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CONCERNING PROFITABLE MEETINGS.

WE have received a number of requests from friends of the truth for advice as to the most profitable methods of conducting meetings. One Brother writes:

"A few brethren who have been reading DAWN express their willingness to meet somewhere to study in consecutive order, and I ask suggestions for a plan suited to beginners. Pray for us, that we may commence this study in the right way, and be the recipients of many blessings.

"Yours in the faith,

J. W. McLANE."

Another Brother recently removed to a new neighborhood says:

"I find in this locality a fine field for labor. Several here to whom I have given tracts already manifest interest. I have conversed freely with them on Bible subjects, and have their promise to attend meetings at my house. So if you can aid me by suggestions I will be thankful.

"I am, dear brother, yours in the service of the Master,

"JOSHUA L. GREEN."

Another Brother writes: –

"We have a number of persons here who wish to assemble themselves together for worship. We would be pleased to have some instructions from you as to how to go about it.

"I hope you can give us some way which will be satisfactory. Some of us have left the churches and are now free from all precepts of men. To speak for myself, I left the Presbyterian church.

"Yours in Christ,

C. C. FLEMING."

We are glad to note the increasing desire for the study of God's plan of the ages; and also to see that the importance of method and order are recognized in this. We give our advice as follows: –

(1) You would best first re-read some things already written which bear upon this subject – in our issues of May 1, '93, page 131; Sept. '93, page 259; Oct. 15, '93, page 307; Mar. 1, '94, page 73; April 1, '95, page 78; May 1, '95, page 109.

(2) Beware of "organization." It is wholly unnecessary. The Bible rules will be the only rules you will need. Do not seek to bind others' consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey so far as you can understand God's Word to-day, and so continue growing in grace and knowledge and love day by day.

(3) The Bible instructs you whom to fellowship as "brethren;" – only believers who are seeking to walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Not believers of any and every thing, but believers of the Gospel record – that mankind is *fallen* into sin and its penalty, death, and that only in Christ is there salvation, "through faith in his blood" "shed for the remission of sins", as "a *ransom* [a corresponding price] for all." Any who merely believe in Christ as a noble and good person, a grand example of righteous living, etc., may be agreeable as neighbors or business acquaintances, but they are not "believers," and hence are not "brethren," any more than are Jews, Mohammedans, Infidels, publicans and sinners – for practically these also so acknowledge him.

(4) You come together, then, as God's children, bought back from sin and death with the great price, and resolved henceforth to live not unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you. (2 Cor. 5:15.) Your meetings should have certain objects in view, viz: –

(a) Worship, praise and prayer.

(b) Mutual helpfulness in waging victorious warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil within and without.

(c) And to these ends you meet also for the study of God's Word, which he provided for our instruction and help in the narrow way which leads to those blessings prepared by him for those who love him and who demonstrate their love by their efforts to serve, honor and obey him.

(5) Thus seen, a *knowledge* of doctrines is not our ultimate object in meeting, but the building up of characters, which, as attempted copies of the character of God's dear Son, will be "accepted in the Beloved." But God declares that *knowledge* of the doctrines which he has revealed in his Word will be of great value to us in our endeavors to grow in his grace.

Hence, after worship, praise and prayer, Bible study should be recognized in its two parts, – (a) The study of God's plan, – what he tells us he is doing for us and for the world; what he has done; and what he will yet do; that we may be enabled as sons to enter into the very spirit of the great work of God and be intelligent co-workers with him. (b) The study of our duties and privileges in God's service, toward each other and toward those that are without, to the end that we may build up such characters [R1867 : page 216] as would be pleasing and acceptable to God now and in the age to come.

And since for general convenience these meetings should not last much longer than from one and a half to two hours, it will generally be found best to have at least two meetings per week, one for the

consideration of Christian graces and testimony and mutual helpfulness; and the other for Bible study. And at every meeting our songs and prayers of thankful worship should ascend as incense [R1867 : page 217] before God; and in this worship all should share.

Amongst us, as in the early Church, the preaching of formal discourses is the exception, rather than the rule. The exception should be where some brother has the necessary qualifications – clear appreciation of the truth and ability to set it forth so as to be helpful to the Lord's flock, with qualifications also of voice, education, etc., and withal, surely one who is meek and not likely to become puffed up, or to preach himself, rather than the cross of Christ.

But, whether there be preaching or no preaching, the other meetings, in which all can and should take part (both brethren and sisters), should be kept up; and each of the saints (consecrated "believers") should seek in them to do good, as well as to get good. – See Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:11-32; 1 Thes. 5:11.

