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# Christian Education



*T*he fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding' ” (*Proverbs 9:10, NKJV*).

Think about the above text. It entails two closely related concepts: “fear,” as in awe, as in marveling at the glory and power of God; and “knowledge,” as in learning truth about the character of God. Hence, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are rooted in God Himself. This makes perfect sense. After all, God is the source of all existence, the One alone who created and sustains all existence (*John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16, 17*). Whatever we learn, whatever we know about—quarks, caterpillars, supernovas, angels, demons, “principalities and powers in heavenly places” (*Eph. 3:10*), everything—they exist only because of God. Hence, all true knowledge and wisdom and understanding ultimately have their source in the Lord Himself.

Scripture is clear: “God is love” (*1 John 4:8*), which explains this quote from Ellen G. White: “Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. The first and great commandment is, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.’ Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored.”—*Education*, p. 16.

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Because the Lord is the Source of all true knowledge, all true education, all Christian education should direct our minds toward Him and toward His own revelation about Himself. Through nature, through the Written Word, through the revelation of Christ in that Written Word, we have been given all that we need, and then some, to come to a saving relationship with our Lord and, indeed, to love Him with all our heart and soul. Even nature, so defiled by thousands of years of sin, still speaks, even powerfully, of the goodness and character of God when studied from the perspective given us in Scripture. But the Written Word, the Scriptures, is the perfect standard of truth, the greatest revelation we have of who God is and what He has done and is doing for humanity. Scripture, and its message of Creation and Redemption, must be central to all Christian education.

*Scripture, and its message of Creation and Redemption, must be central to all Christian education.*

The apostle John said Jesus Christ is the “Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (*John 1:9*). In other words, just as only through Jesus does every human being have life, through Jesus every human being receives some rays of divine light, some understanding of transcendent truth and goodness.

Yet, we’re all in a struggle, the great controversy, in which the enemy of souls works diligently to block us from receiving this knowledge. Thus, whatever else Christian education entails, it obviously must seek to help students better understand the light that God offers us from heaven.

Otherwise, what? As Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (*Mark 8:36*). What good is a great education in science, literature, economics, or engineering if, in the end, you face the second death in the lake of fire? The answer is obvious, isn’t it?

Thus, the topic for our lessons this quarter. What does it mean to have a “Christian education,” and how can we as a church, in one way or another, find a way for all our members to be able to get such an education?

*This Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide has been written by various presidents of Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America.*

# How to Use This Teachers Edition

**“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”**

**—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.**

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetical, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

**Final thought:** What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.

# Education *in the* Garden of Eden



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 2:7–23; Gen. 3:1–6; 2 Pet. 1:3–11; 2 Pet. 2:1–17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24.*

**Memory Text:** “Behold, God is exalted by His power; who teaches like Him?” (*Job 36:22, NKJV*).

Most Bible students know the story of Genesis 1–3 and its cast of characters: God, Adam, Eve, the angels, the serpent. The setting is a splendid garden in a paradise called “Eden.” The plotline seems to follow a logical series of events. God creates. God instructs Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve sin. Adam and Eve are banished from Eden. However, a closer look at the first few chapters of Genesis, especially through the lens of education, will uncover insights into the cast, the setting, and the story.

“The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the instructor, and the parents of the human family were the students.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 20.

The Lord was founder, principal, and teacher of this first school. But as we know, Adam and Eve ultimately chose another teacher and learned the wrong lessons. What happened, why, and what can we learn from this early account of education that can help us today?

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 3.

## The First School

Though we don't think of a garden as a classroom, it makes perfect sense, especially one like Eden, filled with the unspoiled riches of God's creation. It is hard to imagine, from our perspective today, how much these unfallen beings, in an unfallen world and being directly taught by their Creator, must have been learning in that "classroom."

**Read** Genesis 2:7–23. What do you notice about God's purposefulness in creating, placing, and employing Adam?

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God made the man and the woman in His image and gave them a home and meaningful work. When you consider teacher-student dynamics, this is an ideal relationship. God knew Adam's abilities because He had created Adam. He could teach Adam, knowing that Adam could realize his full potential.

God gave the man responsibility, but He also wanted happiness for him, as well. And perhaps part of the means of giving him happiness was giving him responsibilities. After all, who doesn't get satisfaction—happiness, even—from being given responsibilities and then faithfully fulfilling them? God knew the heart of Adam and what he would need to thrive; so, He gave Adam the task of taking care of the Garden. "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (*Gen. 2:15, NKJV*). It's hard for us to imagine, knowing only a world of sin and death as we do, what the work must have entailed and the lessons that, no doubt, Adam learned as he worked and kept their garden home.

In Genesis 2:19–23, God created animal companions for Adam, and He also created Eve as Adam's wife. God knew that Adam needed the companionship and help of a peer; so, He created woman.

God also knew that man needed to be in close relationship with Him; so, He created an intimate space in Eden within the confines of the Garden. All of this attests to God's purposefulness in Creation and His love for humanity. Again, from the great distance between us and Eden, it's hard to imagine what it must have been like—though it is fun to try to imagine, isn't it?

**Though we are far removed from Eden, we can still learn lessons from nature. What are some of those lessons, and how can we benefit from them as we interpret them through the lens of Scripture?**

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## Intrusion

One of the great joys for many teachers is assembling their classrooms: hanging bulletin boards, organizing supplies, and arranging the rooms in the most desirable way. When we look at God's vision for the classroom that was the Garden of Eden, we see the care He took in preparing a learning environment for Adam and Eve. He desired beauty to surround them. We can imagine that every flower, bird, animal, and tree offered an opportunity for Adam and Eve to learn more about their world and about their Creator.

Yet, there is an abrupt shift from Genesis 2 to Genesis 3. We have taken inventory of all the good that God created with divine intention. But in Genesis 3:1 we also awaken to God's provision for free will. The presence of the serpent as "more subtil than any beast of the field" is a departure from the language heretofore used. Such words as "very good" and "not ashamed" and "pleasant" are adjectives used to describe God's creation in the prior chapters. Now, however, with the serpent, there is a change of tone. The word "subtil" also is translated in some versions as "cunning." Suddenly a negative element is introduced in what, so far, has been only perfection.

In contrast, Genesis presents God as the opposite of "cunning." God is emphatically clear about His expectations of the pair in the Garden. We know from God's command in Genesis 2:16, 17 that He has established one key rule that they must obey, and that was not to eat from the forbidden tree.

Whatever else we can take from this story, one thing stands out: Adam and Eve were created as free moral beings, beings who were able to choose between obedience and disobedience. Hence, right from the start, even in an unfallen world, we can see the reality of human free will.

**In Genesis 3:1–6, examine the descriptions the serpent used and that Eve then repeated. What do you notice about the information that the serpent offers Eve? What do you notice about how Eve then regards the tree of knowledge of good and evil?**

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In Genesis 2:17, the Lord told Adam that if he ate from the tree he would "*surely die*" (*emphasis supplied*). When Eve, in Genesis 3:3, repeated the command, she did not express it as strongly, leaving out the word "surely." In Genesis 3:4, the serpent puts the word back in but in an utter contradiction of what God had said. It seems that though Eve was taught of God in the Garden, she didn't take what she learned as seriously as she should have, as we can see by the very language she used.

## Missing the Message

As we saw yesterday, Eve—even in her language—watered down what she had been taught despite God’s clear command.

Though she didn’t misinterpret what the Lord said to her, she obviously didn’t take it seriously enough. One can hardly exaggerate the consequences of her actions.

Thus, when Eve encountered the serpent, she repeated (but not exactly) to the serpent what God had said regarding the trees in the Garden (*Gen. 3:2, 3*). Of course, this message wasn’t news to the serpent. The serpent was familiar with the command and was therefore well-prepared to twist it, thus preying upon Eve’s innocence.

**Examine** Genesis 3:4–6. Besides directly denying exactly what God had said, what else did the serpent say that, obviously, succeeded with Eve? What principles did he take advantage of?

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When the serpent told her that part of the message was incorrect, Eve could have gone to confer with God. This is the beauty of Eden’s education: the access the students had to their Mighty Teacher was surely beyond anything we can now fathom on earth. However, instead of fleeing, instead of seeking divine aid, Eve accepts the serpent’s message. Her acceptance of the serpent’s revision to the message requires some doubt on Eve’s part about God and what He had told them.

Meanwhile, Adam wanders into a difficult situation himself. “Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been his joy. How could he have it thus?”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 56. Unfortunately, though knowing right from wrong, he also chose wrongly.

**Think of the deceptive irony here: the serpent said that if they ate of the tree, they would “be like God” (*Gen. 3:5, NKJV*). But didn’t Genesis 1:27 say that they were already like God? What can this teach us about how easily we can be deceived and why faith and obedience are our only protection, even when we have been given the best of educations, as had Adam and Eve?**

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## Regaining What Was Lost

When Adam and Eve chose to follow the serpent's message, they faced, among many other consequences, banishment from God's classroom. Think about what Adam and Eve lost because of their sin. When we understand their fall, we can better understand the purpose of education for us in the present age. In spite of their banishment, life in an imperfect world ushered in a new purpose for education.

If education before the Fall was God's way of acquainting Adam and Eve with Him, His character, His goodness, and His love, then after their banishment the work of education must be to help reacquire humanity with those things, as well as re-create the image of God in us. In spite of their physical removal from God's presence, God's children still can come to know Him, His goodness, and His love. Through prayer, service, and studying His Word, we can draw close to our God as did Adam and Eve in Eden.

The good news is that because of Jesus and the plan of redemption, all is not lost. We have hope of salvation and of restoration. And much of Christian education should be pointing students toward Jesus and what He has done for us and the restoration that He offers.

**Read 2 Peter 1:3–11. In light of all that was lost when human beings left the Garden, these verses come as encouragement that much can be regained. What does Peter write that we must do in order to seek restoration of God's image in our lives?**

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Through Jesus, we have been given “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (*NKJV*). What a promise! What might some of those things be? Well, Peter gives us a list: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, and so on. Notice, too, that knowledge is one of the things Peter mentions. This idea, of course, leads to the notion of education. True education will lead to true knowledge, the knowledge of Christ, and thus not only will we become more like Him, but we also may stand to share our knowledge of Him with others.

**Think for a moment about the fact that the forbidden tree was the tree of “the knowledge of good and evil” (*Gen. 2:17, emphasis supplied*). What should that tell us about why not all knowledge is good? How do we know the difference between good and bad knowledge?**

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## The Despisers of Authority

Some people are considered “natural students” in the classroom. They barely need to study to make excellent grades. They absorb material easily. Their knowledge seems to “stick.” Second Peter 1 and 2, however, make it evident that our education in Christ is an equal-opportunity experience for those who will dedicate themselves to Him.

The encouraging words of 2 Peter 1 contrast with the sobering warning in 2 Peter 2.

**Read 2 Peter 2:1–17.** What powerful and condemning words is Peter saying here? At the same time, amid this sharp warning and condemnation, what great hope is promised to us?

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Notice what Peter writes in verse 10 about those who despise authority. What a sharp rebuke for what is a reality in our day, as well. We as a church body must work on the assumption of certain levels of authority (*see Heb. 13:7, 17, 24*), and we are called to submit to and obey them, at least to the degree that they are being faithful to the Lord themselves.

However, amid this harsh condemnation, Peter offers a counterpoint. He says that although God is mighty to cast out those who chose deception, “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (*2 Pet. 2:9, NKJV*). Is it possible that part of our education in Christianity is not only avoiding temptation but also learning the many ways that God can and does deliver us from it, as well as help guard us against those, Peter warns, who will “secretly bring in destructive heresies” (*2 Pet. 2:1, NKJV*)? And, since the despising of authority is so condemned, shouldn’t our Christian education also consist of learning the right way to understand, submit, and obey “those who rule over you” (*Heb. 13:7, NKJV*)?

Though one could not say that Adam and Eve *despised* authority, in the end they chose to disobey that authority. And what made their transgression so bad was that they did it in response to a blatant contradiction of what that authority, God Himself, had told them, and who had done so for their own good, as well.

**Dwell more on this question of authority, not just in the church or in the family, but in life in general. Why is authority, both the proper exercise of authority and the proper submission to it, so important? Bring your answers to class on Sabbath.**

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**Further Thought:** “The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the visible universe—‘the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge’ (*Job 37:16*)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. The laws and operations of nature, which have engaged men’s study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. God’s glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, ‘the balancings of the clouds,’ the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were open to the study of our first parents. On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God’s name was written. The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 50, 51.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ If God originally intended for school/work to be an opportunity for humans to encounter Him and His creation, are we still in keeping with God’s intention in our work today? How can we become better acquainted with God through our work (paid, educational, voluntary, ministerial, etc.)?
- ❷ When we consider the craftiness of Satan in the Garden of Eden, it is easy to become frustrated with our own human weakness. Adam and Eve knew God was close, and yet they accepted the serpent’s half-truth. How can we, who are removed from such close physical proximity to God, still find power from Him to help us to overcome temptation?
- ❸ Discuss the question of authority and why it is so important to obey that authority. What happens when the lines of authority become blurred? How can authority be abused, and how do we respond when it is?

## Helping a Distressed Priest

By GABRIEL GOLEA

The Romanian priest came to me with a problem.

“Can you convince the commission members that I have a good job and a good level of education so I can start my doctoral studies?” he asked.

The priest had enrolled to study theology at the University of Strasbourg in France, but the doctoral commission had decided that he first needed to repeat a year of undergraduate studies. I was a second-year doctoral student, and he and I struck up a friendship when we realized that we both were from Romania.

“Do you believe in God?” I asked the priest, smiling.

He was shocked. “Of course, I do!” he said.

“Do you believe in the power of prayer?” I said.

“I believe that God can do miracles,” the priest said.

“I’m not talking about a ritual or some other religious ceremony,” I said. “God can answer our prayers if we pray directly to Him.”

Several days later, I invited the priest to pray with me. “Before I ask the professors, we should make this a matter of prayer,” I said. The priest agreed.

I decided not to try to convince the professors to change the rules for the priest but instead to show them that Romania’s education system met French standards. I met with each of the seven professors who sat on the commission. Each promised to review the matter at the next commission meeting. The professors ended up testing the priest’s knowledge in a special interview and accepting him into the doctoral program. We thanked God for the miracle!

Our friendship flourished over the next two years. The priest often visited my home to talk, eat, and worship with my family. But during his third year, the priest announced that he would leave the program. “I have a new job,” he said. “I have been appointed as Romania’s secretary of state for religious affairs.”

He had become the Romanian government’s top religion official.

You never know the far-reaching influence of your words and actions.

Upon hearing that a priest had taken office, some Adventists in Romania feared restrictions on religious freedom, especially against members of smaller religious denominations like the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But no crack-down materialized. In fact, the priest turned government minister was exceedingly fair and objective with people of all faiths.



After he settled into his job, I jokingly asked to visit his office for a photo. “I want to show my children that I know someone famous,” I said.

He laughed. “Come anytime you want,” he said.

We remain friends to this day.

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## ***Part I: Overview***

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In the beginning, there were no schools or universities. But even without books, lecture halls, or internet-saturated electronics, knowledge—rich with wisdom and virtue—was still communicated. Through an irrigating mist (*Gen. 2:6*), one can just discern the form of God, a garden classroom, and two fresh clay pupils, recently animated by His life-giving breath (*Gen. 2:7*). One doesn't often think of the Garden of Eden as a classroom in which God sits as Instructor, but this week's lesson guides us in that direction.

Two layers of instruction emerge from the beginning of Genesis. First, Genesis permits us to walk in Adam's and Eve's sandals (or, rather, in the prints of their bare feet) and listen in on the master classes that God likely held on the history of Creation, the purpose and responsibilities of the human family (*Gen. 1:26–28*), lessons from nature, meditations on marriage (*Gen. 2:18*), and warnings about an enemy and the forbidden tree (*Gen. 2:17*). Second, we can learn from the Genesis narrative as we would from a textbook. Insights into the nature of the serpent's temptation, consequences of distrust and disobedience, God's character challenged and vindicated, and the provisions for salvation emerge as themes for instruction and contemplation.

Knowing the historical foundations of any branch of academia always brings greater perspective and nuanced understanding. Just as there is no substitute for knowing Euclid's axioms in studying geometry, understanding the initial chapters of Genesis is essential for comprehending the rest of the Bible and the full story of Redemption.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Innocence Versus Cunning**

In Genesis 3, the opening description of the serpent as “shrewd,” “crafty,” and “subtil” (*NET, ESV, KJV*) highlights an important contrast between the snake and the *adam* and his *ishsha*, the man and his wife. The Hebrew word translated “shrewd” (*'arum*) contains the same consonantal root and similar vowel sounds as the Hebrew word translated “naked” (*'arom*), which is used to describe the condition of Adam and Eve in the previous verse. When reading the Hebrew aloud, this *'arom/'arum* is spoken virtually back-to-back and alerts the reader that a

word play (*paronomasia*) is in use. We are about to see an innocent Eve step into the arena of a seasoned, cunning deceiver. She and Adam eat the fruit, and nothing has been the same since.

But how did the serpent do it? How was he able to leverage 26 words to cause a sinless being, completely content and cared for, to rebel against a God whose essence is pure love (*1 John 4:8*)? Whatever the serpent did, it was effective. By a careful dissection of the conversation between the serpent and Eve, you as the teacher can show just how shrewd Satan's strategy was—and how effective it still is, millennia later.

### The School of Eden and the Test of Obedience

Eden was not simply a garden; it was an education:

"The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the Instructor."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 20.

But the continuance of Adam's and Eve's education was conditional upon their unswerving loyalty to all the precepts and commands of their divine Teacher. "So long as they remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 51.

Thus, to ensure their loyalty, God would test their obedience. "Like the angels, the dwellers in Eden had been placed upon probation; their happy estate could be retained only on condition of fidelity to the Creator's law. They could obey and live, or disobey and perish. God had made them the recipients of rich blessings; but should they disregard His will, He who spared not the angels that sinned, could not spare them; transgression would forfeit His gifts and bring upon them misery and ruin."—Page 53.

The final exam involved a tree and a prohibition. "In the midst of the garden, near the tree of life, stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree was especially designed of God to be the pledge of their obedience, faith, and love to Him. Of this tree the Lord commanded our first parents not to eat, neither to touch it, lest they die. He told them that they might freely eat of all the trees in the garden except one, but if they ate of that tree they should surely die."—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 24.

God did more than simply instruct Adam and Eve not to touch or taste the fruit. He sent angels to give the pair additional instruction, telling them that they would be stronger together against temptation than apart. “The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels’ caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 53, 54.

Eve does not subordinate her curiosity to the cautionary instruction of her angel instructors, and to God, her Master Teacher. “Eve found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the fruit of the forbidden tree. She saw it was very lovely, and was reasoning with herself why God had so decidedly prohibited their eating or touching it. Now was Satan’s opportunity. He addressed her as though he was able to divine her thought: ‘Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 32.

The serpent’s opening question is the wedge that will eventually erode Eve’s worldview and undermine much of what she had been taught to cherish and had held to be true. “To the tempter’s ensnaring question she replied: ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.’

“By partaking of this tree, he declared, they would attain to a more exalted sphere of existence and enter a broader field of knowledge. He himself had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and as a result had acquired the power of speech. And he insinuated that the Lord jealously desired to withhold it from them, lest they should be exalted to equality with Himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54.

This narrative showcases an education in worldviews. Eve’s worldview before the Fall was grounded in the knowledge of a Creator God who abundantly provided for His creation, motivated only by unselfish love. The forbidden tree stood as a test and a symbol that Adam

and Eve, though free, were not to live autonomously apart from the God who made them. But the serpent inscribed a different picture on the impressionable and innocent Eve. Using the same data all around them, he reinterpreted the dynamics of the garden in a way that painted God as (1) maximally restrictive of that which is good, (2) threatened by those who partake of the knowledge-imparting powers of the forbidden tree, and (3) misinformed/deceptive as to the lethal consequences of the tree. One would be compelled to doubt the love of such a God. Once love is undermined, then the person questions the reliability of God's words, and it is a short step from there to reject His authority. Adam and Eve did this, and we have all followed suit. It is the mission of Seventh-day Adventist education to reverse this initial twisting of God's character in the minds of His creation and to replace it with the truth of who God is. Being created as God's image bearers uniquely fits us for this task.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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1. The trio of shame, nakedness, and fear comprises a key motif in the temptation narrative. Nakedness and the absence of shame are the introductory descriptions of the first human pair before they succumb to temptation (*Gen. 2:25*). Realization of their nakedness and implied shame are the first results of disobedience (*Gen. 3:7*). Again, it is fear and shame that cause them to hide when they hear the voice of Adonai Elohim, the LORD God (*Gen. 3:9, 10*). The Lord even inquires as to how they know they are naked (*Gen. 3:11*). There is no use of the Hebrew words for *sin*, *rebellion*, or *iniquity* in the narrative. Why do you think that is? In what ways are shame and fear fundamental to humanity? How does knowing God and His salvation address these issues?

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2. People still see the Christian God as restrictive. How often have we heard, “What’s wrong with doing” this or that? What is the most effective way to dispel this millennia-old smear on the reputation of God? One strategy is to show that God still restricts only one thing from His creation: sin. The fact that the one tree bears a thousand different fruits doesn’t mean that God restricts us from a thousand different things.

