent within all of us. Even the Apostle Paul had a shortage of selfless servants. Timothy was the only one who was more interested in others than in himself. Notice Paul's statement: "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:20-21). Honestly admit the fact that you have been selfish even in your approach to service. REPENT of it and fervently pray for God to give you the attitude of SELFLESS SERVICE - - serving without any thought of what you might get out of it.

5. Selfless service also involves SACRIFICE. Too many think of the Ministry in terms of position and prestige -- not in terms of hard work and personal sacrifice. But teal service does involve sacrifice. There have been men who have been thrilled with the opportunity to be on the Visiting Program but have resented the sacrifices this opportunity demanded. Jesus Christ set us the perfect example of selfless sacrifice. Here is the way he described it: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to GIVE HIS LIFE a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27). Service is laying down our lives -- our time, our talents, our energies -- to help others (I John 3:16; Phil. 2:3-8). An excellent example of this was one of Paul's fellow laborers, Epaphroditus: "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death . . . because for the WORK OF CHRIST he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me (Phil. 2:27, 30). Are you willing to sacrifice personal pleasures and even, on occasion, personal needs to labor in the Work of God? Are you willing to miss sleep, miss certain time with your family and give up various things you are now doing? A servant of God does not lead a normal life. He is called upon to sacrifice a number of things many would claim to rightfully be theirs to hold onto. What really is your attitude? Do you really have a spirit of service? Just how much are you willing to sacrifice? This will determine how effective a servant you will be in God's Work.
6. A servant of God needs to have a love and concern for the people he is serving. He serves not because it is his job but because it is his life. But herein lies another problem which all of us have. We are victims of the age in which we live. We have become hardened by the events of our times. Paul describes our time as being "without natural affection" (II Tim. 3:3). People today have been rendered practically insensible to the needs and sufferings of others by the shock waves of events which plague our world and which are continually bombarding us. This is an age of non-involvement -- of people who have pulled into their protective shells and can't be bothered or couldn't care less. But a servant of God must be sensitive to the needs of others. He must be concerned and sympathetic -- able to be moved with compassion. Pray for God to give you this attitude of mind. And as you visit and work with people and see firsthand the tragic shape this world is in, ask God to increase your capacity to feel deeply for others.
7. A ministerial assistant needs to realize that his ability to serve is very limited at first when it comes to helping people in some spiritual way. He should not, therefore, expect to suddenly be called upon to lead in visits, answer difficult Bible questions or advise someone who has a serious problem. His primary function will be to accompany

the minister on visits. This is a tremendous help to the minister because it greatly increases his visiting potential, since he is not permitted to visit women by himself. (Note: Mr. Herbert Armstrong has absolutely forbidden any minister to visit women unless accompanied by his wife or another man. This is to insure that our ministers will be above reproach in their conduct before the world, as well as to avoid any possible temptation from developing.) The assistant also provides much needed companionship during the many long hours spent each week in travel. He should, therefore, strive to be a good conversationalist -- one who is enjoyable to be around. He should not, however, monopolize the conversation or always be talking. He should know how to ask intelligent questions as well as being a good listener.

8. There will probably be other ways he can assist the minister and thereby increase his overall effectiveness. He may be asked to drive while the minister studies. If you are given this opportunity, be alert at all times and drive within the rules of safety. The assistant may be asked to fill out the visiting slips. Make sure they are filled out accurately and legibly. Another opportunity for service may involve certain kinds of office work. Don't worry -- he isn't going to ask you to become a "chief flunky." However, be willing to help in any way possible. Don't resent assisting in some physical duty. Remember, God's way is that the physical precedes the spiritual (I Cor. 15:46). If you are a willing servant in the small things you are given to do, God will see that you are given greater opportunities of service (Luke 16:10). If the minister should ask you to run an errand for him, don't consider it to be a menial task which is "beneath your dignity." Orient everything you are asked to do toward the WORK OF GOD. Look on them as opportunities of building the WORK in your area. If you can do some physical duty which frees the minister to serve someone spiritually, rejoice in it. This is the very reason deacons were appointed originally: "It is not reason that we (the apostles) should leave the Word of God, and serve tables . . . But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:2, 4). Make it your goal to assist the minister and make his work more effective. Continually have a spirit of service.

B. Be Loyal to the Minister

1. Respect the minister over you. Resist all temptations to disrespect him. This will not be easy. It is natural (which means carnal) to disrespect anyone who is over you in authority. For some weird reason, the carnal mind tries to build itself up by tearing others down.