(6) What shall be our Standard by which we may know the truth and prove it? We answer, The Word of God "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect [-ed in knowledge and conduct], thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

But how shall we understand the Bible? For centuries good men as well as bad men have searched its pages. The former have found therein blessings, it is true, but so far as doctrines are concerned only confusion; satisfactory plan, order, justice and wisdom none have ever found there in all that time. The due time for the mystery of God's plan to be finished had not yet come; and it was "sealed up," "hidden," until that due time. But now, we who are living in the time of "the cleansing of the Sanctuary,"* and particularly since the time of blessedness at the end of the 1335 days+ – in the present harvest, and in the beginning of the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet – we have a very different

experience from the saints of past times. To us it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, which many prophets and many righteous persons of the past were not privileged to see. Thank God for the light of present truth! Now we can see *a plan* of God – a plan which covers every detail of history past, and of revelation future; a plan that is complete, – lacking and disjointed at no part; a plan that is in strictest conformity with divine Justice, Wisdom, Power and Love, and with every text of the divine Word; and which thus proves itself to be not only a reasonable plan, but *the* plan of God, in comparison with which all other theories and plans are defective and evidently erroneous, out of harmony with the divine attributes and with the divine Word.

**See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., Chap. iv*

*See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., Chap. iii.**

Those who have come to an understanding of the plan of the ages, recognize it as of divine and not of human origination. It is the key to the mysteries of God which God himself has provided, and for which we all unite in rendering to him all praise. Its light is that of the millennial dawn, bringing with it peace and joy to thousands. We give all praise and honor to the Divine Author from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and who thus, according to his promise (Luke 12:37), continues to feed his Church with spiritual "meat in due season." God, still our Teacher, uses as heretofore instrumentalities, and has provided for his people's instruction and use the orderly presentations of MILLENNIAL DAWN to point out to them his plan of the ages and the duties and privileges of this "harvest" time; because the "due time" has come for "the mystery" to be finished. (Rev. 10:7.) And those who have received instruction in the Word, in private, through the use of MILLENNIAL DAWN as a teacher sent of God (Eph. 4:11-14) have no more reason to ignore it as God's mouthpiece in united study than in their own private study; – no more, either, than they would a living teacher.

And should any be disposed to worship the humble human instrumentality chosen of God as the channel for this blessing of present truth, we say to such, – "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant [not thy Lord], and [fellow servant] of thy brethren the prophets [all true teachers or mouthpieces of God]:...Worship God." (Rev. 22:9.) The water of life and the Giver of it, and not the earthen vessel through which it is sent, are to be revered. The earthen vessels have naught whereof to glory. What have we of ourselves that we did not first receive of the Lord? – 1 Cor. 4:6,7.

The God-given plan of the ages is what we should all use in the study of the Bible, if we would get the treasures of wisdom, and grace, and strength for service in these perilous harvest times, for which it is divinely provided. Each one who recognizes this as a God-given light should use it in the study of the Word. Each should make it his own light as God intended. Each should become so proficient in its use as to be able to answer every question that could be asked respecting the general *plan* of God. But alas! some seem to feel that this is Brother Russell's plan, and that they should originate their own. But this is a great mistake. It is not our plan, but God's. If not God's plan, it is of no value. We do not want any human plans. Surely men cannot make plans for God that he will recognize; for his own plans have been since "before the foundation of the world." God has but one plan, and it is unalterable; and now that he has revealed it, we confess that it is wonderful, yet as simple as it is beautiful. It is a plan, however, that men could not conceive or arrange. Its thoughts are higher than man's thoughts; and hence in all the centuries past men have never even approximated this divine plan of the ages.

So then the Bible, the standard, should be studied in the light of this God-given teaching, until each one is proficient – an able teacher of it. Then each should let his light shine – humbly serving it to others.

Some, alas! when their eyes are opened to see God's loving plan of the ages, while surprised, and thankful to God for the present truth,

neglect to do more than hastily taste of it; and then they hasten on, as they say, to "hunt for *more*." What they should do would better be to use well what God has already given us as his people. There is a famine in the land; not for bread, nor for water, but for the Word of the Lord. (Amos 8:11.) Our Lord and Master has come to his waiting people, and spread for them a bounteous table of truths, new and old, in order. (Matt. 13:52.) We certainly have no right to ask for *more* or *other* blessings, until we have feasted to the full on what has been set before us. Then we should exercise ourselves, using the strength received in serving the feast to others. Neglecting this, it would certainly be with bad grace that any would attempt to break open any parts of the storehouse not yet unlocked. Remember the illustration of the time-lock++ which opens easily, without burglarizing, at the appointed time.