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### *Notes*

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# The Family




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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:1–15, 2 Cor. 4:6, Luke 1:26–38, Matt. 1:18–24, Eph. 4:15, 1 John 3:18, Deuteronomy 6.*

**Memory Text:** “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (*Proverbs 1:8, NKJV*).

As human beings, we are always (ideally) learning. In fact, life itself is a school.

“From the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth. The Lord had directed that even from babyhood the children should be taught of His goodness and His greatness, especially as revealed in His law, and shown in the history of Israel. Song and prayer and lessons from the Scriptures were to be adapted to the opening mind. Fathers and mothers were to instruct their children that the law of God is an expression of His character, and that as they received the principles of the law into the heart, the image of God was traced on mind and soul. Much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings; and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 69.

For most of human history, education took place mostly in the home, especially for the early years. What does the Bible say about education in the family, and what principle can we take away from it for ourselves, whatever our family situation happens to be?

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 10.

## The First Family

We haven't been given many details—none, really—in the initial pages of Scripture regarding the kind of family education that went on in the earliest days of human history, though we can be sure that it was in the family structure itself that education took place back then.

“The system of education established in Eden centered in the family. Adam was ‘the son of God’ (*Luke 3:38*), and it was from their Father that the children of the Highest received instruction. Theirs, in the truest sense, was a family school.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 33.

And though we don't know exactly what was taught, we may be sure that it dealt with the wonders of Creation and, after sin, the plan of Redemption.

**What** do the following texts teach, and why would these surely have been part of the education that Adam and Eve imparted to their children? *Genesis 1, 2, Gen. 3:1–15, 2 Cor. 4:6, Luke 10:27, Gal. 3:11, Rev. 22:12.*

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“The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 20.

Christian education is a commitment to educating families and members in doctrine, worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service. Home is where you minister to family members about the love and promises of God. It is where Jesus is introduced to children as their Lord and Savior and Friend and where the Bible is upheld as the Word of God. Family is where you model what a healthy relationship with our heavenly Father looks like.

In *Genesis 4:1–4*, we have both Cain and Abel bringing their offerings to the Lord. We surely can assume that they learned about the meaning and importance of the offerings as part of their family education regarding the plan of salvation. Of course, as the story shows, a good education doesn't always lead to the kind of outcome that one would hope for.

**Whatever your home situation is, what choices can you make in order for it to be an environment where truth is taught and lived out?**

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## The Childhood of Jesus

Scripture gives us very little detail about the childhood of Jesus. Much from those years remains a mystery. However, we have been given some insight into the character of His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, and what we learn about them could help explain to us something of His childhood and early education.

**What** do these texts teach us about Mary and Joseph, and how might they give us insight into how Jesus had been educated by His parents?

Luke 1:26–38 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:46–55 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 1:18–24 \_\_\_\_\_

Through these texts we can see that both Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews, seeking to live in obedience to the laws and commandments of God. And indeed, when the Lord came to them and told them about what was going to happen with them, they faithfully did all that they were told.

“The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother’s knee. As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

No doubt Mary and Joseph were good and faithful teachers to the Child, but, as the story in Luke 2:41–50 reveals, there was much about their Son that they did not understand, because Jesus had knowledge and wisdom that had been imparted to Him only by the Lord.

**Read again the Ellen G. White quote above. How do we wrap our minds around what she wrote here about how Jesus learned at His mother’s knee the words that He Himself had spoken? What does this tell us about the amazing love of God? How should we, fallen and sinful creatures, respond?**

## Communication

In a very real sense, education at any level is communication. The teacher is the one who has knowledge, wisdom, information, facts, whatever, to convey to the student. Someone filled with a lot of knowledge must be able to communicate it to others; otherwise, what good is all that he or she knows, at least in terms of teaching?

At another level, however, good teaching skills are not just the ability to communicate. Also crucial to the whole process is the building of a relationship. “The true teacher can impart to his pupils few gifts so valuable as the gift of his own companionship. It is true of men and women, and how much more of youth and children, that only as we come in touch through sympathy can we understand them; and we need to understand in order most effectively to benefit.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 212.

In other words, good teaching works on the emotional and personal level, as well. In the case of the family as a school, this is so very important. A good relationship must be built between the student and teacher.

Relationships are established and developed by means of communication. When Christians do not communicate with God, such as by reading the Bible or in prayer, their relationship with God stagnates. Families need divine guidance if they are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

**Read** the following texts. What can we learn from them about how to build strong family relationships (or any kind of relationship, for that matter)? *Ps. 37:7–9; Prov. 10:31, 32; Prov. 27:17; Eph. 4:15; 1 John 3:18; Titus 3:1, 2; James 4:11.*

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Taking the time to sow the proper seeds of communication will not only prepare family members for a personal relationship with Christ, but also help to develop interpersonal relationships within the family. It will open up channels of communication that you will be glad you formed once your children reach puberty and adulthood. And even if you don’t have children, the principles found in these texts can work for all kinds of relationships.

**Think, too, about why it is not just what we say that is so important, but *how* we say it. What have you learned from situations in which the way you said something pretty much ruined the impact of what you had said, even if what you said was correct?**

## The Role of Parents

**“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).**

**“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10, NKJV).**

Parents have an awesome responsibility. The father is the head of the family, and the family is the nursery of church, school, and society. If the father is weak, irresponsible, and incompetent, then the family, church, school, and society will suffer the consequences. Fathers should seek to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Mothers, too, have perhaps the most important role in all society. They have great influence in shaping the characters of their children and establishing the mood and temperament of the home. Fathers should do all they can to work with the mothers in the education of their children.

**What** can fathers and mothers learn from these texts? Eph. 5:22, 23, 25, 26; 1 Cor. 11:3; 2 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 13:13, 14; 2 Pet. 1:5–7; Phil. 4:8.

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Christian parents have a moral obligation to provide a biblical model of Christ and the church by their behavior. The marriage relationship is an analogy of Christ’s relationship to the church. When parents refuse to lead, or if they lead in a tyrannical manner, then they are painting a false picture of Christ for their own children and for the world. God commands all Christian parents to diligently teach their children (see Deut. 6:7). Parents have the responsibility to teach their children to love the Lord with their whole heart. They are to teach the fear of the Lord, a total loving devotion and submission to Him.

In Deuteronomy 6:7, the children of Israel were given specific instructions about educating their children in regard to the great things the Lord had done for His people. However great a story the elders had to tell their children, we, who live after the cross of Christ, have a much better one to tell, don’t we?

Thus, the healing or training we are to give is an ongoing proactive event in which we pour the truth of God into our children and prepare them for their own relationship with Christ.

In the end, though, we all have been given the sacred gift of free will. Ultimately, when they are adults, our children will have to answer for themselves before God.

## Lest Ye Forget

Before the children of Israel were to enter into the Promised Land, Moses spoke to them again, recounting the wonderful ways that the Lord had led them, and he admonished them again and again not to forget what the Lord had done for them. In many ways Deuteronomy was Moses' last will and testament. And though written thousands of years ago, in a culture and life situation radically different from anything we face today, the principles there apply to us, as well.

**Read** Deuteronomy 6. What can we learn from this chapter about the principles of Christian education? What should be central to all that we teach, not just to our children but to anyone who doesn't know what we know about God and His great acts of salvation? What warnings are found in these verses, as well?

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So, central to all that they were to teach their children was the marvelous working of God among them. Also, how clearly was the warning given not to forget all that God had done for them.

Of course, if parents are to play the first major role in integrating biblical teachings into their children's lives, then they have a responsibility to organize and prepare their own lives in such a manner that they have adequate knowledge and time to spend with their children.

"The child's first teacher is the mother. During the period of greatest susceptibility and most rapid development his education is to a great degree in her hands."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 275.

This is the essential time when parents minister to their children about the love and promises of God. Designating a regularly scheduled time to teach the wisdom and promises of God personally to your children will positively impact your family for generations to come.

**Read this text:** "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (*Deut. 6:7, NKJV*). What is the point here, and what should it tell us about how crucial it is always to keep the reality of the Lord before not just our children but our own selves, as well?

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**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “Preparation,” pp. 275–282; “Cooperation,” pp. 283–286; and “Discipline,” pp. 287–297, in *Education*.

“Upon fathers as well as mothers rests a responsibility for the child’s earlier as well as its later training, and for both parents the demand for careful and thorough preparation is most urgent. Before taking upon themselves the possibilities of fatherhood and motherhood, men and women should become acquainted with the laws of physical development . . . ; they should also understand the laws of mental development and moral training.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 276.

“The work of co-operation should begin with the father and mother themselves, in the home life. In the training of their children they have a joint responsibility, and it should be their constant endeavor to act together. Let them yield themselves to God, seeking help from Him to sustain each other. . . . Parents who give this training are not the ones likely to be found criticizing the teacher. They feel that both the interest of their children and justice to the school demand that, so far as possible, they sustain and honor the one who shares their responsibility.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 283.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Whether we have children or not, we all exist in some sort of domicile, and we all interact with others, as well. What have you learned from this week’s lesson that can help you in interacting with, or even witnessing to, others, whether in the place where you live or elsewhere?
- ❷ We tend to view education as a good thing. (After all, who can be against education?) But is this always the case? What might be examples of education’s having been perverted and turned into something bad? What can we learn from those negative examples that could help us make education a good thing?
- ❸ As stated in Wednesday’s study, we all have been given the sacred gift of free will. Sooner or later, when children become young adults or even adults, they will have to make their own decisions regarding the God whom they had been taught about all their young lives. Why must all parents—and anyone, really—who seek to witness to others and to teach others the gospel, always keep in mind this crucial truth about free will?



## Australian Risks All in Africa

By VANIA CHEW

Ettienne McClintock, 51, wasn't taking anything for granted in Ethiopia.

The 3ABN Australia radio host was preaching in Shisho, a rural town located 20 miles (35 kilometers) from Awassa, the second-biggest city in Ethiopia, as part of 2019 Total Member Involvement meetings organized by the East-Central Africa Division. Electricity was intermittent, and he spent the first two nights presenting in the dark.

Despite the technical challenges, more than four hundred people were attending the outdoor meetings. The crowd was far bigger than the church could handle, and Ettienne was preaching from a makeshift shelter with plastic sheets for a roof.

Ettienne was worried as he prepared for the third meeting. Although a rented generator provided power, rain began to fall just 30 minutes before opening time. He hoped people wouldn't be deterred from attending.

The rain stopped by the beginning of the meeting, but rain clouds filled the sky. Ettienne was barely 15 minutes into his sermon when the rain started. As the downpour intensified, people left the meeting. Although Ettienne had some protection in his makeshift shelter, his audience was sitting in the open air. "The church elders and I had prayed for the rain to stay away, and now the rain had come back," Ettienne recalled. "We had to do something. But what?"

Suddenly it came to him. Every evening, he had been sharing about God's power over sickness, sin, and death. But God also had power over the weather. He could pray for the rain to stop. But what if God chose not to stop the rain? His message would lose credibility, and people might stop attending.

At that moment, 1 John 5:14 flashed into Ettienne's mind: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (*NKJV*).

Ettienne prayed silently, "Lord, I believe, but please help my unbelief."

Through his interpreter, he invited the audience to pray with him for the rain to stop. Moments after he said, "Amen," the rain stopped. It didn't rain again for the rest of the program. After the sermon, about two hundred people came to the front to ask for prayer. "There were people kneeling everywhere," Ettienne said. "As we knelt in the dirt, we prayed a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication to God."



Seeing half of the audience kneeling on the ground, Ettienne remembered his family and friends praying for his meetings in Australia. He thanked God for their prayers. "God gave me a new experience," he said. "Up until that point in my life, I took low risks for God with low rewards. This was a high risk that made me feel uncomfortable and vulnerable, but the reward was amazing."

## ***Part I: Overview***

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In fact, life itself is a school. Thus, the lesson begins and proceeds to demonstrate that the family is our first schoolroom. No child is too young to begin hearing about the goodness of God. Songs and prayers of God's greatness should begin at crib-side and continue till graveside.

Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel, along with their wives, are honored with being this world's first family. How hard it is for us to conceive what it would have been like to have the sum of human history looking across at you at the breakfast table! The Garden of Eden, lush but inaccessible, is still within their view, not to mention an angelic sentinel and his sword of fire. No doubt the awful splendor of these sights inspires endless questions from the young boys. "The Creator God did that" would have been an answer to strings of *why-and-how* questions bubbling up from the boys' curious minds. Adam's and Eve's answers would have been based on their eyewitness accounts and personal experience of engagement with this Creator God. They'd have a primitive gospel to share that spoke of a divine Son who would one day be born to crush the head of the serpent, yet not without sacrifice to Himself (*Gen. 3:15*), in order to bring the human family back to the garden and the way things should be.

A picture of this divine Son's childhood and education can be loosely constructed from the first chapters of Luke and Matthew. This picture pays a compliment to the value of education as Jesus takes the opportunity to learn from His heavenly Father, and to instruct the priesthood in the temple (*Luke 2:41–51*).

The lesson highlights communication, the avenue through which education comes. It makes the important point that building relationships is a key component for effective communication and teaching. This idea is further developed below.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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We cannot overestimate the influence of family. It literally makes us who we are. Even the teen who rebels against everything his or her family stands for is still being shaped by the family, in this case through antagonism rather than submission. But we always hope that our families will be the locus of an education that prepares us for godliness, emotional and relational stability, intellectual and vocational pursuits, and physical well-being. Each one of those topics could lead to information overload;

so, the lesson provides a key thought, perhaps too often overlooked, that is important in order for education in all areas to be effective—the necessity of building relationships. The relationship between the educators and the learners, whether they be parents and children or teachers and students, often determines whether effective learning is taking place.

### **Relationships and Child-Rearing**

Many parents are hopeful that the early indoctrination of their children with Adventist ideals, teachings, and lifestyle will lead them to become faithful Seventh-day Adventists as adults whose commitment to God and the church may motivate them to full-time ministry. However, to many parents' dismay, not only do their children not remain Seventh-day Adventists into their young adult years but they also make no profession of Christianity at all. Their morally unrestrained lifestyle even exceeds that of their peers who had zero Christian upbringing. The parents' hopes are dashed, and they are left baffled as to what happened and where they went wrong.

So many families sincerely do what they think is right in the rearing of children, only to reap an outcome opposite to their expectations. Of course, there are countless variables that can cause children to reject their Adventist education. But for the sake of Adventist children, let us as parents ask the hard relationship questions about what may have gone wrong.

How frequently do parents and children share matters of the heart with each other? Does the child feel safe to share hopes, fears, and troubles with his or her parents? Do the parents continually seek to affirm where the child is doing well, or does the child only hear criticism when he or she makes a mistake? Are the parents patient as the child stumbles along in learning new activities or responsibilities? Do the parents express empathy toward their children, remembering what it was like to be a child themselves? Do the parents gently guide the children to have a relationship with God? Or do they simply ramrod religious instruction instead? Are the parents secure and adult enough to admit to their children when they make a mistake and to ask for forgiveness? Or do they continually maintain a façade of perfection that the children see through anyway? Have the parents devoted time to give exclusive attention to their children? Do they play with their children? Has respect been cultivated and earned between both parent and child? Do the parents apply discipline in a calm, controlled environment, or impulsively in frustration or anger? Do they communicate words and actions of love and tender care to the child, so that the child knows that they love him

or her unconditionally? And the list goes on . . .

These questions are important. Regardless of how dedicated parents are in inculcating Adventist religious instruction into their children, if the core issues that the questions just mentioned address are not interwoven into their parenting philosophy, it all may be for nothing. There are moments when it is time to put down the textbook, take a break from the chores, and, instead, spend quality time with your kids. Invest in the relationship, and the dividends are likely to be an effective education, culminating in a lifelong commitment to Christ and eternal life.

“Both parents and teachers are in danger of commanding and dictating too much, while they fail to come sufficiently into social relation with their children or their scholars. They maintain too great a reserve, and exercise their authority in a cold, unsympathizing manner, which tends to repel instead of winning confidence and affection. If they would oftener gather the children about them, and manifest an interest in their work, and even in their sports, they would gain the love and confidence of the little ones, and the lesson of respect and obedience would be far more readily learned; for love is the best teacher. A similar interest manifested for the youth will secure like results. The young heart is quick to respond to the touch of sympathy.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 58.

### **Jesus and the Rabbinical School in Jerusalem**

The account of the encounter between the preteen Jesus and the learned doctors of Jewish law during His Passover visit to Jerusalem is brief but dense. “After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (*Luke 2:46, 47, ESV*). So, what makes Jesus the model student? To glean insights into that question, let’s look at the following statement from Ellen G. White: “At that day an apartment connected with the temple was devoted to a sacred school, after the manner of the schools of the prophets. Here leading rabbis with their pupils assembled, and hither the child Jesus came. Seating Himself at the feet of these grave, learned men, He listened to their instruction. As one seeking for wisdom, He questioned these teachers in regard to the prophecies, and to events then taking place that pointed to the advent of the Messiah.

“Jesus presented Himself as one thirsting for a knowledge of God. . . . The doctors turned upon Him with questions, and they were amazed at His answers. With the humility of a child He repeated the words of Scripture, giving them a depth of meaning that the wise men had not conceived of. If followed, the lines of truth He pointed out

would have worked a reformation in the religion of the day. A deep interest in spiritual things would have been awakened; and when Jesus began His ministry, many would have been prepared to receive Him.

“The rabbis knew that Jesus had not been instructed in their schools; yet His understanding of the prophecies far exceeded theirs. In this thoughtful Galilean boy they discerned great promise. They desired to gain Him as a student, that He might become a teacher in Israel. They wanted to have charge of His education, feeling that a mind so original must be brought under their molding.

“The words of Jesus had moved their hearts as they had never before been moved by words from human lips. . . . The youthful modesty and grace of Jesus disarmed their prejudices. Unconsciously their minds were opened to the word of God, and the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 78–80. Every Christian knows that Jesus is the Teacher of teachers, but how often is He known as the Student of students?

So, what makes Jesus the model Student? He has a curiosity and hunger for knowledge of God that makes Him an attentive listener. He asks questions, showing that He is an active, not just a passive, learner. He’s not reluctant to offer answers either. He shows that He can be vulnerable and put His ideas out on the table for others to judge, criticize, or affirm. This builds the resilience He will need when, as an adult, His words will bring accusations of demon possession (*John 8:48*) and calls for His death (*John 8:40*). But as a Boy who has been speaking of God since He was 12 (and probably sooner), He could not be intimidated. Good students always make the best teachers.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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Though the family is the first schoolroom, no one is guaranteed that it will be a good one. There may be many things we must *unlearn* from our families. If we were fortunate, we gleaned a few (or more) good principles worth holding on to for a lifetime. Discuss some of these issues with your Sabbath School class for the purpose of showing how God helps us handle the good and the bad experiences of family life.

- 1. What were the negative patterns within your family that you told yourself you would never pass on to your own young family? In what ways did both God and Scripture help you identify those negative patterns? What insights did you gain that taught you to prevent their recurrence?**

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- 2. Identify the ways that God took the hardships of your less-than-ideal family life and brought about a benefit.**

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## Notes

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# The Law *as* Teacher




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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Deut. 6:5, 31:9–27, Rom. 3:19–23, Rev. 12:17, 14:12, Mark 6:25–27, Heb. 5:8.*

**Memory Text:** “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (*Deuteronomy 6:5, NKJV*).

In warning the Galatians against legalism, Paul wrote: “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law” (*Gal. 3:21, NKJV*). Of course, if any law could have “given life,” it would have been God’s law. And yet, Paul’s point is that, for us as sinners, even God’s law can’t give life. Why? “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (*Gal. 3:22, NKJV*).

However, if the law can’t give life to sinners, what’s the purpose of it, other than to show us our need of grace? Is the law, then, only negative in function, only there to show us our sins?

No; the law also is there to point us to the way of life, which is found only in Jesus. This also is what true education should be about, pointing us to a life of grace, of faith, and of obedience to Christ. That’s why this week we will study the role of God’s law in the whole question of Christian education. As we do, let’s see what the law, though it cannot save us, still can teach us about faith, about grace, and about our God’s love for fallen humanity.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 17.

## To Love and to Fear God

The book of Deuteronomy contains Moses' last words to Israel before a new generation will finally enter the Promised Land. But before they do, he has some very clear words and instructions for them.

**Read** Deuteronomy 31:9–13. What does it mean to fear the Lord?

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God was intentional about the ways that He imparted His law to Israel. He made every provision so that His laws would not be forgotten. In this way, God is a long-suffering Educator. He teaches and repeats and sends prophets and uses His servants to impart His message. And He did it again and again. Indeed, isn't so much of the writings of the Old Testament nothing but God seeking to teach His people to follow the way of life?

Notice in these verses how Moses stresses the importance of future generations' learning the law. Moses describes it as a two-step process. First the children will *hear* the law, and then they will "learn to *fear* the LORD your God" (*Deut. 31:13*).

First, they hear, and then, they learn to fear God. That is, learning the law presupposes that fear will not be a natural outcome of knowing the law. The process of fearing God must be learned. Moses implies that knowledge and fear are a process, not an immediate cause-and-effect relationship.