2. Since many of you are physically older than the minister in charge of the area, you will have to resist the urge to disrespect him because of his youth. Even Timothy had to cope with the problem of others disrespecting him because of his age (I Tim. 4:12). However, here is something that will help you overcome this temptation. True maturity is not merely determined by the number of years a person has lived. There are some people who are thirty, forty or fifty years of age and have never really "grown up." In fact, unless a person is converted and has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, he is not mature -- no matter how many years he has lived! The Greek word usually translated "perfect" in the Bible could just as accurately be rendered "mature" or "complete." Therefore, **ONLY GOD IS PERFECTLY MATURE.** God is the Ancient of Days. His Spirit is ageless. So all of us are mature to the degree God's Spirit dwells in us. We are all in the process of growing up "unto a perfect (mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

3. No man is ordained to the Ministry unless he is a **SPIRITUAL ELDER**, which means he is spiritually older than others in the congregation he is serving, even though they might be older in physical years. It is even possible that some in the congregation have been in God's Church longer than the minister. Wouldn't that make them spiritually older than he? No, not at all. Once again, age -- either physical or spiritual -- isn't solely determined by the number of years. How could someone who has been converted for a shorter period of time still be spiritually older? Most of the ministers of preaching elder and above have been trained directly at God's College. They have received intensive, personal training throughout their College careers from Mr. Herbert Armstrong himself and other of God's top ministers. Not only have they received the finest possible training and instruction on earth today, but they have also been subjected to a great deal of pressure. Ambassador College has been humorously called "God's spiritual pressure cooker." Just as a literal pressure cooker greatly accelerates the cooking process, so does the training at Ambassador College accelerate the spiritual growth rate of its students. It is possible for a man to grow more in one year at Ambassador College than he would grow over a number of years in a local Church area. The intensive and concentrated training program at the "West Point" of God's Church really pays off. So respect the minister over you. Look up to him as your spiritual elder and appreciate what God has done in his life.

4. However, despite the fact that he is an ordained minister and your spiritual elder, you will soon learn as you work closely with him

that he is not yet perfect. The more and more you are together, the more of his weaknesses and flaws you will discover. Since you will be spending many hours together, you will see more of the minister's imperfections than any other member of the congregation - - with the exception of his wife. Are you going to focus your attention on these and begin to disrespect him?

5. It often comes as quite a shock to people to find out that the minister isn't really perfect after all. For some reason, people tend to view the minister as having already attained perfection - - no longer subject to the weaknesses of human flesh. Such is not the case. Every minister of God has to battle his human nature just as much as anyone else. He has his weaknesses he is working on. Now, in order to be qualified to become a minister, he cannot have any huge, obvious, glaring character flaws which everyone in the congregation could easily detect and which would set a wrong example and be a stumbling block to others. However, he is a long way from perfection. But so was the Apostle Paul. Notice what he said about himself: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14). Paul was still battling his carnal nature. He hadn't perfectly overcome.
6. Nowhere in the Bible does it say a man has to be perfect before he can be used by God. In fact, a minister is able to sympathize with the weaknesses and imperfections of others because he is having to battle the same problems himself (Heb. 5:2). Instead of focusing your attention on his weaknesses and disrespecting him for them, concentrate on his many strong points (which every minister of God does have) and respect him for them and learn to follow his good example as he follows Christ (I Cor. 11:1). Love and respect him for his WORK'S SAKE -- what Almighty God is doing through him in spite of his weaknesses. Pray for him that he might become a more effective instrument in the Work of God.
7. Never discuss any of his weaknesses or problems with anyone -- not even your wife. This is not your responsibility. Never listen to criticism about him from disgruntled members of the congregation. You will soon learn that not everyone in the congregation has the right attitude toward God's minister. There will always be a few who will resent the minister or dislike him for some reason or other. They will always be armed with their list of gripes and complaints. Sooner or later, this type of individual will try to bend your ear

and get you to side with them against the minister -- to persuade you that the minister is wrong or unfair in one way or another. Never give this type of person an audience for airing his bitterness. Always uphold the minister. Let all know by your attitude and actions that you are 100 percent behind him. If someone comes to you with an accusation against the minister, let him immediately know that you will not discuss it with him but that he should talk to the minister about it. Then make sure you tell the minister about the incident. You will learn that a man cannot be a true minister of God and please everyone. Jesus Christ warned, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the FALSE PROPHETS" (Luke 6:26). People naturally resent authority. They don't like to be corrected. Often, they will become offended and become bitter toward the minister. This is their fault -- not the minister's.