[++MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., p. 23.](#)

"Thy words were *found* [not made, nor gained by human skill or labor], and *I did eat them*." (Jer. 15:16; [R1867 : page 218] Rev. 10:10.) Our Lord has always provided for his Church the food necessary to her welfare; and he always "giveth liberally." The proper attitude for the Church is to be active in eating the food already received and in using the strength derived from it. She is not to leave the table bountifully spread to pray for *more*. When more would be beneficial more will be sent by the hand of some "servant" of God and the Church. Nor will the true "servant" find it necessary to make the food; for it will be given him by the great Householder. It will be "found" by him, and when he presents it to the Lord's family, they will be able to discern upon it the stamp of divine truth. And after partaking of it liberally they will dispense it to others.

Sufficient *labor* for all comes after we have "found" the truth, – *labor* in eating it, studying and appropriating it, and labor in serving it to others. The labor and bitterness of experience come not with the *getting* and first tasting of the truth, but with the conflict of the truth

with our own and other people's prejudices. Then comes the pleasurable but often painful labor of serving it to others that they may *find* it easily and eat it. The eating of the truth (the proving of it, and then the appropriating of it to strength) is no small task. When a new food comes to us, our eyes first criticize it. If it looks good, we handle it and smell of it; and finally, still approved, we judge further by biting it with our teeth; and then our palate judges by the taste, while our teeth prepare it for nutrition. So every child of God has considerable labor in the way of proving and eating his spiritual food, after the Lord has provided it and he has "*found*" it. The proving is a necessity because Satan through his agents is permitted to offer us poisonous food. God would have us exercise our spiritual senses and judge or prove all we eat by the standard, and thus to learn to distinguish good from evil. This searching and proving and appropriating, opposed by the world, the flesh and the devil, require considerable energy and overcoming quality, and leave little enough of time and energy to help others.

Let us remember, however, that we cannot break open any secrets which God may wish to conceal as not yet appropriate "meat in due season"; nor should we wish to [R1868 : page 218] do so. The small boy who bangs away at the unripe apple until it falls get food which makes him very sick: the ripe apple is very easily plucked. The unripe chestnut burr is difficult to pluck and very troublesome to open, and when open its fruit is unwholesome; but the ripe burr will fall and open of itself and its meat is sweet. Our diligence should be rather to watch the ripening processes of divine providence, and to hold our minds and hearts in humble readiness for all the rich fruitage of the advancing seasons, assured that our Master knoweth what things we have need of and will supply them to us in due time – directly or indirectly, it matters not so long as it is truth, from him and for us.

In the study of the Word of God in the light of the DAWN, let each one make use of concordances and marginal references and various translations of the Scriptures as he may have opportunity; remembering

that nothing is to be accepted as truth which does not harmonize with the letter and spirit of God's Word. It is the Word of God that is to be eaten; the DAWNS and TOWERS are divinely provided helps for the cutting of the food into eatable portions, – enabling us to "rightly divide the Word of truth," and thus facilitating the eating of it.

Such meetings for the study of the Word in the light of the now revealed plan of the ages have been termed "Dawn Circles." The plan originated with Brother Rahn, of Baltimore, several years ago, and he and the other members of the class report much profit therefrom. The same plan has been pursued in perhaps a score of other cities, and always with success when rightly conducted. In illustration see letters from Brother Townsend in our issue of Dec. 15, '94 and Bro. Jeffery in issue of Jan. 1, '95. Since the "Circles" are no longer an experiment, but have practically demonstrated their value, it seems advisable to announce the matter so that all the students of the truth can have the benefit of the experience of others. We advise the holding of these Circles everywhere, and suggest that you invite to them only such as are believers in the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, and of genuine Christian character. But any one should be welcomed who is desirous of learning the way of God more perfectly. As the Apostle says, "Him that is weak in the faith [not fully committed to Christ] receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" – you do not meet to discuss the unbeliever's doubts, but to confirm the believer's faith. – Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 14:24,25.

It is advisable that the leader be a good reader, and that he begin at the beginning of Volume I. He should pause at the end of each sentence, if necessary, to give full opportunity for questions or remarks; and at the close of each paragraph a general discussion of its contents should be encouraged, together with an examination of texts cited therein, and any other texts *that appertain to the subject*. His object should be to draw out expressions from all, and to see that each person present understands the subject thoroughly. An entire session might profitably be spent sometimes upon one or two pages, or

sometimes on one or two paragraphs. Each one of the Circle should have in hand some translation of the Bible or a "Dawn."

At the close of each chapter each one of the Circle should endeavor to give his own brief review of its subject, to see how clearly he has grasped it, and to impress it upon himself the more deeply. Having in view that all are preparing themselves to impart the truth to others, each should be encouraged to attempt a statement of the subject discussed, in his own words, but preferably in the *order* set forth in "DAWN."