Also, what does "fear God" mean when the people also are told that "you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (*Deut. 6:5, NKJV*)? Perhaps we can compare it to the way a child loves and fears a good father, a father who reveals his love and care by showing that he says what he means and he means what he says. With such a father, if you do wrong, you will indeed suffer the consequences of that wrongdoing. Yes, we can, and must, love and fear God at the same time. They are not contradictory ideas. The more we learn about God, the more we come to love Him because of His goodness; and yet, at the same time, the more we come to know about God, the more we can fear Him, too, because we can see just how holy and righteous He is and how sinful and unrighteous we are in contrast, and how it is only by grace—undeserved merit—that we are not destroyed.

**How do you understand what it means to love and to fear God at the same time?**

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## A Witness Against You

When Moses knows he is soon to die, he is profoundly aware of the situation that he will leave behind. He knows that after his death the Israelites will enter into the Promised Land of Canaan. He also knows that they will become rebellious upon reaching their long-sought destination.

**Read** Deuteronomy 31:14–27. What preparations does Moses make before his death? What were Moses’ chief concerns, and how does he address those concerns?

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Moses’ tone here may appear like that of a teacher preparing for a substitute. He knows that his pupils have misbehaved in his presence in the classroom; he is not so deluded as to think that they will not rebel in his absence. He instructs the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant to place the book of the Law next to the ark in order for it to be a “witness.” Moses is not simply passing on a lesson plan for his substitute. He is passing on a witness. Moses speaks of the book of the Law as though it is a living being with power to reprove the hearts of men.

**Think** about the law as a “witness against” them. How do we understand this idea in the New Testament, as well? *See Rom. 3:19–23.* That is, how does the law point us to our need of grace?

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In Deuteronomy 31, God instructs Moses to write down a song that the Lord has taught Moses. Moses is then to teach the song to the Israelites so that, as stated in verse 19, it “may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.” Again we see God’s directives personified. A song, when sung, is more easily shared and spread. And when a song is a witness, it has the ability to cause people to look at themselves and see what it says about them.

Even as we seek to obey God’s law with all our God-given strength, in what ways does His law function as a “witness against” us? What does this witness teach us about the need of the gospel in our lives?

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## That You May Prosper

Throughout the Bible, we hear of other outcomes of knowing—and obeying—God’s law.

**Read** Joshua 1:7, 8. What was the Lord saying to Joshua, and how do the principles found there apply to us today?

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The Lord tells Joshua as he enters into Canaan: “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (*Josh. 1:7, NKJV*).

This notion of success as a by-product of obedience may seem contrary to the way success is measured in our world today. Many today believe that the marks of success are innovation, creativity, and self-reliance. To succeed in a particular industry often requires extraordinary talent and risk-taking.

However, in God’s eyes success requires a different set of resources.

**Read** Revelation 12:17, 14:12, Romans 1:5, 16:26, James 2:10–12. What are these verses saying to us, today, about obedience to God’s law? That is, even if we are not saved by obeying God’s law, why is it so important that we still keep it?

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Old Testament, New Testament, Old Covenant, New Covenant—it doesn’t matter: as Bible-believing Christians we are called to obedience to God’s law. Violation of the law, also known as sin, can lead only to pain, suffering, and eternal death. Who hasn’t learned for themselves, or seen for themselves, the results of sin, the results of violation of God’s law? Just as ancient Israel would prosper by obeying God’s law (even though they needed grace, as well), it’s no different for us today either. Hence, as part of Christian education we need to keep God’s law as a central component of what it means to live by faith and trusting in God’s grace.

**What has been your own experience with the consequences of sin? What have you learned that you could share with others so that, perhaps, they might not make the same mistakes?**

## The Toils and Struggles of Law Keepers

There are great benefits to following God's law, as evidenced in the people whom God prospered. Joshua closely followed God's precepts, and he led the people of Israel well. Time and again, the Lord told Israel that if they obeyed the law, they would prosper.

**Read 2 Chronicles 31:20, 21. What were the key reasons in this passage as to why Hezekiah prospered?**

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Whatever education venue we are in, we must stress the importance of obedience. Yet, our students aren't stupid. They will notice, sooner or later, the harsh fact that some people are faithful, loving, and obedient. And yet—what? Disaster strikes them, as well. How do we explain this?

The fact is, we can't. We live in a world of sin, of evil, a world in which the great controversy rages, and none of us are immune to it.

**What do these texts teach us about this difficult question? Mark 6:25–27; Job 1, 2; 2 Cor. 11:23–29.**

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Without question, good and faithful people, law-abiding people, have not always prospered, at least as the world understands prosperity. And here, too, might be a partial answer to this difficult question, a question that as we seek to teach the importance of the law is no doubt going to be raised. What exactly do we mean by “prosperity”? What did the psalmist say? “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (*Ps. 84:10, NKJV*). There's no question that, by the world's standards, even those faithful to God and obedient to His law don't always “prosper,” at least for now. We do our students a disservice to say otherwise.

**Read Hebrews 11:13–16. How do these verses help us understand why those who are faithful still suffer in this life?**

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## Jesus, Our Example

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived the only human life in perfect obedience to the Father, in perfect obedience to the law of God. He did this so that He could be not just our Substitute, which He was, but also our Example, which He was too.

**Read the following passages:** *Luke 2:51, 52; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; John 8:28, 29.* **How do they remind us of Christ's obedience throughout His life?**

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Perhaps John said it the best when he wrote this: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (*1 John 2:6, NKJV*). When we fix our eyes on the life of Christ and His ministry on earth, it is easy to see how He pleased the Father by His obedience. Christ did fulfill prophecy, and He upheld God's laws throughout His lifetime.

Just as God told Moses to write down His law so that it might be a witness to Israel, Christ was the living embodiment of the witness to His apostles, disciples, to sinners, and saints. Now, rather than just having a set of rules to follow, we have the example of Jesus, a flesh-and-blood human being, to follow, as well.

As teachers, what better role model can we present to students than the model of Jesus and how He obeyed the Father?

"That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption. 'By grace are ye saved through faith.' But 'faith, if it hath not works, is dead.' Ephesians 2:8; James 2:17. Jesus said of Himself before He came to earth, 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Psalm 40:8. And just before He ascended again to heaven He declared, 'I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.' John 15:10. The Scripture says, 'Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. . . . He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.' 1 John 2:3-6."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

**What can you do to better follow Christ's example in all areas of your life and thus be a better teacher to others, as well? Though it's kind of an old, trite idea, why does what we do—our actions—speak so much louder than what we say?**

**Further Thought:** “Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. The first and great commandment is, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.’ Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored.

“Like the first is the second commandment—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Matthew 22:39. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 16.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Like Israel of old, we are to love God and to fear God at the same time (*Matt. 22:37, Rev. 14:7*). In class, talk more about how we can do both. Also, answer the question: *Why are these two commandments not in conflict with each other?*
- ❷ What is the difference between setting a standard and making a rule? In your experience, is Adventism more concerned with setting high standards within its community of believers or in making rules that unite its community? What does Scripture say about setting high standards for oneself? One’s family? One’s church?
- ❸ How do we strike the right balance in showing the importance of obedience to the law of God and, at the same time, showing why this obedience is not the source of our salvation?
- ❹ Read through Psalm 119 and note how many times notions of obedience, freedom, laws, rules, and commands are stated. What does the author of Psalm 119 want to convey about these themes?

## Instructed by God in Brazil

By SELOMITA HAMZAOUI

An aunt gave me a booklet filled with Bible verses on a Saturday afternoon.

“Just open the booklet, and God will talk to you through a verse,” she said.

I hadn’t thought about God in more than twenty years. Although I was raised in a Christian home in Brazil, I had stopped attending church when I was 16. Now I was wrapping up a month-long trip in Brazil as part of a research project for my university studies in France. I would leave for Paris the next day.

I opened the booklet, and my eyes fell on Proverbs 22:19: “So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you” (NKJV). The words moved me because I was a student and curious to know what God would teach.

That evening, I joined friends for a goodbye meal. But I couldn’t get the Bible verse out of my mind, and I excused myself to go to church.

Entering the church, I saw to my shock that every young woman was dressed like me in jeans, high heels, earrings, and makeup. The music also had changed, and the pastor didn’t make an altar call. I was waiting for the appeal. I wanted to give my heart to Jesus. I left disappointed.

The next day, I flew to France and prayed, “Lord, even though they didn’t make an altar call, I will find a church in France and attend services regularly.”

In France, I found a church near my home and started to attend every Sunday. The people were kind, but I sensed that they were cold spiritually.

I started studying the Bible at home, and I watched sermons online. I discovered a prominent Seventh-day Adventist preacher on YouTube who spoke powerfully about Revelation. I watched 25 of his sermons.

One night, I woke up around 3:00 A.M. and decided to pray until daybreak. The same thing happened the next night and the next. As I prayed those three nights, I sensed that Jesus’ return was near. I confessed my sins and praised God for His goodness. On the third day, peace filled my heart. I knew God lives.

Although I had watched so many YouTube sermons, I didn’t realize that the preacher was an Adventist. Wondering about his denomination, I found his personal testimony online. Immediately, I looked for the address of an Adventist church in Paris. On my first Sabbath, I was astonished to see people

studying the Bible in Sabbath School. The women were dressed modestly, and the sermon was about Revelation. God knew what was important for me. I wept during the worship service. I didn’t think this kind of church existed.

God promised in Brazil to teach me, and I have been learning in France ever since.



*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel around the world.*

## *Part I: Overview*

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The law has a public relations problem. This is unfortunate because the law and the God who gave it have much to teach us. Christians are confused about how the law functions in life because of the Pauline emphasis on our not being “justified” by law but by faith (*Gal. 2:16*). But to dispense with the law just because it doesn’t function in one realm would be like getting rid of your toaster because it doesn’t vacuum the floor well. It seems that people have grown content with simply knowing what the law doesn’t do rather than what it does do.

But those who are in a properly oriented covenant relationship with God have no reason to suffer anxiety or aversion toward the law. Being able to say with David, “O how love I thy law!” (*Ps. 119:97*) provides a good test of whether one is in a healthy relationship with God and the law. If people protest with, “What about love or grace or Jesus?” they are in for a surprise. The most important law of all, the *crème de la crème* of all the laws, is the law to love. “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.’ ” This is the greatest of all the laws; at least, that’s what Jesus thought (*Deut. 6:5, ESV; Matt. 22:36, 37*). If people have a problem with law, do they take issue with *this* law too? So, it is safe to say that there is enough endorsement from King David and King Jesus to give the law a chance as an instructor for life and a revelation of the God who gave it.

## *Part II: Commentary*

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### Scripture

When planning an evening with friends, no one is likely to recommend, “Let’s get together so we can read and study some laws.” It is understandable why most people have an aversion to the subject of law in the Bible. For the most part, there is a depressing cycle of (1) laws given or repeated, (2) laws violated, and (3) God’s anger as a result of the violation and the horrible consequences that follow.

This cycle happens again and again, to the point where we as readers ask ourselves in frustration, “What is Israel’s problem? They are the most stubborn, rebellious group of people on the face of the earth.” We act shocked at Israel’s failures for 30 seconds, and then something happens. Slowly we look away from the nation of Israel and instead gaze into the proverbial mirror and see the reflection of our personal

histories. If we are honest, we see some striking similarities between ourselves and Israel, and like King David unwittingly condemning himself upon hearing Nathan's parable, we, too, hear the law announce to us, "Thou art the man" (*2 Sam. 12:7*).

So, what is there to learn from this rather fatalistic cycle of law, sin, and condemnation—a cycle so many Christians resolve by simply ignoring the subject of biblical law and/or prematurely jumping to the themes of forgiveness, grace, and salvation? The answer is found in God's sharing with Moses and Israel the prediction of Israel's rebellion. " 'This people will rise and whore after the foreign gods . . . and they will forsake me and break my covenant' " (*Deut. 31:16, ESV*). Then the children of Israel learn a 43-verse song (*Deuteronomy 32*) that they are never to forget (*Deut. 31:21*), a song that explicates exactly that prediction. This is all done on the verge of their being granted the Promised Land and the innumerable blessings that accompany it.

What we learn here is something fundamental about God Himself. What kind of Being is this who willingly enters into a covenant relationship with a people He knows beforehand will be unfaithful to Him? So many of the relationships that we humans enter into are risk-based and probabilistic. We marry with the expectation that our spouse will be faithful to us till death. If we were unsure, we probably wouldn't commit; if we were certain of their future infidelity, then we definitely wouldn't commit. Friendships are formed on the presumption that the parties won't become backstabbing enemies. And yet, the God of the Hebrews, our God, embraces us with open arms, knowing that He will be stabbed in the back by our sin and rebellion against Him. This is amazing grace.

Yet, this grace comes into sharpest focus when seen through that "depressing" cycle of a covenant people called into a relationship with God, governed by His commandments and laws, followed by egregious disobedience. This perspective reveals God's heart of love and grace even *before* the promises of salvation and forgiveness are made explicit. The mere fact that He enters into committed relationships with people such as us is a miracle in itself. His later promises of salvation, forgiveness, and restoration are the simple outgrowth of a divine heart that counts the cost of our rebellion and sin and concludes the price small enough for a chance to be in our company for eternity.

**Discuss:** We quickly learn that this Lawgiver is not a megalomaniac simply trying to boss His creation around. His willingness to enter into a covenant with people He knew would violate it teaches us something about His character. What does it teach us?



## Scripture

Monday's lesson brings out how before Moses died God gave him a song that the people of Israel were to memorize (*Deut. 31:21*). This song was to serve an interesting function. God says that after the people enter the land and are filled up by its abundance, they will turn to other gods and break the covenant with their God. As expected, disasters and the covenant curses follow. One can imagine the tragic experience of going from the height of prosperity to being decimated by starvation and war (*Deut. 32:23–25*). “Why is this happening to us?” one can almost hear them cry in desperation. “We offered our sacrifices to the gods, and they *had* been blessing and protecting us” (*Deut. 32:17; Hosea 2:5, 8*). It is at this moment of disorientation, when Israel is reaping the full wrath of God for its disobedience, that it is time to sing this song.

The song is intense (*Deuteronomy 32*). It tells the story of God's goodness contrasted with the wickedness of His people. It calls on them to “remember the days of old” when God provided and cared for them, “carrying them on [His] wings” (*Deut. 32:7, 11, NKJV*). Eventually, in the midst of their superabundance, they forget and forsake God and instead sacrifice to demons (*Deut. 32:17, NKJV*). The heartbreaking verses tell us of the disastrous consequences that follow. But there are hints that God has not utterly forsaken His people: “For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants,” and “ ‘I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal,’ ” and “ ‘He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people’ ” (*Deut. 32:36, 39, ESV; Deut. 32:43, NKJV; emphasis supplied*). God has taught His people a song that, though brutally honest, will answer all their questions. It will tell them of their origins as a people, of the God they rejected, of the impotent gods they replaced Him with, of the reason that they are in the mess they are in, and of the hope for the future.

The song would have been sung for generations and served as a warning and deterrent against departing from the God of their fathers. But at the height of prosperity and presumptuous security, it must have sounded quaint and irrelevant to their ears, if sung at all. But now that they are experiencing a chaos of their own making, the song out of their own mouths serves as a “witness” against them (*Deut. 31:19*). God has placed within the collective psyche of the people of Israel what their destiny will be unless they resist the idolatry of the nations around them.

This song is tragic, but from a teaching perspective it also is brilliant. It clearly states the consequences of covenant disloyalty. It explains the *whys* behind the dire predicament of being ravaged by war and the elements. It places the blame on Israel's shoulders, and it vindicates God from culpability in the nearly complete destruction of

His people. Can one think of a better method to avert national disaster than to inculcate a prophetic song in a people's oral tradition, telling of what will become of their homeland if they reject the God who granted it to them?

**Discuss:** Who at one point hasn't wished to look into the future in order to make better decisions in the present? God has granted this wish in large measure if we would but read what He prophetically shares. The irony is that, even with the prophetic song on the lips of Israel, they still walked right into the worst-case scenario (*Dan. 9:13–15*). What does this outcome teach us about the benefits or detriments of knowing the future?

### *Part III: Life Application*

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The first step in really applying the law to one's life is reading and prayerfully reflecting on it. And we are not talking about just the Ten Commandments. They will forever have a hallowed place in both Christian and Judaic circles, and they should. The Law as defined as Torah or the first five books of the Old Testament is what the ancients meant when speaking of Law. Once we realize this, "law" takes on a definition that demands broadening. The Garden of Eden story—that's Law; all the stories of Abraham—that's Law; the parting of the Red Sea—that's Law; et cetera. For this reason, *Law* also is properly translated as "teaching" or "instruction." This understanding immediately makes the title of the lesson somewhat redundant (though necessary)—The Law as Teacher. Yes, we would all hope that we would allow the *Law* that God gave us to actually *teach* us something. It would be strange to think otherwise, and how unfortunate it is that sometimes the *Instruction* (i.e., the Law) is the last place people (even Christians) look for instruction. It would be almost comical if it were not so tragic. Prayerfully reading the context of laws in the Bible, with diligent cross-referencing with the New Testament, should keep one on a balanced path of learning, living, and loving God's law.

### *Notes*

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TEACHERS COMMENTS

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# “The Eyes *of the* LORD”: The Biblical Worldview



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Prov. 15:3; Job 12:7–10; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 20:5, 6; John 1:1–14; Mark 12:29–31.*

**Memory Text:** “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (*Proverbs 15:3, NKJV*).

Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote a poem that began with his writing about imaginary animals: talking rabbits, talking squirrels, and the like. They “have as much in common with real animals,” he wrote, “as our notions of the world have with the real world.” Then, to end the poem, he wrote: “Think of this, and tremble.”

“Tremble” might be too harsh a word, but it is true that indeed, so much of what humans think about the world could be completely wrong. For example, for almost two thousand years many of the world’s smartest and best-educated people thought the earth sat immobile in the center of the universe. Today, many of the smartest and best-educated people think that humans evolved from what was originally a simple life-form.

As human beings, we never look at the world from a neutral position. We see it, always and only, through filters that impact how we interpret and understand the world around us. That filter is called a worldview, and it’s so crucial that we teach our young people, and even older church members, the biblical worldview.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 24.

## “The Eyes of the LORD”

An Oxford university professor has theorized that we, the world, and everything around us—none of it is real. Instead, we are the digital creations of a race of aliens with super-powerful computers.

While that’s an interesting theory, it does bring up a crucial question: What is the nature of reality?

There are two very broad possible answers, even if only one is rational. The first is that the universe—and all that is in it, including us—just *is*. Nothing created it, nothing formed it. It just is here. It is simply a brute fact. There is no God, there are no gods, there is nothing divine. Reality is purely material, purely natural. As someone said 2,500 years ago (this is not a new idea), there is only “atoms and the void.”

The other view is that some divine being (or beings) created the universe. That, indeed, seems more logical, more rational, more sensible, than the idea that the universe just *is*, with no explanation for it. This position encompasses the natural world, the world of “atoms and the void,” but it is not limited to it. It points to a reality that is much broader, deeper, and more multifaceted than the atheistic-materialist view so often heard today.

**What** do the following texts have to say about the ideas raised in today’s lesson? *Ps. 53:1, Prov. 15:3, John 3:16, Isa. 45:21, Luke 1:26–35.*

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Central to any Christian education is the reality, not just of God but of the kind of God that He is, a personal God who loves us and who interacts with us. He is a God of miracles who, though using natural laws, is not bound by those laws and who can transcend those laws when He wills (such as in the virgin conception of Jesus). The teaching of this view is especially pertinent in our day because so much of the intellectual world, claiming (erroneously) that science supports it, openly and unapologetically teaches the atheistic and naturalistic worldview.

**Think about how narrow and limited the atheistic worldview is in contrast to the biblical worldview, which (as said above) encompasses the natural world but isn’t limited by it. Why, in the end, is the biblical worldview, the theistic worldview, simply so much more logical and rational than its atheistic rival?**

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## Leibniz's Question

Many years ago, a German thinker and writer named Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz asked what is probably the most basic and foundational question possible: “Why is there something instead of nothing?”

**How** do the following texts answer Leibniz's question? *Gen. 1:1; John 1:1–4; Exod. 20:8–11; Rev. 14:6, 7; Job 12:7–10.*

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It's fascinating how in the Bible the existence of God is just assumed. Genesis 1:1 doesn't start out with a bunch of logical arguments (though many exist) for the existence of God. It just assumes His existence (*see also Exod. 3:13, 14*), and from that starting point, God as Creator, the Bible, and all the truth revealed in its pages unfold.

The doctrine of Creation also is foundational to any Christian education. Everything we believe as Christians, everything, rests on the doctrine of the six-day Creation. The Bible didn't begin with a statement about atonement, or about the law, or about the Cross, or about the Resurrection, or about the Second Coming.

No, it began with a statement about God as Creator, because none of these other teachings makes any sense apart from the reality of God as our Creator.

Hence, again, a biblical worldview must emphasize the importance of the doctrine of Creation. This emphasis, too, becomes very important, because the teaching has faced a full-frontal assault in the name of science. Evolution—billions of years of life slowly evolving by fits and starts, all by chance—has all but destroyed faith in the Bible for untold millions. It's hard to imagine a teaching more antithetical to the Bible and to the Christian faith in general than evolution. That's why the idea that evolution can somehow be made to harmonize with the biblical doctrine of Creation is even worse than atheistic evolution. It can't be done, not without making a mockery of the Bible and of the Christian faith as a whole.