8. Be dependable in everything you are given to do. This is another way loyalty is expressed. Listen carefully to instructions and then faithfully follow them. Don't insist on doing things your way. If you have what you feel is a good suggestion, offer it, but never go ahead and do it your way if it is different from the way you were told to do it. You will soon learn that generally speaking the minister's way is better than your way, because it is based on Ambassador College training and years of experience in the Ministry. Jesus Christ set the perfect example of dependability and loyalty. Notice Christ's approach: "verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise . . . I can of mine own self do nothing . . . because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:19, 30). Jesus Christ didn't try to be original. He didn't insist on doing things His own way. He perfectly followed His Father's example. What a lesson for us to learn. When given anything to do, make sure to do it and do it exactly the way you know the minister wants it done. This is an absolutely essential quality in any ministerial assistant.

C. Listen and Learn in preparation for Greater Service

1. While there are some who may be called to serve permanently as ministerial assistants, there are others who will ultimately qualify to serve more fully as ordained elders in God's Church. The time spent serving as a ministerial assistant can be a valuable training period -- a time of spiritual apprenticeship - - for greater opportunities of service.
2. A full-time ministerial assistant has the opportunity of working closely with one of God's ministers -- spending hundreds of hours observing

him in all kinds of circumstances. Be a walking sponge. Soak up all the wisdom, maturity and experience you can from the minister over you. Be eager to learn. Be observant. Closely observe how the minister conducts the visit, answers questions and handles problems. Learn by asking questions. If you don't understand something, ask about it.

3. Become an expert in understanding human nature -- how it works, its various disguises and deceptions. Develop insight and perception. Ask God to help you discern attitudes. Look beneath the facade to the heart of the problem.
4. Learn how to give clear, concise, accurate answers to Bible questions. Too many of you give fuzzy, generalized answers instead of crystal-clear specific answers. Make your Bible an effective tool. Develop a system of marking and cross-referencing. Make sure your "sword" is sharp and readily accessible. Really become a student of God's Word (Col. 3:16; II Tim. 2:15).
5. Be completely open with the minister. Don't be afraid to let him know your weaknesses. Ask for correction. Remember, the minister is 100 percent for you. If you have a problem you're battling, ask him for help. You have nothing to lose by being open and honest. If you try to hide or cover up some problem, you can rest assured it will ultimately come out sooner or later. The later it comes out, the harder it will be on you. To the degree, the minister really knows you, he will be able to help you grow so you can produce more for God's Work.
6. Resist the temptations of vanity. Don't begin to think of yourself "more highly than you ought to think" (Rom. 12:3). Don't start competing with the minister or become jealous of him. Don't try to keep up with him by purchasing certain physical "status symbols." When given an opportunity to explain a scripture or give a sermonette, be basic and to the point. Don't try to make a "big splash." It may end up revealing that you are "all wet." Don't be pushy or hint around for opportunities. Just be ready for them when they come.
7. Finally, strive for humility. "Before honor is humility" (Prov. 15:33). "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. HUMBLE YOURSELVES therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (I Pet. 5:5-6). Don't set your heart on some office. Be willing to do whatever God sets before you. God sets every member in the body as it pleases Him (I Cor. 12:18). Be pleased and thankful for whatever opportunities God opens for you. Be WORK-CONSCIOUS -- not office-

conscious. And whether or not you ever become an ordained minister in this phase of the Work of God, if you grow in the real SPIRIT OF SERVICE, you will be qualifying for an infinitely higher position in a much bigger phase of the ever-expanding and eternal WORK OF GOD.

III. WE ARE ALL ASSISTANTS

Many of you older men will not be used as ministerial assistants, and God is not calling most of you to be elders in His Church. But we all need to learn to develop the attitude and approach of an assistant -- of a totally trustworthy and yielded servant.

Satan lost his position, because he didn't want to be an assistant; he wanted to be the boss! He didn't want to serve or assist mankind, so he rebelled. This same nature is in each of us -- we chafe at being under authority. We want to be the one giving the orders, responsible to no one.

In God's government, none of us will ever be the "boss." We will be assistants forever -- true for all eternity! The higher one goes in God's Work, or any work, the more he assists. Jesus Christ is an assistant -- the very best assistant of all!

So, regardless of where God decides to use you as a part of His Body to finish His Work, set yourselves to become the most loyal, yielded, dedicated, responsible assistants possible. By so doing, you will enhance the success of this Work and make your calling and election sure as an assistant to Jesus Christ in His Kingdom for all eternity!

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS

1. "The Plain Truth About Child Rearing," by Mr. Ted Armstrong, booklet.
2. "Train Your Children for Sabbath Services," by Mr. Ron Kelly, August 1965 GOOD NEWS.
3. "The Mother's Place in Child Rearing," by Mr. David Antion, June 1967 GOOD NEWS.