In considering this method of Bible study note how much of interest and profitable conference could be drawn from the first chapter of Vol. I. The first paragraph calls our attention to and applies Psalm 30:5: – "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." How many suggestions this will call up to each child of God present! (1) The long, dark night of the reign of Sin and Death each could contrast with the longer glorious day, just dawning, in which Righteousness and Life shall reign through Christ's great work. (2) The *cause* of the Night, the withdrawal of divine favor because of disobedience, could be contrasted with the cause of the Morning – "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (3) The cause of the weeping and pain, in the Night, – the curse or righteous sentence – "dying thou shalt die," could be contrasted with the cause of joy and rejoicing in the Morning, – "Thy dead men shall live," when "times of refreshing shall come – times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken." (Acts 3:19-21.) Each should be encouraged to tell what he knows experimentally about the dark night of sin's control, and also his appreciation of the rays of light from the Sun of Righteousness now shining, and of the glorious prospects which are thus revealed to his eye of faith.

The second paragraph is built upon Isaiah 55:8,9; and it has much food for thought and profitable converse. [R1868 : page 219] These

two paragraphs might well fill the time of one session; and if the Circle be a large one it might require two sessions to fully digest them.

The third, fourth and fifth paragraphs consider what should be our *object* as truth-seekers, what we should seek, and what God promises we shall find – John 16:13 and other references coming to mind. Then the sixth paragraph considers the proper methods for Bible study, and refers to Eph. 4:11-16; besides which many other references will occur to the Circle. Paragraphs eight and nine contrast proper and improper methods of study, and call up an entirely new set of interesting scriptures. These paragraphs – third to ninth – would give a grand and helpful Bible and plan study for a second session of the Circle.

The next seven paragraphs, 10 to 16 inclusive, treat of the present religious condition of the world, and would make a wonderful third lesson if rightly used. A TOWER article on the same subject (Feb. '90, page 3) might also be introduced here with profit. How many interesting questions and suggestions come to all minds, some correct and some incorrect, and how helpful each could be to the other in building one another up in the most holy faith; and on leaving for home, how many would appreciate more fully than ever the general darkness of the world and the value of the *light* and of open eyes to see it. And thus we might progress, every lesson being full of instruction and of correct applications of Scripture. The Circles will be all the more interesting if there be present some "believers" not long in "this way." It would be well to tell your Christian friends, who show even a little interest in the truth about the Circle, and invite them to attend from the first. But should new inquirers come in after the Circle has advanced some distance, it will not be necessary to go back for their benefit, for they can at home read up to the present with such additional brief explanations as the leader may deem advisable.

But some one will say, At that rate we would be fully a year in going through the first volume of MILLENNIAL DAWN, and the three

volumes would require three years! All the better, we answer: if we are furnished with spiritual refreshment for years, it is far better than if only for a day: it is not a case of business rush to "get through with it" that is our aim, but spiritual refreshment in the study of God's Word, that we may see clearly for ourselves and be able to give to him that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us. At the close of the series you would have had under particular, critical examination hundreds of the most noteworthy texts of Scripture – words of the Lord's *inspired* mouthpieces, brought forward in their appropriate places to illuminate the various subjects which constitute the burden of divine revelation – the divine plan, spanning ages. Surely, if the Bible required nearly two thousand years for its preparation, we should give it reverent study, and not merely a casual glance and thought. Besides, when you would have gone through the subject thus thoroughly, you would doubtless be so proficient that you could answer promptly any question respecting it and be prepared to quote the Scriptures fully in support of your statements. Not only do all need such thorough study to prepare them "for the work of the ministry," but each needs such study for his own protection from the perils which will increase more and more during this "evil day."

The method suggested is not merely a reading of the DAWNS; for that each could do as well at his home and alone. Our proposition is for a general study of God's great plan of salvation – a comprehensive study of theology – the use of the DAWNS merely steering the minds of all into the same Scriptural channels and assisting in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. There are no scriptures which cannot be brought into these studies; for all scriptures are directly or indirectly related to God's plan. The design includes a study of the whole Bible in the fullest sense, and the cooperation of all in bringing forward every text and thought which could throw light upon the subjects considered.

Knowing the "downwardness" with which all our race is afflicted, we should, whenever we come together, guard ourselves and each other by resolving that no communications shall proceed out of our mouths

except such as would serve to edify one another, and to build one another up in the most holy faith. This would bar out "gossip" and **[R1869 : page 219]** idle talking, and insure our thinking and talking of "whatsoever things are just and true and pure and of good report." If each comes to the meeting praying for the Lord's blessing upon himself and on the others of the Lord's body, near and far, it will be found helpful. And may grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, be with us all who thus seek, more and more, the way, the truth and the life.