**God asks us to spend one-seventh of our lives, every week, to remember the six-day Creation, something He asks for no other teaching. What should that tell us about how foundational and important this doctrine is to a Christian worldview?**

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## The Biblical Worldview

As said in the introduction, none of us views the world from a neutral position. For example, an atheist looks at a rainbow in the sky and sees nothing but a natural phenomenon. It has no meaning other than that which humans decide to give it. In contrast, someone eyeing it from a biblical worldview sees not only the natural phenomenon, the water and light interacting, but also a reaffirmation of God's promise not to destroy the world again by water (*Gen. 9:13–16*). “How great the condescension of God and His compassion for His erring creatures in thus placing the beautiful rainbow in the clouds as a token of His covenant with men. . . . It was God's purpose that as the children of after generations should ask the meaning of the glorious arch which spans the heavens, their parents should repeat the story of the Flood, and tell them that the Most High had bended the bow and placed it in the clouds as an assurance that the waters should never again overflow the earth.” —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 106.

For Seventh-day Adventists, the Bible remains the foundational text of our faith. It teaches the worldview, the “filter,” by which we are to see and understand the world, which can be a very daunting and complicated place. Scripture creates the template to help us better understand the reality we find ourselves in, which we are part of, and are often confused and befuddled by.

**What** truths are found in the following texts that can better help us understand the reality we exist in? *Eph. 6:12; Mark 13:7; Rom. 5:8; 8:28; Eccles. 9:5; Rev. 20:5, 6.*

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As Seventh-day Adventists, we must firmly adhere to the teachings of the Bible, for this is God's revealed truth to humans, explaining for us many things about the world that we would otherwise not know or understand. Hence, all Christian education must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God, and any teaching contrary to it must be rejected.

**What are some teachings of the Bible that contradict other beliefs that people hold? What should this difference teach us about how important it is that we adhere faithfully to the Word of God?**

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## Worship the Redeemer

As crucial as the doctrine of Creation is to our faith, the doctrine does not appear alone, especially in the New Testament. It often comes coupled with, even inextricably tied to, the doctrine of Redemption. And that's because, frankly, in a fallen world of sin and death, Creation alone isn't enough. We live, we struggle, we suffer (as we all do), and then—what? We die, ultimately winding up no different from animal carcasses left on the side of the road.

How great is that?

Hence, we have, as crucial to our worldview, the doctrine of Redemption, as well—and that means we have Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected at the center of all that we believe.

**Read John 1:1–14. What are these texts telling us about who Jesus was and what He has done for us?**

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Look also at the first angel's message: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water' " (*Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV*). Notice that the "everlasting gospel" is linked directly to God as the Creator. And when we realize that the God who created us is the same God who, in human flesh, bore the punishment for our sin upon Himself—it is no wonder we are called to worship Him. What other response should there be from us when we realize what our God is really like?

For this reason, Christ and Him crucified must remain front and center to all that we teach—a teaching that, in fact, must include the Second Coming, as well, because Christ's first coming doesn't really do us a whole lot of good apart from the second, does it? One could argue, from Scripture, that Christ's first and second comings are two parts of one event—the plan of salvation.

**Dwell more on the idea, expressed in John 1, that the One who made all "that was made" (*John 1:3*) was the One who died on the cross for us. Why should worship be the overwhelming natural response?**

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## The Law of God

Years ago, in France, the nation was debating the question of capital punishment: Should it be abolished? Advocates for its abolishment contacted a famous French writer and philosopher named Michel Foucault and asked him to pen an editorial on their behalf. What he did, however, was advocate, not for abolishing just the death penalty—but for abolishing the whole prison system entirely and letting all the prisoners go free.

Why? Because for Michel Foucault all systems of morality were merely human constructs, human ideas put in place by those in power in order to control the masses. Hence, these moral codes had no real legitimacy.

However extreme his position, what we see here is a logical consequence of a problem that is not really so new. Moses dealt with it in ancient Israel thousands of years ago. “‘You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes’” (*Deut. 12:8, NKJV; see also Judg. 17:6, Prov. 12:15*).

However, if we shouldn’t do what is right in merely our own eyes—that is, we ourselves are not righteous, holy, and objective enough to know what is morally correct—then how do we know what to do? The answer, of course, is that the Lord who created us also gave us a moral code to live by. Maybe our eyes can’t get it right, but the Lord’s always do.

**What** do these texts teach us about moral conduct? *Deut. 6:5, Mark 12:29–31, Rev. 14:12.*

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If we are going to make redemption central to our Christian worldview, then (as we saw last week) God’s law, the Ten Commandments, must be central, as well. After all, what are we redeemed from if not sin, which is breaking the law (*Rom. 3:20*)? The gospel really makes no sense apart from the law of God, which is one reason we know that the law is still binding for us, despite its inability to save us. (That’s why we need the gospel.)

Therefore, all Seventh-day Adventist education must emphasize what Ellen White has called “the perpetuity of the law” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 63), which includes the Sabbath. If education is to help restore the image of God in us as far as possible in this life, then even at the most basic level God’s law must be held up, in light of Christ’s example, as the moral code that shows us what truly is right in God’s eyes.

**Further Thought:** “The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595. With this idea in mind, we can see why a solid Christian worldview is essential for Adventist education. After all, as we noted earlier, education in and of itself is not necessarily good. People can be educated, even highly educated, in ideas and attitudes that are contradictory to the principles found in the Bible. That’s why, as Seventh-day Adventists, our educational system must be based on the Christian worldview. This means, then, that all general fields of education, science, history, morality, culture, and so forth will be taught from that perspective as opposed to one that contradicts or even just ignores it. Also, as said earlier but worth repeating: there’s no such thing as a neutral perspective; all of life, all of reality, is viewed through the filters of one’s worldview, whether or not that worldview is cogently and systematically thought out. Hence, it is essential that the biblical worldview form the foundation of all Seventh-day Adventist education.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What are examples that you can think of from history in which entire systems of education were (or even are) very destructive? What were some of those places, what were students taught there, and what can we learn from them? How can we protect our own educational systems from these destructive influences?
- ❷ This week’s lesson looked at some of the key points of a Christian worldview: the existence of God, the Creation, the Bible, the plan of Redemption, and the law of God. What other important elements should be included in any complete formulation of a Christian worldview?
- ❸ An eighteenth-century thinker once wrote: “O conscience! Conscience! Thou divine instinct, thou certain guide of an ignorant and confined, though intelligent and free being—thou infallible judge of good and evil, who makes man to resemble the Deity.” What’s right, or wrong, with that position?
- ❹ Look at this Ellen G. White statement again: “The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.” What does that mean? How does this show us why Adventist education must be so different from much of how the world itself views education?

## Missionary's Darkest Night

By MERRY GRACE BALORIA

I never thought that a single night would be the darkest in my life. It was during that darkest night that God showed me His marvelous light.

Heavy rain awakened me at 12:45 A.M. It was completely dark in the one-bedroom house that I shared with a missionary partner in Eastern Samar province. Only two weeks remained of our one-year term with 1000 Missionary Movement, and a big earthquake had left the area without power.

I couldn't see anything, but I heard strange noises. Grabbing a flashlight, I directed it toward the door. I couldn't see anyone, but I felt certain that an intruder had entered. Shaking with fear, I knelt under the large mosquito net that covered my partner's bed and mine. "Lord, please save us just like you saved Daniel and Joseph," I prayed. "We wouldn't be here if it weren't for You."

I lay back on my bed and, trembling, repeated Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (NKJV). I picked up the flashlight again. What I saw was beyond my imagination. It was horrible. I saw a man with red eyes and wet hair. He held a large bolo knife and was kneeling inside our mosquito net.

Terrified, I screamed at the top of my lungs. My partner awoke, and we shouted for help. The intruder lunged at us with the sharp, single-edged knife, and we tried to kick him away. Suddenly something hard hit me. I fell to the ground, pain sweeping over my body. *Lord, am I going to die?* I thought.

Hearing someone trying to open the house door, I cried, "Open the window!" When my partner and I heard the window being opened, we ran to it and leaped out. A neighbor saw my battered face and asked what had happened. When she heard about the attacker, she rushed home, fearful for her own children.

My partner and I walked barefoot in wet, deserted streets, calling for help. Everyone seemed to be asleep. Finally, someone took us to the hospital at 3:00 A.M. My partner had slight cuts on a hand and foot. I had a serious cut from my left eye to my jaw. A physician gave me many stitches and injections.

The happiest moment in that dark night came with the morning sun. As the sun rose, it seemed to be shining just for me. I smiled. I felt Jesus' deep love. He had been with me from the beginning and would be with me until the end, the Shepherd watching over His sheep. The attacker was caught that morning,

and he remains in prison. I was not discouraged. Eight months later, at the age of 22, I began a second year of service with 1000 Missionary Movement, this time in South Korea. I now am in my third year of service. I thank God for the experience. The Lord said in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (NKJV). My outlook on life has changed. My life isn't mine; it is God's.



## ***Part I: Overview***

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We can't spend all day analyzing or testing whether every single belief we hold is true or not. We have jobs, families, and responsibilities that usually preclude full-time philosophizing. At one point in our reflective lives, we settle on a core number of principles that we hold as true. These principles are broad in scope and usually touch on issues of origins, meaning, morality, and destiny. Together, these will form our worldview. This worldview then becomes a lens through which we see the world and process, incorporate, or test new information as it comes to us.

This lesson focuses on the necessity of teaching a biblical worldview. It contrasts this necessity with a naturalistic/materialistic worldview (i.e., that nothing supernatural exists, and everything [with a capital "E"] can be explained and be reduced to physics and chemistry). In contrast, central to the biblical worldview is not only the proposition that God exists but also that He is a personal God who engages with His creation. His creative power explains the material universe, including us. His redemptive power reveals His heart, displays His restorative purposes for the universe and humanity, and secures our futures. Worldviews that stray from the biblical witness (e.g., naturalistic evolutionary theory) can easily undermine human value. We can see this truth clearly in the grim examples that follow.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Illustration**

*Worldview* is one of those words rumored to be of vast importance. But since we seem to go through our days just fine without explicit reliance on it, there is a temptation to believe its importance is overrated. It's true; taking a stroll with a friend, arguing over this or that, rarely provokes occasion to speak of the first principles of logic or of competing ethical paradigms. But allow that stroll to take you down the *Blutstraße* (blood road) to the Buchenwald Memorial in Germany, and then worldviews take on a chilling significance. Buchenwald, along with other concentration camps during World War II, were part of the Nazi extermination machinery dedicated to killing Jews, political dissidents, Gypsies, and other "undesirables." Listen to Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor himself, explain the origins of this nightmare:

"If we present a man with a concept of man which is not true, we may

well corrupt him. . . . I became acquainted with the last stage of that corruption in my second concentration camp, Auschwitz. The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazi liked to say, of ‘Blood and Soil.’ I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some Ministry [department] or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.”—Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. xxvii.

This is why worldviews matter. They can shape a reality in which light becomes darkness, and darkness light, where evil is good, and good is evil (*Isa. 5:20*). It is intellectually naïve and narrow-minded to explain atrocities simply by calling the perpetrators “monsters” or some other dehumanizing epithet without getting to the core of why people do what they do. Many “monsters” of history showed love to their wives and children, cracked jokes with friends, bounced their giggling grandchildren on their knees, and proceeded to get up each morning to perform the day’s atrocities. This is why worldviews matter. And this is why the answer to the psalmist’s question, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (*Ps. 8:4*) must always begin with “in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (*Gen. 1:27*).

Is there any religion or philosophical system that places a premium on human life higher than Christianity’s proposition that humans are the created, beloved image bearers of the one divine God? This truth entails the belief that Christians, Seventh-day Adventists included, are in a sense the protectors of the worth and dignity of humankind and should be flanking competing worldviews, marshalling a high view of what it means to be a human.

Some may think it a delusion of grandeur to assume that the dignity of humanity needs to be defended in the modern twenty-first century. But (post) secularism has a difficult time grounding objective human value (or “objective” anything, for that matter). In a now-famous debate between Christian apologist Greg Bahnsen and atheist Gordon Stein, someone asked from the floor why “Hitler’s Germany” was wrong. Stein, representing the atheist position, could come up with no better answer than to say that what Hitler did went against Western civilization’s moral “consensus.” Basically, it was wrong because Western civilization had previously decided that behaviors of that nature (for example, genocide) were wrong. Within this moral worldview, if the decision had gone the opposite direction for some reason, then all that was done by the Nazis could just have easily been deemed moral. Remember, Gordon Stein is not some Nazi propagandist in the 1930s. He is a *Jewish-American*

scholar having a debate at the University of California, Irvine, USA, in the year 1985.

Notice that neither Stein nor the Nazis subscribe to a worldview that upholds the intrinsic worth of humankind. Stein's framework of majority-determined morality has as much effectiveness at restraining evil as a paper tiger. Eventually, the person, or persons, who subscribes to this moral worldview will logically conclude that there is no *objective moral obligation* to go along with the majority and will simply do "whatever is right in his own eyes" (see *Prov. 21:2, Deut. 12:8, Judg. 21:25*). The fact that wicked regimes or individuals come and go is to be expected; what is disconcerting is that the core worldviews that shaped them can still be heard "at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers."

### Worldviews and Law

Most people would agree that they subscribe to worldviews that encourage some form of law-keeping. However, if their concept of law-keeping is primarily influenced by the legal codes of their countries, there may be a crucial difference between a Judeo/Christian understanding of law and other formulas.

Dr. Joel Hoffman brings out a rarely mentioned difference between the Ten Commandments and other legal codes. He offers an illustration of a conniving teenager who reflects on securing his financial future by marrying a wealthy older woman, killing her, and facing seven to twelve years of prison. He weighs the consequences; he would get out of prison at about thirty years old but would be wealthy for the rest of his life. He decides it's worth it. Hoffman then says that there is nothing in the entire body of American law that says you are not entitled to make that calculus. Nowhere does American law state that if you are willing to do the time, you still shouldn't do the crime.

This is where the Ten Commandments stand out in contrast, precisely because they don't state specific consequences for disobedience. They are *moral* law, not *legal* law. Of course, later these commandments also make up the legal code of the nation of Israel. But the commandments tell us what to do and what not to do, not in order to avoid certain specific consequences but because God is communicating what is morally right and what is morally wrong, something American law (America is likely representative of other countries in this respect) doesn't do. Perhaps this also is why the Ten Commandments are not introduced as "commandments" (*mitsvot*), but instead as "words" (*d'barim*) (*Exod. 20:1*). (See Joel M. Hoffman, "Interpreting Language," n.p. [cited 22

Dec. 2018]. Online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek\\_q0qvfbQe](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek_q0qvfbQe).)

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians who find ourselves in positions of teaching, we need to communicate the uniqueness of the law of God to the next generation. We often contextualize the Ten Commandments as a legal code to “scare” young people into obedience, but in doing so, we may divest God’s law of its unique moral authority. Any foolish tyrant can make up a law on a whim and command subservience on pain of death. Instead of motivating people to obey God’s laws by listing severe consequences, perhaps we as teachers can communicate what a privilege it is even to *know and understand* what the moral law of God (and the universe) is. And that is just the beginning. To have these moral laws and principles inscribed on our hearts and minds by the Spirit of God so that we may reflect His character is a privilege almost beyond comprehension, not to mention the tremendous and innumerable blessings that follow (*Jer. 31:35, Rom. 8:4*). Contrast this with the world’s massively confused morality and consequent pain, and one would hope that people would be lining up to learn of God’s laws and have their lives changed by them (*Isa. 60:1–3, Mic. 4:2*).

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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#### **Discuss:**

1. What are the different worldviews today that leave an open door for evil and tyranny to gain a foothold in society? How does one explain that these worldviews can be held by individuals who are extremely kind and, as the saying goes, “wouldn’t hurt a fly”?

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2. Frankl provides a definition of man and the consequences of that definition: “When we present man as an automaton of reflexes, as a mind-machine, as a bundle of instincts, as a pawn of drives and reactions, as a mere product of instinct, heredity and environment, we feed the nihilism to which modern man is, in any case, prone.” In what ways does evolutionary theory support this dangerous worldview?

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3. **The Christian worldview holds to a high view of humanity. Here are two reasons why:**
  - a. **We are created by God; we are therefore His and are to be treated according to His criteria, not someone else's (*Isa. 43:1*).**
  - b. **We are redeemed by the blood of God's Son, and therefore our value is beyond measure (*Rev. 5:9*).**

**Name all the ills we are plagued with socially and individually that would at least begin to be resolved if the above two biblical truths were incorporated into one's worldview.**

## Notes

[illegible]



# Jesus as the Master Teacher



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Heb. 1:1–4; 2 Cor. 4:1–6; John 1:14, 18; 14:1–14; Phil. 2:1–11; 2 Cor. 5:16–21.*

**Memory Text:** “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV).

**B**illy Graham tells the story of when he visited soldiers at a field hospital in the company of their general. One young soldier “was so mangled that he lay facedown on a canvas-and-steel contraption.” A doctor whispered to Graham, “I doubt he’ll ever walk again.” The soldier made a request of the general: “Sir, . . . I fought for you, but I’ve never seen you. Could I see your face?” So the general got down, slid under that canvas-and-steel contraption, and talked with the soldier. As Graham watched, a tear fell from the soldier onto the general’s cheek.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, humanity lay mangled and bleeding, in need of a healing vision of God. It is as though humankind pleaded, “Oh, God, could we see Your face?” In sending His Son to this planet, the Father sent the Master Teacher on a mission: to show humankind His face. Ever since, we have had the wondrous privilege of beholding “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6, NKJV).

As we watch the Master Teacher make His way to earth, what can we learn from Him?

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 31.

## Revealing the Father

**What** are the most important points the apostle makes about Jesus at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews? (*Heb. 1:1–4*).

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New Testament authors repeatedly accent a significant idea: Jesus comes to earth to show human beings who the Father is. In past times, God’s revelation came in a fragmented way through the prophets; in Jesus, however, the final and complete revelation of God has come.

Also, in His person, Jesus is “the reflection of God’s glory” (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*). As sinful humans, we could not endure full access to the glory of God. As the incarnate Son, Jesus reflects that glory. It is muted in Christ’s humanity so that we might see it and understand clearly the character of God.

Jesus also is “the express image of his person” (*Heb. 1:3*). The term used here, the Greek word *charactēr*, is sometimes used of the impression a seal makes in wax or the representation stamped on a coin. So, Jesus is “the exact imprint of God’s very being” (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*).

If we wish to know the Father, we must listen carefully to what the Master Teacher says about Him. And we must watch the Master Teacher, as well. The Father is seen in the Son.

**Compare** Hebrews 1:1–4 with 2 Corinthians 4:1–6. In 2 Corinthians 4:1–6, who is Jesus, and what do we learn from Him?

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As they educated others about God, Paul and his coworkers sought to reflect Jesus’ own teaching ministry about the Father. As “the image of God” (*2 Cor. 4:4*), Jesus brought us knowledge about God the Father. Similarly, Paul avoids deception and distortion of God’s Word and, instead, sets forth the truth plainly (*2 Cor. 4:2*).

Just as God, at Creation, used light to dispel darkness, He has given us His Son, Jesus, to dispel false views about Him and to show us the truth about God. It is in “the face of Jesus” that we gain the clearest knowledge of God (*2 Cor. 4:6*).

**Jesus accurately reflected the Father, something we, too, are called to do since we are invited to “be imitators of God as dear children” (*Eph. 5:1, NKJV*). What does that mean, and what can we learn from Jesus about how to be “imitators” of God?**

## Revealing the Father (Cont.)

In the moving prologue to his Gospel (*John 1:1–18*), John discusses Jesus as the eternal “Word.” John’s claims for Jesus are not timid or limited; they are bold and cosmic in scope. Jesus was in existence before the world came into being—from eternity, actually. In fact, Jesus is the agent of Creation (*John 1:2, 3*). He is “the light of all people” (*John 1:4, NRSV*), and, as the Word who came into the world, He “enlightens everyone” (*John 1:9, NRSV*).

**According to John, what is the result of Christ’s becoming a human being? As the Word, what light did He bring? What qualifications does He possess to do so? *John 1:14, 18.***

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“The Light appeared when the world’s darkness was deepest. . . .

“There was but one hope for the human race . . . that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world.

“Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 74–76.

Everything Jesus did in His life on earth had a single purpose: “the revelation of God for the uplifting of humanity.”—*Education*, p. 82.

**Jesus Himself says, “‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ ” (*John 14:9, NRSV*). What was the setting of Jesus’ statement? Why did He make it? *John 14:1–14.***

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It is tempting to criticize Philip’s blundering statement (*John 14:8*). After years of close fellowship with Jesus, he still misses the essential point of the Incarnation—that Jesus has come to show the Father’s character. Perhaps teachers today can take some comfort in the fact that one of the Master Teacher’s pupils performed so badly! Philip’s statement is probably recorded, though, not to give us reason to criticize him but to give us opportunity to examine ourselves. How long have we walked with Jesus? And have we understood Jesus any better than Philip had? “‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.’ ”

## Reading the Master Teacher's Mind

**What** concern about the Christian community in Philippi is on Paul's heart as he writes his letter to them? *Phil. 2:1–4; Phil. 4:2, 3.*

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Philippians 2:1–11 is one of the most profound passages in all the Bible. It discusses the preexistence of Christ, His divinity, His incarnation, His humanity, His acceptance of death on the cross. It describes the long, difficult, downward road that Jesus took from heaven to Calvary (*Phil. 2:5–8*). And it describes how the Father exalts Jesus to a position of universal worship (*Phil. 2:9–11*). A lot of amazing truth is packed into those verses.

**How** does Paul introduce Philippians 2:5–11? Of the events of Jesus' life that he celebrates, which ones do you think he expects believers to reflect in their own lives? *Phil. 2:6–11.*

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Paul hopes that the believers at Philippi, who could be argumentative, will learn from Jesus and His incarnation. If Jesus could adopt human form—"the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" (*Phil. 2:7, NRSV*)—and even submit to crucifixion, how much more should they submit to each other out of love?

We are reminded that there is much to learn from the Master Teacher, Jesus. We learn from the messages that He shares during His earthly ministry. We learn from the miracles that He performs and the way that He acts toward others. We may seek to model our own relationships with others after His great condescension and by dwelling on His willingness to exchange the glories of heaven for a manger (what a lesson for us!).

In contrast, the world all too often invites us to exalt ourselves, to boast of our accomplishments. At a manger in Bethlehem and from the Master Teacher we learn a different lesson—that God's great work of education and salvation is accomplished, not by exalting ourselves but by humbling ourselves before God and becoming servants to others.

**What situation are you facing, even now, in which your humbling yourself could give you a powerful opportunity to reflect Christ to others?**

## The Master Teacher and Reconciliation

Human relationships all too often break down. We become estranged from one another. The person who was once our close friend becomes, over time, someone we distrust. However, such a broken relationship can be mended. When that happens, we experience the wonder of reconciliation. Few human experiences are as sweet as this.

**How** does reconciliation lie at the heart of Christ's incarnation and His role as Master Teacher? *2 Cor. 5:16–21.*

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If we feel blessed when a relationship with another human being is restored, how grand should we feel when we are reconciled to God? In 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, Paul is clear about who is doing the reconciling—God the Father has taken the lead in mending our broken relationship with Him. And He has done this reconciling work “through Christ” (*2 Cor. 5:18, NRSV*). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (*2 Cor. 5:19, NKJV*).

Again, though, we are not simply to be consumers of the joys of reconciliation. We are to learn from the Master Teacher. In His incarnation, Jesus participated in the work of reconciliation. And we, too, are invited to participate in it. God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. And now we, with Paul, are given “the ministry of reconciliation” (*2 Cor. 5:18*).

Colossians 1:15–20 is another of the great New Testament passages on Christ's incarnation. Often thought to be a hymn, the first half of the passage discusses Christ's role in Creation (*Col. 1:15–17*), while the last half focuses on Christ's role in Redemption (*Col. 1:18–20*). Through Christ's role as Creator-Redeemer, God reconciles all things to Himself. The work of reconciliation that God accomplishes through Christ is cosmic in scale, impacting “all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (*Col. 1:20, NRSV*).

While we could never match the cosmic scale of the Master Teacher's work as reconciler, we are invited to participate in “the ministry of reconciliation” in our own sphere (*2 Cor. 5:18*). Could this be what was in Jesus' mind when He prayed, “ ‘As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world’ ” (*John 17:18, NKJV*)?

**What are practical ways we can reflect God's role as Reconciler? That is, in what situation right now (if any) can you help people be reconciled with each other?**

## The Master Teacher's First Pupils

One moment, they are a band of ordinary shepherds caring for an average flock of sheep outside a small town. In the next moment, they are the recipients of an amazing appearance of angels who bear startling, wondrous, world-shattering news. Motivated by that appearance, they seek out the child whom the angels announced.

**Imagine** standing with the shepherds and gazing into the manger. What would you see? *Luke 2:8–20.*

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We must admire the first pupils of the Master Teacher—Joseph and Mary and the shepherds. The humble conditions of Jesus' birth give no indication of the wonder of the Incarnation—that, in the Person of this Infant, God has become One with humankind. However, with the aid of visions, dreams, and angels, those first students of His are able to look beyond the outward appearance of Jesus' birth. The shepherds share with others the identity of this infant, that He is “‘a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:11, NRSV; compare Luke 2:17*).

**How** do the wise men respond to the news of the birth of Jesus? How does Herod respond? *Matt. 2:1–12.*

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Before He has spoken His first parable or performed His first miracle, the Master Teacher is worthy of our worship because of who He is. To fully appreciate the later teaching ministry of Jesus, we must join these early pupils, the wise men, in their worship of the Master Teacher. The one whose teachings we admire is more than a wise educator. He is God come to dwell with humankind. Christian education is rooted in the worship of Christ.

With wise men, shepherds, and angels, we are called to worship Christ, the newborn King—and to see in the infant Jesus the reality of God Himself.

**Think about what the Incarnation of Jesus means regarding the character of God. The Creator of all the universe, which is so big that we cannot grasp it—this God “humbled himself” by coming into humanity, living as Jesus, and then dying on the cross, bearing in Himself the punishment for our sins. Why is this such good news?**

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Teacher Sent From God” pp. 73–83, in *Education*.

“In the Teacher sent from God, all true educational work finds its center. Of this work today as verily as of the work He established eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour speaks in the words—

“ ‘I am the First and the Last, and the Living One.’

“ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’ Revelation 1:17, 18, R.V.; 21:6, R.V.

“In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

“Behold, He is still inviting: ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,’ out of him ‘shall flow rivers of living water.’ ‘The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.’ John 7:37, 38; 4:14, R.V.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 83.

“Dear teacher, . . .

“As the highest preparation for your work, I point you to the words, the life, the methods, of the Prince of teachers. I bid you consider Him. Here is your true ideal. Behold it, dwell upon it, until the Spirit of the divine Teacher shall take possession of your heart and life.

“ ‘Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord,’ you will be ‘transformed into the same image.’ 2 Corinthians 3:18, R.V.

“This is the secret of power over your pupils. Reflect Him.” —*Education*, p. 282.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What values and actions would be important to Christian teachers and students who take seriously the idea of learning from the incarnation of the Master Teacher?
- ❷ Christian parents and teachers have a high standard—to reflect the character of God as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus. What should we do when we fall short of this high standard?
- ❸ In class, discuss the question at the end of Thursday’s study. What does the birth, life, and death of Jesus teach us about the character of God? Why should this be so comforting to us, especially during times of great trial?

## Finding Freedom in Rwanda

By LUCETTE N'DIAY MITRAC

I don't know why I volunteered to preach at Total Member Involvement evangelistic meetings in Rwanda in May 2016. Other than me, only young people volunteered to preach when coordinator Duane McKey invited our Seventh-day Adventist church in Paris to participate. I was weak after a long illness, and my 23-year-old son recently had committed suicide. But I signed up and quickly was asked to supervise the young people, not to preach.

Things changed after our arrival in Nyanza, Rwanda. We met with the local pastors, and I was asked to preach. I fled to my hotel room and fell on my knees. "Lord, I have never preached," I prayed. "But since You said it is not by might nor by power, but by Your Spirit, please speak instead of me."

Starting with the first evening meeting, childhood memories flooded my mind as I spoke about the transforming power of the gospel. Rwandans had suffered horrific rape and violence during 1990s genocide. I had gone through similar trials and spoke from my heart. Every time I made an altar call, people were moved, especially women who had been raped. Many came to the front.

The more I spoke, the more I was healed. Although I had given my heart to Jesus many years earlier, I realized that I still held a grudge. I knew that God had not deprived me of my childhood and my mother, but I still blamed Him.

My stepfather used to rape me. I only told my mother when I was 13. She took me to a gynecologist and sent me to live with a cousin. Shortly afterward, she visited me on a Friday. I never saw her again. My stepfather killed her.

My stepfather spent only two years in prison because he was a high-ranking military officer. I lived in an orphanage from the age of 13 to 19. My biological father was alive, but he didn't want anything to do with me. I felt so lonely.

I found healing in the Bible. I read, "The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness. . . . He who touches you touches the apple of His eye. . . . The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love' " (*Zeph. 3:17, Zech. 2:8, Jer. 31:3, NKJV*). But I didn't love myself. Even if people told me that I was pretty, I didn't feel pretty inside.

In Rwanda, the dark negativity faded as I spoke. I knew it wasn't me preaching. I found freedom and accepted Christ's loving declaration that I am a wonderful creature. A total of 390 people were baptized at Cyegera Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Today I am 66, and I have returned to Rwanda many times. My Rwandan friends are my family, and they call me "Mama." I am working now so many people will become new creatures in Christ.



*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel around the world.*



## ***Part I: Overview***

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If we never knew a word out of Jesus' mouth, we could still spend a lifetime learning from Him. The fact that He left heaven to come to this world, along with His actions while here, speaks volumes. Perhaps this is why all the epistles of the New Testament are thin in their quoting of Jesus' words but are instead preoccupied with who He is and the life He lived.

Jesus is a two-for-one deal. Getting to know Him entails learning of Another. "Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us' " (*John 14:8, ESV*). One can hear the pained surprise and amazement in Jesus' voice as He responds: " 'Have I been with you so long . . . ?' " (*John 14:9, ESV*). He expected His disciples to know what the author of Hebrews knows, that He Himself is the "brightness of his [the Father's] glory, and the express image of his person" (*Heb. 1:3*). An important Christological theme in the New Testament is that Jesus reveals what God is like. His face reveals God's face (*2 Cor. 4:6*). When teaching the Bible, we should express doctrines in light of the character of God. This character is best seen in the only One who can exclusively say, " 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' " (*John 14:9, ESV*). So, regardless of people's experiences, the number of Bible texts quoted, or the reverence for one's denominational doctrines, the life of Christ must always serve as a corrective to our descriptions of God.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Illustration**

So then, who is Jesus of Nazareth? The answer often depends on who is asking. During a meeting, I was asked by a pastor of another denomination who I thought Jesus was. Because of the context and who was asking, I knew what he wanted. He *didn't* want to know whether Jesus was the Messiah or the revelation of the Father or our best Friend. He wanted to know whether I believed Jesus was eternal, preexistent, omnipotent, omniscient, omni-everything-else that affirms that He truly is God. The disciples, on the other hand, gave an answer different from the one I gave. Matthew's account answers with, " 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' " (*Matt. 16:16, NKJV*). The text condenses with Luke saying, " 'The Christ of God' " (*Luke 9:20, NKJV*), and Mark simply saying, " 'the Christ' " (*Mark 8:29, ESV*). Obviously, Jesus as Messiah was the looming issue during His ministry. As time marches on, sometimes the issues and questions about Jesus change. Though Jesus doesn't change, it

may be advantageous, based on context and our audience, to modify our emphasis in how we present Him.

Who Jesus is can be communicated in various ways. Keep in mind that the audience helps to narrow the options. Here is an extreme example: a young boy on his deathbed doesn't need to hear of the hypostatic union of Jesus' divine and human nature as articulated by the Council of Chalcedon. He needs a comforting Friend. Other venues provide opportunity for scholarly discussion about the details of Christ's person. It is imperative as educators that we recognize different ministry settings and know Christ well enough to share just the right angle of His personality that best fits the moment.

### Scripture

"Passing the torch" is an English idiom that harkens back to Greek runners passing a torch in a running relay in which a final runner crosses the finish line with torch in hand. Scripture reveals a passing of the torch that is both thrilling and sobering at the same time. As the lesson brings out, Jesus came to reveal what the Father is like. In a sense, the Father passed a torch to the Son, so that the Son's face would illuminate the Father's character to our gaze. Here are some biblical snippets to that end:

- "He [Jesus] is the *radiance of the glory of God*" (*Heb. 1:3, ESV*).
- Jesus is "the exact *imprint of [God's] nature*" (*Heb. 1:3, ESV*).
- "The glory of Christ, *who is the image of God*" (*2 Cor. 4:4, ESV*)
- "The light of the knowledge of *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (*2 Cor. 4:6, ESV*)
- "'Whoever has *seen [Jesus]* has seen the Father' " (*John 14:9, ESV*).

There is no doubt that New Testament authors want us to conclude that when we see Jesus, we are beholding an accurate picture of what the Father is like.

So, Jesus fulfills His leg of the race. Does He pass the torch? Yes, He does. Of course, He remains, and will always remain, the most perfect image of His Father, but He passes the torch on to His followers in an expression of shared responsibility and privilege.

Notice the "commission" He gives His disciples—a commission that may even be greater than what is typically identified as the Great Commission (*Matt. 28:18–20*). After twice pronouncing peace on His disciples, He proclaims, " 'As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you' " (*John 20:19, John 20:21, ESV*). Never has the little word "as" been so honored to bear such meaning. Just as the Father sent Jesus to show the world who He (the Father) is, Jesus now sends

us to show the world who He (Jesus) is. The torch has been passed.

It is no wonder that His laying this holy burden on the shoulders of the disciples is embedded between two empowering acts of Christ. First, He pronounces “peace” upon them while letting them gaze upon His scars. He slowly undoes His robe so they can see and touch His spear-pierced side and hold His scarred hands. “ ‘Touch me, and see’ ” (*Luke 24:39, ESV*). And while they stand huddled around their risen Savior, He says again, “Peace be unto you” as if to make a connection between His wounds and the peace He is blessing them with (*John 20:19–21*). They now have peace—a shalom—that truly passes all understanding and ushers them into reconciliation with God (*Phil. 4:7, Rom. 5:1*). He then tells them He is sending them the way His Father sent Him—but not before He does one final act. He breathes on them and says, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (*John 20:22*). This will be the secret of their success. The renewing and empowering influence of the Spirit of God will enable them to reflect their Savior.

In thinking about Jesus’ passing the torch of revelation to His people, a number of verses come to mind that reinforce the idea that we were created and redeemed for such a purpose.

1. Jesus is the express image of God (*Heb. 1:3*), and humanity was made in God’s image, as we read: “Let us make man in our image” (*Gen. 1:26*).
2. Jesus is the image of God, and we are to be restored into the image of Jesus: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (*Rom. 8:29, ESV*). “And we all, . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image” (*2 Cor. 3:18, ESV*).
3. Jesus is the light of the world (*John 8:12*), but then so are we: “ ‘You are the light of the world’ ” (*Matt. 5:14, ESV*).
4. Jesus is the Word made flesh (*John 1:14*) in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (*Col. 2:9, ESV*); by extension, the people of God are called “the body of Christ” (*1 Cor. 12:27*).

The list of parallels continues between Jesus’ mission to reveal truth about God to this world and how He has qualified His people to continue that same mission. Our prayer is that to the very end we will carry the torch handed us by Christ, to illuminate the world with the knowledge of His character.

### Illustration

A revivalist once offered some thoughts on being God’s image bearers. As touched on in the lesson, Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Christ as being the

*charakter* of the Father. The Greek *charakter* first denoted the engraving tool used by an engraver. Eventually, it denoted the mark or impress made by the tool, an impress as one would see on a coin. The purpose was to make an exact reproduction of the king's image on those coins. Jesus was once asked a question on whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. He asked to see a coin and asked His audience whose image was on the coin. They answered, "Caesar's," after which Jesus said His famous line, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (*Matt. 22:21*). In like manner, Jesus will one day return to this earth looking for His own "coins." When He does, He needs only to ask the same question He asked 2,000 years ago: Whose image is seen on these coins? If we bear the image of Christ and have the Father's name impressed in our foreheads (*Rev. 22:4*), then it will be good news to hear, " 'Render . . . to God the things that are God's' " (*Matt. 22:21, ESV*). God will gather His coins and we can go home—finally.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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Speaking like a Christian, attending church like a Christian, explicating doctrines like a Christian, and calling oneself a Christian are never replacements for actually being a Christian. There is no population that understands this difference better than our children, who are watching every move their parents, their teachers, and their religious leaders make. They may not be able to articulate it, but they are either consciously or unconsciously evaluating Adventist education based on how Adventists live. This is the bottom line. This is why bearing the image of God in our daily lives is nonnegotiable if we want to see Adventist education succeed.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1. How does one know if he or she is a genuine Christian?**

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2. How should accountability play a role in denominational employment, where one teacher or leader can influence hundreds or maybe thousands of children?

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3. How much should we rely on students' feedback to determine if someone is a godly teacher who should continue being employed?

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4. The title of this lesson is "Jesus as the Master Teacher." Do you think that this idea is coming across loud and clear in our families and schools? If not, how could we teach our children in a way that causes them to say, "I was taught by Jesus today"?

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## TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT TIME

### *What is Total Member Involvement?*

- ▶ Total Member Involvement (TMI) is a full-scale, world-church evangelistic thrust that involves every member, every church, every administrative entity, every type of public outreach ministry, as well as personal and institutional outreach.
- ▶ It is a calendar-driven, intentional soul-winning plan that discovers the needs of families, friends, and neighbors. Then it shares how God fulfills every need, resulting in church planting and church growth, with a focus on retaining, preaching, sharing, and discipling.

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT TMI TIME IN SABBATH SCHOOL

### *Dedicate the first 15 minutes\* of each lesson to plan, pray and share:*

- ▶ **TMI IN-REACH:** Plan to visit, pray, care for missing or hurting members, and distribute territory assignments. Pray and discuss ways to minister to the needs of church families, inactive members, youth, women and men, and various ways to get the church family involved.
- ▶ **TMI OUT-REACH:** Pray and discuss ways of reaching your community, city, and world, fulfilling the Gospel Commission by sowing, reaping, and keeping. Involve all ministries in the church as you plan short-term and long-term soul-winning projects. TMI is about intentional acts of kindness. Here are some practical ways to become personally involved: 1. Develop the habit of finding needs in your community. 2. Make plans to address those needs. 3. Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ **TMI UP-REACH:** Lesson Study. Encourage members to engage in individual Bible study—make study of the Bible in Sabbath School participatory. Study for transformation, not information.

TMI	Time	Explanation
Fellowship Outreach World Mission	15 min.*	Pray, plan, organize for action. Care for missing members. Schedule outreach.
Lesson Study	45 min.*	Involve everyone in the study of the lesson. Ask questions. Highlight key texts.
Lunch		Plan lunch for the class after worship. <b>THEN GO OUT AND REACH SOMEONE!</b>

*\*Adjust times as necessary.*

# MORE MISSION!



**Y**ou could read the mission story about Rishon Pereira, a 9-year-old boy who gave away his toys to village children in India.

Or you could meet him, his parents, and their goats through photos and a video!

Visit the Facebook page of Mission Quarterlies to download extra materials to make the children and adult mission stories come alive every week.

E-mail editor Andrew McChesney  
([mcchesneya@gc.adventist.org](mailto:mcchesneya@gc.adventist.org))  
for more information.



@missionquarterlies



# More Lessons From *the* Master Teacher




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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:1–11, Rom. 5:11–19, Gen. 28:10–17, John 1:1–14, Matt. 15:21–28, Mark 10:46–52.*

**Memory Text:** “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road” (*Mark 10:52, NKJV*).

Who among us has never been ashamed of himself or herself? Who among us hasn't done things that pain us to think about, and that we would recoil in horror at the thought of others knowing? Most likely, we've all been there, haven't we?

Imagine, then, what it was like to be Adam and Eve after they ate fruit from the forbidden tree. Or when Jacob tricked his father into favoring him over his elder brother and then had to run away from his brother's anger. How did he sleep at night? And imagine being the woman caught in adultery, “in the very act” (*John 8:4*). David had been there, too, and Psalm 32 was his poignant expression and confession of what it had been like.

Of course, that's one reason the gospel is universal, and Christ's death was for all humanity. Whatever our differences, surely one thing unites us: our general sinfulness.

Hence, true Christian education must be about pointing us to the only solution for our rather dismal state. This week we'll look at our only solution, our Master Teacher.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 7.



## Instead of Hiding

**Read** Genesis 3:1–11. Why would God have asked Adam, “Where are you?”

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Typical stories of the Fall depict the fruit as an apple. But that’s not what the text says. It was simply the “fruit of the tree” (*Gen. 3:3*). The kind of fruit doesn’t matter. Eating from this tree was forbidden because the tree *stood for something*. It stood for the temptation to push God aside and to declare, “I can be the measure of my own life. I can be God to myself. I have authority over the Word of God.”

And, sure enough, when the snake, or “serpent,” got Adam and Eve to eat the tree’s fruit, their lives skidded off course. And then, when they sensed God nearby, they tried to hide “among the trees of the garden” (*Gen. 3:8, NKJV*).

How strange that God would ask Adam, “Where are you?” God certainly knew where he was. Perhaps the Lord asked the question to help Adam and Eve realize just what they were doing—hiding—as a result of what they had done. That is, He was helping them see the sad results of their actions.

**Read** Romans 5:11–19, where Paul, many times, directly links what Adam did in Eden with what Jesus did on the cross. What should this tell us about how Jesus came to undo what Adam did?

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One could argue that the plan of salvation is God’s response to Adam and Eve’s answer. They were hiding from God in the shame and the guilt of their sin, and God came to rescue them. In our own ways, we, too, have done the same thing, and Jesus has come to rescue us. Hence the question “Where are you?” could be asked of us, as well. That is, where are you in your sin and guilt, in relationship to Jesus and what He has done to rescue you from it?

**Whatever else Christian education entails, why must it entail, even emphasize, the fact that our natural state is to hide from God, and then point us to Jesus as the solution?**

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## On the Run

**Read** Genesis 28:10–17. What is the context of this story, and what does it teach us about God’s grace for those who, in a sense, are on the run from their sins?

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In his dealings with the rest of the family, Jacob, with his mother’s help, had fallen into cruel deceits, and now he’s paying for it. His brother is breathing violent threats against him, and he’s become a fugitive, headed toward his uncle’s place in Haran. Everything is unsettled and scary.

One day Jacob trudges into the dusk, and then the dark. He’s in the middle of nowhere, with only the sky for a roof. Finding a stone for a pillow, he falls asleep. But sleep’s blank unconsciousness is soon interrupted. The famous dream comes, and the ladder, or staircase, that he sees rests on earth and stretches to heaven. Angels are ascending and descending on it.

Then he hears a voice say, “ ‘I am the LORD, the God of Abraham’ ” (*Genesis 28:13, NRSV*). The voice goes on to repeat promises Jacob is familiar with from the family lore. Your offspring will become great. They will be a blessing to all the families of the earth. “ ‘Know that I am with you,’ ” the voice continues, “ ‘and will keep you wherever you go, . . . for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you’ ” (*Gen. 28:15, NRSV*).

Ellen G. White wrote of how Paul, much later, “beholds the ladder of Jacob’s vision, representing Christ, who has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. His faith is strengthened as he calls to mind how patriarchs and prophets have relied upon the One who is his support and consolation, and for whom he is giving his life.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 512.

Jacob awakens, and he says to himself: “ ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it’ ” (*Gen. 28:16, NKJV*). What’s happened here is “awesome.” He’ll never forget the place, and he gives it a name. Then he vows lifelong loyalty to God.

**What can we learn from this story about how God, in Christ, is seeking to reach us despite our sins? Again, why must Christian education keep this principle at the forefront of what it teaches?**

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## Rabbi Jesus

Of all the chapter beginnings in the New Testament, none is more famous than this: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*John 1:1*). And John 1 soon takes you to the unforgettable verse: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (*John 1:14, NRSV*).

**Read** John 1:1–14. What are these texts sharing about who Jesus was and what He was doing here? What should this tell us about Jesus as the great Example of a teacher?

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The same God who spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden, and to Jacob in the middle of nowhere, now shows up *as a person*. God, says the New Testament, was *personified* in Jesus. Through Jesus, we can learn about God’s will and God’s way, because Jesus was God.

The chapter goes on to say how John the Baptist was so compelling a preacher that even religious leaders from Jerusalem suspected that he might be someone special. But he was preparing the way for someone greater than himself. Someone astonishingly special was about to appear, and he, John the Baptist, would be unworthy to “untie the thong of his sandal” (*John 1:27, NRSV*).

The next day he saw Jesus and declared that He was the “Son of God.” That day, and also a day later, he called Jesus “the lamb of God.”

Also, two of John the Baptist’s followers decide to follow Jesus themselves. And when Jesus asks what they are looking for, they call Him “‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher)” (*John 1:38, NRSV*).

Jesus, then, is a rabbi, a teacher, but never has there been a human teacher like Him, because, again, He is God. In other words, God came down to humanity in the form of a human being, and in that form He functioned as a rabbi, a teacher. No wonder Ellen White called Jesus “the greatest teacher the world has ever seen.”—*Signs of the Times*, June 10, 1886. After all, this Teacher was God.

**Considering who Jesus was, why does it make sense to learn from Him the best ways of teaching spiritual truth? What can we learn from Jesus about why not only what we say is important for teaching but also what we do?**

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## A Woman Talks Back

Jesus is the Master Teacher. God's true character shines through in His teaching, and also in His life. Thus, one gospel story is all the more remarkable for showing that when someone talks back to Jesus, He still listens.

**Read** the story of Jesus' encounter with a Gentile (or "Canaanite") woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon (*Matt. 15:21–28, Mark 7:24–30*). Notice that the men in Jesus' circle are impatient with her and that even Jesus appears to dismiss her. What do you make of the woman's audacity? What does this story teach us about how Jesus Himself taught others?

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Jesus was near Tyre and Sidon. He had crossed into a place where strangers abounded and ethnic tension bristled. The Greek-speaking city dwellers looked down on Jewish farmers in the countryside, and the Jewish farmers looked down on them in return.

Not long before, Herod, the puppet governor of Galilee, Jesus' home territory, had executed John the Baptist. But John was a man whose vision Jesus largely shared, and the execution seemed ominous. Jesus came face-to-face with the danger of His mission.

Feeling the strain, Jesus entered a house, hoping, so Mark says in his account, that no one would know He was there (*Mark 7:24*). But the woman found Him.

In the culture of that time and place, a woman had no right to assert herself. What is more, this woman belonged to a culture and ethnic group the Jews had little time for, and this put her at a further disadvantage.

But the woman's daughter was sick. She wanted help, and she persisted in asking for it.

Jesus dismissed her. " 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs,' " He said (*Matt. 15:26, NRSV*). The remark could have hurt her feelings.

And then something remarkable happened. She then responded. She was familiar with dogs—unlike the Jews, who would not have them as pets—and she said: " 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table' " (*Matt. 15:27, NRSV*).

Her remark makes a difference. It seems compelling. And Jesus heals her child.

**" 'Let it be to you as you desire' " (*Matt. 15:28, NKJV*). How do we understand these words? How do we respond, though, when things do not happen as we desire?**

## A Student Who Gets It

Jesus and His followers had turned toward Jerusalem. As Herod had been concerned about John the Baptist, the authorities, including Herod, were now concerned about Jesus. His followers included the poor and other vulnerable folk hoping desperately for change.

Jesus wanted above all things to bring hope to the world. But He was sure, by now, that those with the most power and privilege were going to do what they could to nullify that mission. They did not want Him to succeed.

As for the inner circle of Jesus' students, the twelve disciples, they seemed eager to be on Jesus' side. But at the same time, they seemed baffled—or *blind*. For example, in Mark 8:31–33, the Master Teacher is challenging His students to *see* things hard for them to see. That is, in many ways they still were spiritually blind to what really mattered (see Mark 8:37).

All this is background for Jesus' encounter with someone who *does* see.

**Read** the story of Jesus and the healing of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar. (See Mark 10:46–52.) Notice the great mercy Jesus shows. Now consider how the blind man's desire to *see* leads to his decision to *follow* Jesus on the way, or road, to Jerusalem. Do you think Mark may be drawing a contrast between Bartimaeus and the other disciples? How does this story shed light on what it means for *you* to be responsive to the Master Teacher?

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Bartimaeus had wanted to see the curl in a baby's hair and the color of wheat at harvest. But seeing includes more than just what's physical only. This story, in other words, is about seeing spiritually. It is about *getting it*—about catching on to what the Master Teacher is truly about. Physical sight is one thing. It's an important thing, and Jesus knows it. But Jesus also knows that every person's deepest wish is for a new and better life.

**Read** Hebrews 5:12–14. What is this teaching us about true education?

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**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Test of Discipleship,” pp. 57–65, in *Steps to Christ*.

Ellen White tells us (among other things) that when we truly respond to the Master Teacher, “we long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 58). In the company of Jesus Christ, duty, she says, “becomes a delight” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 59). Now, from the Bible, consult Matthew 5–7. Here is the Sermon on the Mount, one of the great summaries of what the Master Teacher wanted His students to know and the keynote of the kingdom He came to establish.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As God addressed Adam and Eve, and also Jacob, so Jesus addresses us. He connects with our deep longings, and He startles us (as He did Bartimaeus) into reconsidering who we are and where we are going. In this light, think about how we teach the Bible to our children and to one another. What is the difference between mediocre Bible teaching and the compelling kind that really makes a difference in people’s lives?
- ❷ Is the question of where you are on life’s journey purely *personal*, or might it be helpful to discuss this with people you trust? How does the idea of the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27) suggest that conversation with others can be one way of getting in touch with what Christ wants you to know?
- ❸ We learned on Thursday that as soon as Bartimaeus could see—as soon as he was rescued from his physical (and spiritual) blindness—he *followed Jesus* on the road to Jerusalem. On this road he heard, every day, the Master Teacher’s wisdom. Now, we may assume, he *wanted* to bear Jesus’ image, breathe His Spirit, do His will. Why would someone take “delight,” as *Steps to Christ* puts it, in following a standard as high as the one Jesus upheld in the Sermon on the Mount?
- ❹ Dwell more on the question at the end of Thursday’s study. How do we learn to discern between good and evil? How do we define what is good and what is evil? And why is what we do with that knowledge perhaps even more important than having that knowledge itself?

## Miracle on an Indian Road

By DAISY JUNG

The other day, my husband and I traveled to the city to buy materials for the chapel that we are constructing in a village in India. We also needed supplies for the student volunteers who were helping us share the gospel in the area.

My husband bought electrical equipment for the construction project, and I found 15 guitars for the volunteers and 100 notebooks for their classes. It was 9:00 P.M. when we started the three-hour drive back to the village. As my husband drove, we chatted and listened to music.

About a half hour before reaching home, a strange sound startled us.

*Dadadadada. Pang!*

The noise was quite loud. We were not sure what had happened. My husband stopped the car and stepped outside to investigate. A tire was flat.

When we saw the flat tire, we looked at each other and laughed loudly for some time. "How many times have we had a flat tire like this?" my husband asked.

"Well, let me count," I said. "If I include the bicycle, then it must have happened many, many times. Our life is really not boring, darling."

We didn't have a spare tire.

Stranded in the countryside in the middle of the night, we called Pastor Abishek for help. Music played softly in the disabled car as my husband calmly sat in the driver's seat, waiting for the pastor. The car didn't have a working air conditioner, and we soon began to sweat. I chased a mosquito around the car.

Suddenly lightning flashed across the dark sky, and thunder rolled. Raindrops splattered on the windows. "Honey," I said. "This situation is quite unfortunate but funny. Life isn't boring here in India."

After some time, Pastor Abishek arrived to pick us up. We moved the 15 guitars, 100 notebooks, and electrical equipment into his small truck.

As we drove toward home, the pastor surprised us.

"When you called me, my cell phone was on silent mode," he said. "Even the vibration function was turned off so I could sleep. I don't know how it happened that I woke up at midnight and looked at my phone at the very moment that you called. I normally sleep soundly the whole night through."

Our hearts trembled as he spoke. God had woken him in the deep of night and impressed him to check his phone. God knew that two of His children were longing for home.

By now it was raining heavily. Lightning illuminated the road, and thunder roared. But we were happy because we were going home. Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Angel Abishek!



*Names have been changed to protect the work of volunteers serving in a sensitive part of the world.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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“Where are you? What are you doing?” (*Gen. 3:9, Gen. 3:13, paraphrase*). These are the last questions we want to hear while indulging in sin. And yet, at some point God has whispered to us, “Where are you right now?” As the lesson points out, the gospel is universal because, as humans, we all have sinful, fallen natures.

It is one thing to admit that we were born with sinful, fallen natures; quite another to feel convicted enough to seek a personal solution to the sin problem. The temptation is to concede, Yes, I “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Rom. 3:23, NKJV*). But so has everyone else, right? The flip side of this cavalier attitude can undermine our reception of God’s love, as well. “Yes, God loves me, but He loves the whole world too. How personal and intimate, really, is that?” (*read John 3:16*). Somehow our awareness of both the wretchedness of our sinful nature and our deep need of the redeeming quality of God’s love must be sharpened to penetrate a heart numb from theology that ironically becomes diluted when applied across the board.

Jesus taught us the way (His teachings), showed us the way (His example), and made us a way (His death and resurrection). He is Teacher, Example, and Savior all at the same time. He doesn’t just expose sin—He conquers it.

As a time traveler goes into the past and changes it to affect the future, Jesus’ life and death reverse the historical consequences of Adam’s failure (*Rom. 5:12–21*). For the believer, grace, justification, and eternal life are present realities. Jesus is Someone we can trust—Someone we should listen to.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Scripture: Jesus’ Worldview and the Downward Spiral**

As difficult as it is for the adherent to the evolutionary, progressive, humanistic worldview to admit, evil is real, and it proceeds directly out of the center of the human heart. We are not victims; we are perpetrators. Jesus, the Master Teacher, said it like this: “ ‘For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft,



murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within' ” (*Mark 7:21–23, ESV*).

In a sense, we are *all* victims, because everyone's sins send out ripples that affect everyone else. Obviously some are more deeply affected than others. We acknowledge that. But even in the midst of our pain, it is helpful to remember that our sins have hurt others, lest we grab our fellow man “by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest” (*Matt. 18:28*) and forget that we ourselves have been forgiven “ten thousand talents” (*Matt. 18:24*).

When we study Genesis and capture the worldview depicted there, we are studying the primary sources that shaped and gave context to all Jesus' teachings. This is crucial, because many of us live in secular cultures that disparage the notion of sin, or at least try to minimize it. This is counter to the Genesis account in which the speed and intensity of a single sin snowballs into an avalanche of wickedness. Adam and Eve commit a single act of disobedience, and the next thing they know, they are holding a dead son—from forbidden fruit to fratricide in a single generation. These are the Scriptures Jesus was raised on. This is why, though He was full of mercy, grace, and love, He never minimized the notion or consequences of sin. Notice the narrative flow of Genesis, the source of Christ's worldview:

1. Everything starts “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*)
2. Forbidden fruit eaten (*Gen. 3:6*)
3. Hiding and blaming (*Gen. 3:8–13*)
4. Murder (*Gen. 4:8*)
5. Risk of murder and God's seven-fold vengeance (*Gen. 4:14, 15*)
6. Murder/manslaughter and a call for seventy-seven-fold vengeance (*Gen. 4:23, 24*)
7. Global wickedness; thoughts only continually evil (*Gen. 6:5*)

Humankind is removed from Eden's paradise in so many ways. Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, presumably exiting the *east* entrance where a sentinel guards reentry (*Gen. 3:24*). When Cain is banished, he goes “out from the presence of the LORD . . . east of Eden” (*Gen. 4:16, emphasis supplied*). The tower of Babel, a monument to human arrogance and folly, is in the *east* (*Gen. 11:2*). Moving east is moving farther and farther away from Eden and the presence of God. Humanity's downward spiral from its pristine condition initiates comprehensive judgments from God. He “uncreates” the world by returning it to its watery embryonic form (*see Gen. 1:2, Gen. 7:18*) and basically starts over, animals and all. In a fascinating combination of judgment and mercy, the *same appraisal* of humanity's wickedness that motivated the Flood judgment is now given as the reason for extending mercy with a promise never to repeat the destruction (*Gen.*

6:5, *Gen. 8:21*). Hence, at the tower in Shinar, in keeping with His promise, God doesn't destroy wickedness; He disperses it (*Gen. 11:8*).

### Scripture: The Foundations

To appreciate the “sinfulness of sin” and to make sure God isn't getting the blame, it is important to go back to the beginning. God makes “good” stuff. He says so seven times in Genesis 1 (*Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31*). And that is just the first chapter of the Bible. With a careful reading of Genesis (and the rest of Scripture), it can be added that He makes *only* good stuff. Already we have the fundamental groundwork that releases God from the culpability that “He created the devil,” or is responsible for sin and suffering. The reason the skeptic or doubter is so quick to make this charge is because it is a blatant deflection from the source of where evil and suffering really come—and that is from the skeptic and doubter themselves and all the rest of creation, both human and angelic.

Whatever manufactured dilemmas one has about how a “good” Creation can turn bad are fairly easily resolved if one admits to a quality of the universe that is so ubiquitous it is virtually invisible. That quality is the potential for change. First, no one would choose a *changeless* universe (no movement, no enacted decisions, no self-determination, no growth, etc.) over a *changing* one. Second, with “change” in the paradigm, humanity celebrates its achievements (changes) in a million variegated ways, but would we celebrate them at all if change already were determined to go only in one direction? Do many celebrate the fact that balls roll downhill? If humans could “roll” only one way, it might be an occasion for observation, but never celebration. Words like freedom, morality, justice, kindness, love, and every other conceivable virtue of humanity would be drained of their significance. So, given the options of a changeless universe, a determined changing universe, or a freely changing universe, most would choose option three, though it opens the door to real changes that we deem evil or painful. So, it is no real paradox that a good thing can turn bad.

### The Skeptics: Which Way Is Down?

Chapters 3–11 of Genesis stand as a witness that following the serpent's suggestion has been a mistake. Things were “good,” but no longer. Humanity has not improved, become godlike, or escaped death (*Gen. 3:4, 5*). It is worth mentioning that humankind's downward trend in the biblical account is the opposite portrayal of that found in the Sumerian flood story. The difference is that the Mesopotamian literature

is optimistic about man's existence. In those accounts, man doesn't start perfect, but after the gods turn against him in the flood, he does better; he *progresses*. The biblical account goes the opposite direction, "and the ensuing pessimistic viewpoint could not be more different from the tenor of the Sumerian tale" (Thorkild Jacobson, "The Eridu Genesis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 [1981], p. 529).

The irony here, of course, is that it has been standard fare for critical scholars and laymen to cast doubt on the biblical account because of Mesopotamian flood narratives. But if the details of those parallel narratives bring into question the validity of the biblical account, then does the optimistic progressive philosophy of these myths bring into question the progressive humanistic worldview? Another question: if the parallels cause skeptics to throw the biblical account into the myth category, do the antiparallels cause them to remove it from that category? Young people will be faced with anti-theistic and antibiblical worldviews the farther they ascend the educational ladder. Let's be sure that Seventh-day Adventist education is preparing them to step up to the challenge.

Throughout Scripture, God inspires hope that one day, things will be restored to their original perfection. Jesus, the Emmanuel son (God with us [Matt. 1:23]), "tabernacling" among His creation (see John 1:14) and announcing the return of the "kingdom of God"—this was the beginning fulfillment that once again humanity would step back into the presence of God, back into Eden to live with God forever (Rev. 21:3).

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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When applying what we learn from the Scripture to our lives, it is helpful to ask: "How do I apply anything to my life?" We are applying a whole set of theories (about whatever) to our lives every day. How to apply the teachings of Jesus to our lives is probably not too much different from how and why we apply anything else to our lives. Here are some ideas that can push your students from mere theory to practice.

- 1. Ask class members to immerse themselves totally in the relevant literature: Encourage them to read, read, and read some more, until they are convinced that they have discovered an important truth.**
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- 2. Disciples are apprentices: Have you ever watched an apprentice? Students watch the master, they follow his strokes, and they imitate him in every way they can.**

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- 3. Invite your students to share what they have learned. Two thousand years ago, Seneca said, "Men learn while they teach." Material gets ingrained when we teach it.**

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Using these three principles as disciples of Christ, your students should prayerfully (1) immerse themselves in His teachings, (2) observe carefully how He lived and have those pictures in their heads throughout the day so that they act like Him, and (3) find a willing ear to share what they have learned and what their experience has been.

# Worship *in* Education



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Daniel 3, Rev. 14:6–12, Ps. 78:1–17, John 4:7–26, 1 Chron. 16:1–36, Mark 7:1–13.*

**Memory Text:** “Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chronicles 16:29, NKJV).

Worship is part of humanity, part of human nature, even fallen human nature. No question, we were created as beings who, out of the freedom given us by God, would worship the Lord because we love Him and know that He is worthy of worship. Such worship must have been pretty easy in a pre-Fall world, where humans had face-to-face access to God in a creation unmarred by sin, death, and destruction—a creation that we who know only a fallen world can barely imagine.

Today, of course, although the innate need to worship still exists in us, it, like everything else in this world, has been twisted and distorted by sin, which means that among other things we, as worshiping beings, can end up worshiping the wrong things, or even end up not worshiping the Lord in the way that He is supposed to be worshiped (*see, for instance, Mark 7:1–13, Jer. 7:4*).

Hence, because worship is so central to the Christian experience, Christian education must deal with the question of worship, the subject for this week's lesson.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 14.

## We All Worship Something

There's something in us—something, no doubt, that was originally woven in us by God but, as with everything else, became warped by sin—that longs to worship. Obviously, in the beginning we were to worship the only One worthy of worship, our Lord and Creator. But since the Fall, all this has changed, even greatly.

But, yes, we all worship something, someone, whatever. This helps explain why all through human history, and even today, humans practice worship. In ancient Egypt, some people worshiped the pharaoh; at other times, in other lands, people worshiped statues of fish, multi-headed gods, and other supposed deities. Some people worshiped the sun, the moon, the stars.

Today, most people are too sophisticated to bow down before a statue of a frog (but, apparently, not a statue of Mary); yet, this hardly means that humans, even secular humans, don't worship something: money, power, sex, themselves, rock stars, actors, politicians. Whatever we love the most, whatever we focus most of our attention on, whatever we live for, that is what we worship. And, warned secular author David Foster Wallace, if you worship the wrong thing, it "will eat you alive."

**What** does the story in Daniel 3 teach us about the importance of true worship?

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The three Jewish boys obviously took the second commandment (*Exod. 20:4–6*) as seriously as God had meant it to be taken. After all, it's part of the Ten Commandments, right up there with prohibitions on murder and robbery and so forth. Worship, proper worship, is so important that, in fact, it becomes central to the issues in the last days, before the second coming of Christ. Thus, Christian education needs to include the whole question of worship: What is it, how do we do it, why is it important, and whom do we worship?

**Read Revelation 14:6–12. What do these texts teach us about how central the question of worship will be in the final crisis before Christ returns?**

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## And Declare Them to Their Children

The Psalms in the Old Testament eventually came to play a role in the religious life of ancient Israel. They were recited, sung, often with musical instruments, during times of worship, especially public worship, which in the Old Testament was key to how the people worshiped in general. Israel functioned as a community, and as a community, they worshiped together.

The Psalms are basically poems, the lyrics to songs. The Hebrew word for the Psalms, *Tehillim*, means “songs of praise.” And when we sing praises to God, whatever else we are doing, we are worshiping the Lord.

**Read** Psalm 78:1–17. What is the essential message here, and how does it fit in with the whole question of education and worship?

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There is a certain determination about the message of Psalm 78. In verse 2, Asaph mentions how we will share the “dark sayings of old.” The word “dark” does not mean ominous but, rather, dim or fading, as history can become when its crucial events go further and further back in time. In other translations, “dark” is referred to as “secret” (*NIV*) or “sweet old truths” (*The Message*). The point here is that whatever else the education of Israel included, it included teaching the children the stories about the Lord’s dealing with the chosen nation.

**Look** at Psalm 78:6–17. What were the specific lessons that they were to teach their children? What was the ultimate goal of this education?

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Among the goals of education as seen in the texts is that the children would learn to trust in God and keep His commandments. How might a text such as Revelation 14:12 reflect that same idea for us today?

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## In Spirit and in Truth

One of the most wonderful accounts in the New Testament of how Jesus ministered to broken souls is found in the story of Jesus and the woman at the well.

**Read John 4:7–26.** What does Jesus say to the woman about worship? In fact, how did they get on the topic of worship to begin with?

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Though she tried to change the subject by talking about worship, Jesus used her tactic to give us some profound truths about worship and what worship involves. Perhaps most important for our immediate purposes is what He said in John 4:24: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (*NKJV*).

True worship of the Lord must be “in spirit,” that is, it must stem from love of God, from the experience of knowing Him personally. “The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

At the same time, worship must be “in truth.” We must have some correct knowledge of God, of who He is and what He requires of us. In other words, doctrine is involved, as well. (How meaningful it is, for example, to know that we worship a God who does not burn people in hell for eternity.)

Thus, we see here two elements in worship: the experience that comes from knowing and obeying God, and the objective truths revealed to us about God. Spirit without truth can lead to a shallow sentimentalism that’s built more on fickle emotion than on anything else. In contrast, truth without spirit can lead to a lifeless formalism. Hence, we need both.

**How would you seek to teach someone to worship “in spirit and truth”? In what cases might someone need an emphasis more on one than on the other?**

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## The Beauty of Holiness

**Read** 1 Chronicles 16:1–36. Try to picture the scene. Do you imagine it as solemn, fearful, or festive and joyous? In what way might it be a combination of both? What can we learn from this scene about worship and how we should teach and even experience worship?

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The place of worship was the tabernacle, where God had dwelt with ancient Israel and where the plan of salvation had been revealed to them. Central, then, to worship and to worship education must be Jesus and the plan of salvation, all of which was foreshadowed in the tabernacle service. Whatever else God has done for us that deserves praise and worship, it all means nothing without the hope of eternal life offered to us by His sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross.

Also, notice the “evangelistic” thrust of the passage: all the world was to learn about the God of Israel.

**Look** at 1 Chronicles 16:29: “Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!” (NKJV). *The beauty of holiness?* What might that mean?

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For starters, think about how ugly, how damaging, how degrading sin is. Also, it’s hard for us now to imagine just how evil, terrible, and degrading the worship practices of the nations around Israel were, practices that included, of all things, child sacrifices. And, no question, these things reflected what the people who practiced them were like.

In contrast, ancient Israel was to be a holy nation, separated from the evil customs around them. They were to be holy in their hearts and minds; this is what gave their worship meaning and beauty before God. Again and again the Old Testament prophets railed against people who worshiped the Lord while engaged in corruption and while their hearts were far from Him.

## Idolatry in Education

Ancient Israel had been surrounded by very religious people, people so dedicated to worshiping and placating their gods that they would sacrifice even their own children to them. That's dedication, is it not?

Hence, worship, true worship of the true God, was an important part of protecting the Hebrews from getting caught up in the idolatry and false worship surrounding them. And yet, despite all the warnings, they still fell into the idolatrous practices that they had been specifically warned against.

What about us today? Why would worship of the true God, recounting all that He has done for us, be so important, as well—especially in the face of the dangers of modern idolatry?

**Read** Mark 7:1–13. What principle do we find in verses 7–9 that could apply today in the context of Christian education and the danger of false teaching, taken from the world, that could negatively impact the practice of our faith?

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Many of the great intellectual ideas in the world today are based on a naturalistic view of reality. Many disciplines studied in school today are studied from that perspective, which often means that what is taught will be contradictory to Scripture. We can be tempted to worship ideas that have been postulated, theorized, and put into practice. We also can deify the brilliant minds of the philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians who trademarked these ideas. The problem is that often these ideas can clash with Scripture, yet because they are now currently taught and believed to be true, people try to incorporate them into Christian education. However, the only way that can be done is to compromise the faith, which often means twisting and distorting the Scriptures in order to try to make Scripture fit with current ideas.

**What are some of the current popular beliefs that clash with Scripture, and how can we as a church protect ourselves from incorporating them into our own educational system?**

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**Further Thought:** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Professors of religion are not willing to closely examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith, and it is a fearful fact that many are leaning on a false hope. Some lean upon an old experience they had years ago; but when brought down to this heart-searching time, when all should have a daily experience, they have nothing to relate. They seem to think a profession of the truth will save them. When those sins which God hates are subdued, Jesus will come in and sup with you and you with him. You will then draw divine strength from Jesus, and you will grow up in him, and be able with holy triumph to say, Blessed be God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be more pleasing to the Lord if lukewarm professors of religion had never named his name. They are a continual weight to those who would be faithful followers of Jesus. They are a stumbling-block to unbelievers, and evil angels exult over them, and taunt the angels of God with their crooked course. Such are a curse to the cause at home or abroad. They draw nigh to God with their lips, while their heart is far from him.”—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 227.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ From Mark 7:1–13, we learned that the underlying condition of false worship is a heart problem. God does not regard worship with our lips if this worship is not springing forth from our hearts. Why is the gospel and the story of the death of Jesus in our behalf the most powerful way to open up hearts to truly love God?
- ❷ Dwell more on the idea of worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.” Is it possible to do one and not the other, or does true worship demand both? If so, why?
- ❸ Yes, our hearts need to be right in order to truly worship God, but what does that mean? Do you have to wait until you are totally connected to the Lord, with your life in perfect order, before you can worship? On the other hand, how can worship, true worship, help get your heart in the right place with God?

## Praying for Work in France

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Abdelkader Henni had no interest in Christianity, and he was surprised when a chaplain spoke to him about Jesus at a school where he participated in after-school activities with other young people in France.

"You come often," the chaplain said. "Why don't you become a Christian?"

Abdelkader, who had lived most of his life in France after his parents immigrated from Algeria, stopped going to the after-school activities. But he wasn't sure what to do. He had finished high school and couldn't find a job.

A short time later, he met a Seventh-day Adventist from Algeria. Abdelkader's heart was touched as he listened to the Adventist's story. He realized that an Algerian could become a Christian, and he began to read about Christianity. Around that time, he ran into an old high school friend. Crystal had been unhappy in high school, but now a joy surrounded her. Abdelkader wondered what had happened, and as if reading his thoughts, Crystal told him.

"I met Someone, and that Person totally transformed my life," she said.

"Who did you meet?" Abdelkader asked.

"I met Jesus Christ," she said.

Abdelkader wondered whether Jesus could transform his life. He accompanied Crystal to a church prayer meeting that evening. When someone asked whether he had any prayer requests, he said, "I need a job."

The next morning, his phone rang.

"You are Abdelkader?" an unfamiliar voice asked.

"Yes," he said.

"Are you looking for a job?" she asked.

Later that morning, the caller interviewed Abdelkader in her car as she drove him to his new job. He was astonished. He had applied for the job weeks earlier but only received it after praying. He believed Jesus could transform his life.

Back at home, he prayed, "I want to know which church to choose."

Three days later he heard a man speaking about the seventh-day Sabbath on the radio. The man read Isaiah 56:1, 2, which says in part, "Blessed is the man who . . . keeps from defiling the Sabbath" (*NKJV*). Abdelkader remembered the Adventist from Algeria and how Adventists went to church on the seventh-day Sabbath. He joined the Adventist Church.



Today Abdelkader, whose name means "servant of the Almighty God," is a 51-year-old Adventist pastor working with non-Christians in France.

"Every day I praise God for the work that He has given me to do," he said.

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*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help people in France and around the world learn about Jesus.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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Worship is an important topic, and the lesson makes a provocative point that we were created, or hardwired, for worship. But because sin has distorted our hardwiring, our expressions of worship can now be misdirected, or misguided. It is possible to worship the wrong thing—or worship the right thing in the wrong way. Worshiping objects other than God is a problem, but not as subtle of a problem as directing worship to God in a manner that He rejects (*Mark 7:1–13, Jer. 7:4*).

The subject of worship really gets interesting when it transcends the issues of drums and video projectors and instead involves life or death. Revelation 14, along with its Old Testament echo in Daniel 3, shows how high the stakes can be over worship. This angle is relevant not only for end-time study and preparation, but it also can inspire resolve for those Christians currently experiencing persecution.

Knowing that we have a fundamental need to worship, that this dimension of the human spirit has been affected by sin, and that worship can be a life-or-death matter should convince us that it needs to be included in Adventist education. Though worship can (and should) be extremely personal, it is not immune to critique. Jesus asserted that God *must* be worshiped “in spirit and truth” (*John 4:24*). To this end, this lesson is devoted.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Scripture**

All Christians believe God should be worshiped; and there the consensus ends. How to worship, when to worship, where to worship, how often we worship, and so forth are some of the issues up for reflection and study. One of the two extremes to avoid would be to conclude that there is a single uniform way to worship God that encompasses every minute detail. Culture; circumstances; availability (for example, does every believer have access to a church building?); and, to some degree, the character and personality of the worshiper will affect what worship looks like. The other extreme, of course, is to think worship is simply a matter of personal preference and that God will exhaustively accept all forms of worship. The question we must ask is: What does the Bible tell us about acceptable forms of worship? How do we even know that God has preferences in regard to worship? Simple: He told us.

### A Woman Brings Up Worship

When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, the conversation progressed to the uncomfortable topic of past failed relationships and current illicit ones (*John 4:18*). As any of us would do, she sidestepped that sensitive issue and redirected the focus, in this case, to controversial national concerns. As an aside, Jesus shows gentle wisdom and tact by not proceeding along those original lines, but instead allows the woman to redirect. Jesus is interested in convicting, not shaming. Returning to their conversation, the woman takes her golden opportunity to have a prophet settle a hot topic question about proper worship sites (*John 4:20*). Presented with options, Jesus' classic answer of neither (*John 4:21, John 9:3*) both disappoints and enlightens at the same time. He follows up with a very relevant warning: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (*John 4:23, 24; emphasis added*). Three phrases from these verses tell us that God has preferences in terms of worship:

1. The qualifying expression "true worshippers"
2. The fact that the "Father seeketh" a specific class of worshippers "to worship him"
3. The emphatic phrase that those who would worship "must worship" in a particular manner

These points should shake us out of our subjectivism and tendency to rely on sincerity as the only test of acceptable worship. Having sincere intentions is a *necessary* condition for "true" worship, but it should not be considered the *only* condition. In retrospect, we are grateful that the Samaritan woman broached the topic of worship, because it led to the recording of Jesus' thoughts on the subject. These are thoughts important for us to absorb, because worship is a decisive issue, if not *the* decisive issue, in the closing events of earth's history.

In support of the idea that God can be particular about how He is worshiped, one need only peruse the sanctuary regulations in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. These portions of Scripture also are instructive on the topic of worship. The sheer volume of instructions, the specificity of how they are to be carried out, and the severe penalty if carried out improperly support the notion that God does indeed care about how He is to be worshiped.

### Another Woman Brings Up Worship

On the flip side of things, there is at least one example in which a man worshiped before God spontaneously in a moment of free expression. This, in turn, offended his spouse who believed he was making a fool of himself. It is written that David "danced before the LORD with all his

might” as the ark was being brought into Jerusalem (*2 Sam. 6:14, ESV*). This moment was filled with sacrifices and “with shouting and with the sound of the horn” (*2 Sam. 6:13–15, ESV*). His only defense to his offended wife, Michal, was that his actions were “‘before the LORD’” (*2 Sam. 6:21*). That’s it. His focus was on celebrating and worshiping before God. He even adds, “I am willing to shame and humiliate myself even more than this!” (*2 Sam. 6:22, NET*). This balances out a potentially skewed picture of God that some might derive from the innumerable sanctuary-related regulations and reminds us that there is a spontaneous and subjective side to worship that also is pleasing to the Lord.

The lesson brings out these balancing concerns using Jesus’ emphasis that the Father must be worshiped in “spirit and in truth” (*John 4:24*). We must have both the truth of what God requires and fully engaged hearts and minds that are receptive to the Holy Spirit. But is there a possibility that what we label as the Christian God is not the God of the Bible but a god of our own making? Perhaps worshiping God “in truth” means being sure we have a true image of God in our minds.

### Lessons From Sociology

How do societies often come up with their ideas about God? One theory, which draws heavily upon the philosophy of the father of modern sociology, Emile Durkeim, proposes that, first, societies develop a set of traits and values that they believe will ensure their survival. Second, they symbolize their traits and values with an animal. That animal is referred to as a totem, and the totem is the representation of the traits and values of a tribe. We all use totemic language to some degree. In the West, we say things like “strong as an *ox*,” “wise as an *owl*,” or “sly as a *fox*.” Stage three occurs when, little by little, the tribe begins to worship the animal that is a symbolic representation of its own traits and values. Now the point becomes clear. If societies end up worshiping a deity that is simply a collective manifestation of its own traits and values, then religion is nothing more than a tribe of people worshiping itself. People may think this process applies only to some primitive tribe outside of Western culture, but they should not be so hasty in their conclusions. There may be much truth in the adage often attributed to George Bernard Shaw that “God may have created us in his image, but we have decided to return the favor.” Lucifer in the Garden painted a picture of God as a restrictive, lying (“you shall not surely die”), insecure (threatened at the prospect of man’s elevation) deity (*Gen. 3:1–6*). But we’d say Lucifer was painting a rather accurate picture of himself.

Educating Adventists, young and old, to avoid the tendency to impute

to God characteristics that are not His should be a priority. The prohibition of making any “graven image” (*Exod. 20:4, 5*) should include false mental images that can be “graven” on the hearts and minds of young people and then worshiped. God has wisely reminded us that His ways are not like our ways (*Isa. 55:8, 9*) and that He is “God, and not man” (*Hos. 11:9, ESV*).

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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Here are a few examples and sketches of worship that should spawn discussion for worshipping on a daily basis.

1. William Temple is believed to have said that “worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by [H]is holiness; the nourishment of mind with [H]is truth; the purifying of imagination by [H]is beauty; the opening of the heart to [H]is love; the surrender of will to [H]is purpose—all this gathered up in adoration.” How can we live each one of these points day to day?

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2. “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (*Gen. 24:63*). You’d be meditating, too, if your never-before-met spouse was soon to approach, riding a camel. Because the word translated as “meditate” is a hapax legomenon (a word occurring only once in the Bible), we are uncertain of its meaning. Nevertheless, being out in nature alone with God, and with a life-changing event on the horizon (literally), worshipping and meditating on God seems appropriate. What places, times, and methods have the students in your class found conducive to worship?

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3. Interestingly, the first time the English word *worship* occurs in the Bible is when Abraham tells his servants that he and his son are going “yonder” to worship (*Gen. 22:5*). The salvation story is echoed in the experience that Abraham and Isaac share on top of Mount Moriah. How can the plan of salvation enrich and direct our personal worship?

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## Notes

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# Education *and* Redemption



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 1:26, 27; Isa. 11:1–9; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; 1 Kings 4:29–34; John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:1–16.*

**Memory Text:** “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV).

**T**he Bible tells a long story about God and His people. Sometimes it is viewed as a love story gone awry, at least temporarily. Or it can be seen as a story of a Father and His rebellious children who, eventually, come around.

But for the purposes of this week's teaching, we will discover in the Bible story another theme, namely, that of a Teacher and His students. They keep failing their tests, but He patiently explains their lessons again and again, until, at last, some learn it.

The Bible story is not unlike our own human stories that we know so well—with one exception. The story of God and His people is assured of a good ending, of reaching its goal. Divine grace toward His people assures that outcome. The human responsibility in this relationship has often been misunderstood and even dreaded by many who have thought of it as onerous. But in fact, the Bible story is essentially an invitation to know God and understand His will. Indeed, learning to know God is our foremost response to His grace. We cannot earn such grace, but we can learn about it, and what is Christian education if not, at its core, education teaching us about this grace?

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 21.

## In the Image of God

**Read** Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 5:1, 3. What do these texts teach about how God originally created humanity, and then what happened to humanity after sin?

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The phrase “the image of God” has captivated interpreters of the Bible for centuries. What is this image in which the first humans were created? For example, does it mean that God looked in a mirror and formed His new creation to look like Himself? Or does it mean that humans are more like God than all other forms of life are? Or does it refer to a spiritual and intellectual similarity and compatibility between the Creator and His human creation? The Scriptures do not give any precise explanation of this expression even though scholars have derived from Scripture many interpretations of what it could mean. However, we can see that, after sin, this image had been changed, which is why Ellen G. White wrote that the goal of education is to restore in man the image of his Maker (*Education*, pp. 14–16).

How can education achieve such a remarkable goal?

First, we need to remember that God made us to have a relationship with Him, somewhat as parents do with their children. He made us in His image, the same way human parents have children in their image (*Gen. 5:1*), so that He can bring us up to be His children, who belong to His family; He can communicate with us and form a lasting relationship with us. The image of God therefore is more of a “mental image” that enables two beings, one divine and the other human, to have a meeting of minds. This is precisely what happens in education, first at home between parents and children and later at school when teachers take over the work of education. Evidently God intended this process of education we know so well when, distinguishing us from many other life forms, He made us in His own image—He did it so that He can teach us and we can learn from Him, until His image (His mind) is reflected in ours.

**The story of Redemption is a story of education from Creation to Incarnation, and from Incarnation to re-creation. God is a teacher, and heaven is a school for all time (see Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 301). What are the implications of this thought for our commitment to Christian education at home, in church, in school, in the university, and throughout life?**

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## Jesus as Teacher

The Bible uses many terms to describe Jesus. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Lord, the Lamb of God, just to mention a few. But to those people who knew Him best during His three-plus years of public ministry in Judea and Galilee, He was a teacher. They called Him “Master,” or “Rabbi.” Both mean the same thing, namely, “Teacher.”

Therefore, the teaching profession and the work of teaching must have been a particularly suitable way for Jesus to carry out His public ministry. Somehow His work of Redemption is akin to the work of teaching. What is more, it was foretold by the gospel prophet.

**Read Isaiah 11:1–9. What does it reveal about the teaching role of Jesus?**

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One of the most startling Messianic prophecies in the Scriptures is found in Isaiah 11. Verses 1–3 portray the coming Messiah in educational terms, someone who brings knowledge, counsel, wisdom, and understanding. The whole passage concludes with this remarkable promise: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (*Isa. 11:9*). Perhaps it was such teachings of Scripture that inspired Ellen G. White in her book on education to note that the work of education and the work of Redemption are one (see *Education*, p. 30).

Read John 3:1–3. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a rabbi, and he further identified Jesus’ teaching gifts as coming from God because of the signs Jesus performed, namely, His miracles and insights into the meaning of life. Jesus accepted, if not the title given Him, then surely the origin of His teaching gifts when He responded to Nicodemus that he must be born again to see (understand, as well as enter) the kingdom of God. This means that the authority to teach others, even in the case of Jesus, comes from God.

Surely teaching is a gift of God. It is commissioned by God, it was adopted by Jesus, and it is recognized by those who are taught as having divine authority.

**What role do we have in seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy about the knowledge of the Lord going all over the world?**

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## Moses and the Prophets

**Read** 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What do these texts teach us about the role of Scripture in Christian education?

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The word for the first part of the Bible, the Torah, is sometimes translated as “the law,” partly because there are many laws in these books. But Torah really means “teaching” or “instruction.” This understanding is very different from what many think the “law” in the Bible is about, namely, rules and regulations that we have to follow to remain in God’s good graces. Not so; the law is intended as teaching material dealing with how to live successfully and safely in the covenant relationship God intended when He created us in the first place.

The next two sections of the Hebrew Bible, the prophets, report on how well God’s people mastered this educational material and lived by it (the former prophets, or historical books), and what they ought to have learned from this educational material (the latter prophets). The remaining part of the Old Testament (called the “writings” in Hebrew) is full of examples of successful and less-successful teachers and students along with their educational experiences. Examples of educational success in these books would be Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Job. Among the failures would be Job’s four friends. Of course, the book of Psalms is a hymnbook, but even it has at least three educational psalms: Psalm 1, Psalm 37, and Psalm 73.

The Gospels abound with materials intended for educational purposes, especially in the parables of Jesus. Many of Paul’s letters begin with a strong gospel proclamation but end with educational material, practical lessons about daily life for Christians. The book of Revelation is full of educational material. For example, the whole disclosure, or unrolling of the future of Christ’s church, is revealed in a book that only the Lamb of God—Jesus, the Master Teacher—can open (*Rev. 5:1–5*).

**Some may say that not all the teaching material in the books of Moses applies in our time, and that is correct. Deuteronomy 17:14–20, the instruction regarding kings, has some very explicit instructions about the selection of someone to hold the royal office. Today, of course, we do not appoint any kings in our church. How do we determine the proper application of all this teaching material in Scripture for our time?**

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## Wise Men and Women

The words for school, study, and education are clearly understood in our time, but they are not common in the Bible. There is one word, *wisdom* or *wise*, which is much more common. For example, the Old Testament makes mention of wise men and women (2 Sam. 14:2, Prov. 16:23).

**Read 1 Kings 4:29–34.** What does this teach us about the importance of wisdom?

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King Solomon is singled out as a very wise man who spoke about animal and plant life and uttered proverbs with great wisdom, meaning as a man of education (1 Kings 4:29–34). The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain many wise teachings on numerous subjects, attributed to Solomon, as well as to other wise teachers in ancient times (Prov. 1:1, Prov. 25:1, Prov. 30:1, Prov. 31:1).

According to the Bible, wisdom is very much like our education today. It is something one learns from parents and teachers, especially while young (Eccles. 12:1), but actually a person accumulates wisdom all through life. Second, wisdom generally has a practical side to it; for example, learn from the ants that save in the summer in order to have enough for the winter (Prov. 6:6–8).

Yet, wisdom is not only practical, but it also has a theoretical side to it, for it begins with faith in God and follows certain foundational principles (Prov. 1:7). Wisdom helps us live responsibly and for the benefit of others, and it also helps protect us from misfortune. Finally, just like education today, wisdom does not answer all the questions we may pose, but it enables us to be content with what we know while continuing to search for what is still unknown, and that is a good position from which we can learn to know God and to trust in His grace. According to Jeremiah 18:18, the role of the wise teacher is considered on par with the roles of priest and prophet. All three convey messages from God to His people, in the form of instruction in the law, educational counsel, and special messages from God.

**How can we learn wisdom and then pass it on to those who come after us? Why is this so important for us, as a people, to do?**

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## Education in the Early Church

One of the remarkable principles of education in Scripture emerges as Jesus, the Master Teacher, prepares to leave His students or disciples. They had been with Him for three and a half years, approximately the amount of time we allocate to a high school or college education. At the completion of either period, depending upon the person, students are often considered ready to manage on their own.

But Jesus knew better, and so He provided His followers with ongoing or continuing education under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere that teacher or guide is identified as Comforter or Advocate (in Greek, *paracletos*) who will be given to the followers of Jesus permanently (*John 14:16, 17*). He is identified as the Spirit of Truth. While the Holy Spirit is not identified as an educator, the work of the Spirit certainly is educational, particularly as it pertains to seeking and finding the truth.

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16. What is Paul saying that is so important in the context of education?**

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Paul begins by reminding the church in Corinth that when he first came to them he spoke of nothing but Jesus Christ and His crucifixion (*1 Cor. 2:2*)—no clever wisdom, only the gospel proclamation. But that was not the end of it (*1 Cor. 2:6*), because once these new Christians matured, the apostle would be back to teach them wisdom, the things God hid before the world began (*1 Cor. 2:7*), even the deep things of God (*1 Cor. 2:10*). All will be studied under the guidance of the Spirit of God as He joins with the spirit of the learner.

How deep will that study be, and how much learning will be open to those who are led by the Spirit? The chapter concludes with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him?” (*Isa. 40:13, NKJV*). The prophet speaking to ordinary people of his day would say that no one can do that. But Paul corrected that perception by concluding, “We have the mind of Christ,” meaning that Spirit-filled Christians have access even to the mind of God, and thus to any amount of learning and understanding (*1 Cor. 2:10–13*) that would be needed to know the path of righteousness.

**Further Thought:** The great gospel commission (*Matt. 28:18–20*) set in motion a remarkable religious movement throughout the whole world. Here a few apostles or missionaries (the two words mean the same—“those who are sent”) went throughout the whole world and gathered up students, made them into disciples, called them to believe in Jesus, baptized them, and proceeded to teach them all the things Jesus has commanded them. The picture is that of Christian converts from around the world, representing different cultures and speaking different languages, coming out of the waters of baptism only to enter a school and begin their education. This is not surprising, for they still had much to learn.

The reason Christians are always learning is not just intellectual curiosity or an eagerness to master knowledge, but rather that the Christian life and faith permeates every corner of daily life. There is so much to learn. Because of that, the letters of the New Testament contain both the proclamation about Jesus (sometimes called by the New Testament word *kerygma* [*keh-RIG-ma*]) and education in all the things Christians have to learn (sometimes called by the New Testament word *didache* [*did-ah-KAY*]). A good example of proclamation is seen in 1 Corinthians 2:2, whereas education begins in 1 Corinthians 4 and continues on and off in the rest of the letter. What is it Christians have to learn?

Work, rest, social issues, community relations, church and worship, economics, philanthropy, relations with the authorities, counseling, family systems, marriage relations and child rearing, food and its preparation, clothing, and even getting old and preparing for the end of life—both one’s personal life and life in this world; to be a Christian means to learn something about all these things and more. Understanding them does not come naturally. It has to be learned.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ How important is the educational work for the mission of the church?
- ❷ What did Ellen G. White mean when she wrote “Heaven is a school” (*Education*, p. 301)?
- ❸ Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16 again. Look at what Paul is telling us about what God is revealing to us through inspiration. Think about his assertion that the rulers and wisdom of the age will come to nothing. If he could say that back then, what about some of the “wisdom” of our age, as well?



## Resurrected in Indonesia

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Two student missionaries greeted their supervisor, Sungbae Gee, with excitement when he arrived at their jungle village on the Indonesian island of Papua.

“Pastor, we have a very nice story!” said Santos, a 22-year-old student missionary from Universitas Klabat, a Seventh-day Adventist university on faraway Sulawesi island. “We prayed for a dead eight-year-old girl, and she was resurrected!”

Sungbae, a South Korean missionary serving as director of the 1000 Missionary Movement in Indonesia, had flown in a small airplane and walked two days and a night to reach the village in Papua’s Samir district. He had come to coach the student missionaries at the halfway point of their one year of mission service, but first he wanted to hear about the girl.

The student missionaries said something terrible had happened a few days earlier. Upon returning from a house visit, they had found the villagers weeping and chanting at the one-room hut of the village chief. The villagers were mourning for the chief’s daughter, Naomi, who had died two hours earlier and was lying on the hut floor. A witch doctor was leading the villagers in the chant.

The student missionaries began to weep. They longed for the villagers to turn away from their dead gods of trees and animals to trust in the living God of heaven. Santos and his friend sat beside Naomi’s still form. Santos gently picked her up and wrapped his arms around her. “Dear God, please show a miracle to the villagers,” he prayed. “We have given Bible studies, and they have listened. Show them that You are more powerful than trees and animals.”

The missionaries prayed for two hours, holding Naomi’s body and crying. They sang a gospel song, “Because He Lives.” The villagers were touched by the tears, the prayers, and the song. Suddenly, Naomi woke up. She turned to her astonished mother. “Mommy, I am hungry,” she said.

Her father, the chief, was shocked. With his own eyes, he had seen something more powerful than the trees and animals.

The village chief gathered the villagers for Bible studies when Sungbae arrived. All 57 adult villagers gave their hearts to Jesus.

“It was a miracle,” said Sungbae, now president of Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College. “Some people might think that resurrections only occurred two thousand years ago, but such miracles still occur today when we put full faith in God.”



*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel around the world.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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Education is a precious gift that should not be taken for granted. Like every other good gift we receive, this one also is “from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (*James 1:17*). It is safe to assume God has the heart of a teacher. Teachers like to share all they know with their students, and Jesus shares a way that He and His Father are like that: “for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (*John 15:15*). What would happen if we read the Bible through the lens of the student-teacher relationship? What if we listened to our divine Teacher and asked ourselves, What is God trying to teach me today from this lesson? Taking a walk outside may be no less an opportunity to learn from the Master Teacher, remembering how often He used nature as His chalkboard. All in all, we must settle into, and embrace, the role of student if we are to appreciate fully God’s gift of education.

Perhaps part of God’s motivation for making us “in His image” is so that our similarity to Him would facilitate the communication of His love and knowledge to us. The lesson speaks of a “meeting of the minds,” one divine and one human, that allows this communion to happen. Being rational is one of those qualities that separates us from the rest of creation. To what degree should we rely upon reasoning in order to understand the plan of Redemption?

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Illustration**

This lesson has highlighted the importance of seeing God in the position of the divine Teacher and ourselves as His students. The crown jewel of His teaching is the plan of Redemption and restoration of this lost world. We are not only to learn of this plan but also then to share it with others. The problem is that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to communicate the truths of the gospel to a culture that does not share some of the presuppositions that undergird a Christian worldview.

For example, a Christian may want to witness by sharing a favorite Bible verse with a college friend but soon realizes that the friend sees the Bible as a compilation of myths with zero credibility. Now what? When the Christian skips the Bible and goes straight to explaining how God sent Jesus to die for our sins, he or she is met with a disdainful look over the word *sin*. “Sin?” the friend smirks. “Sin is an outdated concept from

the days when religion controlled society. We've moved beyond objective morality." In other words, what may be a "sin" for you may be a virtue in another culture. The Christian struggles to look unperturbed and as a last-ditch effort says that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" and that salvation can be found in Him if you believe. The friend patronizingly pats the Christian on the shoulder and remarks that postmodern studies have shown that the term "truth" is problematic and is a throwback to the era of modernity. The friend expresses contentment that the Christian has found a path that brings him peace but that he or she is on a different one. They part ways, and the Christian is left wondering why that whole witnessing opportunity didn't go the way it was supposed to.

As defeating as that last scenario sounded, it at least highlights another problem. The problem is that there are two distinct *responses* the Christian is encouraged to adopt. One is to pray that his or her college friend will see the light and exercise faith in spite of the boatload of intellectual arguments compelling him or her not to. The second response also would be to pray—but then to immerse oneself in the relevant academic literature of philosophy, biblical and systematic theology, history, faith/science studies, and other disciplines that would equip him or her to effectively handle the friend's skeptical concerns. So, which is it? Pray and leave it alone, or take advantage of the democratization of information and seek to educate oneself to the highest levels that are realistic in one's given situation and to continue to pray, as well?

### Discuss:

Ask the pointed question above to your Sabbath School class, and you are bound to receive passionate answers on both sides of the issue. One passage that inevitably comes up is 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2, which reads, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The next section takes a closer look at this text.

### Scripture

On first reading 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2, one could conclude that the only strategy in evangelizing should be the mention of Jesus and His crucifixion. Avoiding arguments associated with wisdom and "excellent" speech appears to be a good thing. But there are some red flags with this interpretation. First, it goes against many sermons in Acts in which careful arguments, historical evidence, and logic are all utilized effectively to convince others of the identity of Jesus Christ and of His resurrection (e.g., *Acts 2*, *Acts 7*). In fact, in the same epistle Paul will use these tools to persuasively support the truth of the Resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15*). The following alternative and contextualized interpretations are offered in

part by J. P. Moreland, a well-known Christian apologist (J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* [Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1997], p. 58).

1. There is a false and prideful use of reason that is not conducive to spreading the gospel. Reason itself and “wisdom from above” cannot be under condemnation—but only its abuse. “It is *hubris* (pride) that is in view, not *nous* (mind). God chose foolish (*moria*) things that were offensive to human pride, not to reason properly used. For example, the idea of God being crucified was so offensive that the Greek spirit would have judged it to be morally disgusting.”
2. Paul also could have the use of Greek rhetoric in mind. Greek orators prided themselves on being able to argue persuasively any side of an issue for the right price. The truth of a matter becomes secondary in this context, and the prize goes to whoever gives the slickest, most polished speech. Paul may well want to distance himself from these methods.
3. Paul also may be arguing for the insufficiency of pure reason alone to communicate the gospel. It is not possible first to begin with principles of logic and deduction and somehow arrive at a crucified and risen divine Savior. Revelation, apostolic/prophetic testimony, the draw of the Holy Spirit, and faith are necessary components in conjunction with reason to make the move from unbelief to a commitment to Christ.

There are some things Paul says that are hard to understand (2 *Pet.* 3:16). Context helps. Also, because it is safe to assume he is not a hypocrite who is violating his own counsel, it is always wise to look at how he himself applies his counsel when he writes and preaches. So, when he says, “I’m only preaching Christ and Him crucified,” even a quick reading of Romans 1–12 helps us to realize that his preaching Christ and Him crucified may amount to crafting a dense, difficult, novel, profound, and brilliant theological treatise that has kept scholars occupied for centuries.

The relationship between faith, reason, academic theology, private Bible study, the Holy Spirit’s role, evangelism, and Adventist education is all rather opaque to many Christians. Many are bewildered as to why they should send their children through to higher Adventist education when they already have the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the Holy Spirit at their disposal. Why not save the thousands of dollars and perhaps do an evangelistic Bible study course through the mail?

This question brings us back to our illustration of the young Christian trying to witness to a college friend, and what his or her educational responsibilities are, in order to address the friend’s questions. If all that

Heaven expects the Christian to do is pray and quote verses, then it seems reasonable that he or she need pursue neither further college education nor self-education (not everyone can afford a firsthand college experience, but we can learn from the writings and resources of those who can). Perhaps two quotes can move us in the right direction, one from Peter and one from C. S. Lewis:

“Be ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15, *emphasis added*).

“If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were educated. But a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”—C. S. Lewis.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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1. How did people see Jesus when He walked the earth? Search the four Gospels for all the times He was called “Redeemer,” and you’ll come up with nothing. Try looking for “Savior” in those same Gospels (three occurrences—two were spoken either by an angel or by someone before He was born). Search for “Rabbi,” “Master,” or “Teacher,” and one can quickly see how people saw Jesus. Of course, He was more than a teacher, but the point is He was never not a teacher. His saving work is tied together with His teaching work. How does this point affect how we share the gospel and what type of education we should acquire?

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2. Read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount or Paul’s letter to the Romans, and notice that they have both a theoretical side and a practical side. Looking at your life right now, which of those two sides of development need attention? Do you need to do more or learn more? If the latter, what more do you feel you need to learn?

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3. Besides needing to have our souls saved for His kingdom, we also have many ideas that need to be restored or corrected. Do you think there is a place for applying the concept of Redemption to the totality of ideas in our minds? Explain your answer.

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# The Church *and* Education



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Luke 10:30–37, Matt. 5:14–16, Luke 4:18–23, Jer. 29:13, Matt. 7:7, 1 Thess. 2:6–8.*

**Memory Text:** “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us” (*1 Thessalonians 2:6–8, NKJV*).

Since the earliest times in which the faithful have gathered to worship God—in synagogues, homes, and churches—the Bible reveals people who, through their study of the Scriptures and through their worship, long to know God and to understand His will for their lives. The Bible also repeatedly reveals that the church is a place where serious and relevant discussions should take place and where people can grow in their knowledge of God and His will for their lives.

Sometimes we are afraid of asking questions. However, in the Bible we often find that questions are used to bring people to a clearer understanding of God. In a similar manner, stories are used throughout the Bible to create opportunities for people to rethink their commitments. Jesus was particularly focused on this type of education with His disciples and followers.

If the church is to be a place of education, it must provide the space for genuine dialogue to occur. Just as we were repeatedly told as students in school, “There is no dumb question,” we must provide within the church a safe environment for each person to grow in grace and in understanding of God and His plan for their lives.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 28.

## True Christian Education

The story is told of a rabbi who looking into the sleepy eyes of the young men who sat in his classroom, asked: “Students, when does one know when the night is ended and the day has begun?”

Several of the students cautiously raised their hands. “Rabbi,” one asked, “is it when you can tell the difference between a fig tree and an olive tree?”

“No.”

Another student raised his hand: “Rabbi, is it when you can tell the difference between a sheep and a goat?”

After listening to a host of answers, the rabbi announced, “Students, one knows the night has ended and the day has begun when you can look at a face never before seen and recognize the stranger as a brother or sister. Until that moment, no matter how bright the day, it is still the night.”

**Read** Luke 10:30–37. What was the point that Jesus was making with this story? And what should this tell us about what must be part of any true Christian education?

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As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been blessed with an abundance of doctrinal light and truth (the state of the dead, the Sabbath, 1844 and the judgment, the great controversy, to name a few teachings) that even most of the Christian world still doesn’t understand. And yet, however crucial these truths are, what good do they do us if we are not kind to people, if we display prejudice against others, and if we allow the cultural and social biases of our environment to cause us to treat others as inferiors?

True Christian education, if nothing else, must cause us to rise above these human foibles and evils and see others as Christ sees them, beings for whom He died, beings whose sins He bore on the cross, beings for whom He paid an infinite price. If we uplift the cross, as we must, then we will see the value and worth of every human being and, ideally, treat them as they truly deserve, in keeping with the value that God has placed on them. Christian education must include this teaching or else it is not worthy of the name “Christian.”

**What prejudices does your culture and society teach, either subtly or even openly, that, as a Christian, you must rise above?**

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## Called to Live as Light

Everywhere we look, it seems as though our planet is turning in upon itself, exchanging light for darkness. Yet, we also encounter darkness much closer to home as we consider our own experience in this difficult and challenging world. For we, too, understand the horrors that this life brings us as we struggle with illness, as we deal with the loss of loved ones, as we watch families succumb to separation and divorce, as we struggle to make sense of many of the evil things in our society and culture.

Yet, amid this landscape of moral bankruptcy and spiritual darkness, in the midst of all this external and internal noise, we hear Jesus' words to each of us:

**“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven”** (*Matt. 5:14–16, NIV*).

**What** do these verses teach us about how we are to live and how, as Christians, what we do impacts how others see God?

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Sitting by the Sea of Galilee that day under the hot sun, how would Jesus' audience have understood His words? Those who heard His words knew all about light and darkness. Certainly they had much darkness to fear. They lived under Roman occupation, in a militarized society that despite their lack of telephones and computers and the World Wide Web, in many ways was as efficient as our own, and in some ways even more terrifying.

The Romans were everywhere, reminding the masses on the hillside that those who insisted on making trouble quickly would find their way to the torturers—and to a naked death on a Roman cross.

And yet, here was Jesus, calling them to live as light. To be merciful. To be pure in heart. To be makers of peace. Christian education must, then, include teaching our students to be lights in the world, to be able to make choices and decisions that will reveal the reality and goodness of God to others.

**What are ways that we can, indeed, point others to the reality and goodness of God?**

## Living as Disciples

If the church is serious about being a force for Christian education, it is imperative that we begin with Jesus. Jesus called disciples. He trained them to do mission by walking with them. Jesus provided opportunity for them to be involved in the lives of people whom they were to care for and to love. And daily Jesus challenged them by His vision of what this world could be when people begin to treat each other as brothers and sisters.

**Read** Luke 4:18–23. What is Christ’s message to all of us, as His followers?

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For three years the disciples watched as Jesus, their Teacher, lived out the ideals of the kingdom—ideals announced in His first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. Forgiveness, grace, and love walked hand in hand with loneliness, commitment, and hardship. If there was a lesson to be learned, it was the lesson that discipleship is not something one takes lightly. You are a disciple for life—not just for one day.

“The Saviour’s commission to the disciples . . . includes all believers to the end of time. . . . All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

As disciples of Jesus, we today must make certain that Jesus is always the center of both our fellowship and our worship. It is good to remember that it was Jesus who invented discipleship. Though the rabbis of His day attracted followers, it was Jesus who called men and women to follow Him. The rabbis could never have imagined a call so radical as to suggest that being with Jesus was more important than all of their commandments.

And, as disciples of Jesus, we not only have respect for all people but will work to provide the kind of place where all people can grow and develop.

Hence, all Christian education must include this sense of mission, of purpose, not just to earn a living but to do in our own sphere what Jesus calls us to do: to follow in His footsteps of ministering to those in need and to share with them the good news of the gospel.

## Seeking Truth

Albert Einstein, often regarded as the father of modern physics, wrote: “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”

We do live in a world of mystery, don’t we? Modern science has shown us an incredible complexity that exists at pretty much every level of existence. And if it’s like that for mere physical things, how much more so for spiritual things?

**What** do the following texts teach about the search for truth, for answers? *Jer. 29:13; Matt. 7:7; Acts 17:26, 27; Ps. 25:5; John 16:13; 17:17.*

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The Bible is full of stories of curious people very much like each of us—men and women who have questions, fears, hopes, and joys, people who, in their own way, are seeking truth, seeking answers to life’s most difficult questions.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” (*Eccles. 3:11, NKJV*). What does Solomon mean here? Some translate the Hebrew word *‘olam* as “eternity” and others as a “sense of the past and the future.” So then, according to this verse, God has placed in the human heart and mind a sense of the past and the future, eternity itself. That is, as human beings, we are able to think about what has been called “the big questions” about life and our existence in general.

And, of course, here is where Scripture plays the central role. Who are we? Why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die? Why is there evil and suffering? These are the questions that seekers of truth have been asking since the beginning of recorded history. What a privilege, and what a responsibility, to be able to help point these seekers toward some answers now. What is Christian education if not pointing people to these answers, as found in the Word of God?

**Why must the Scriptures play the major role in answering the big questions in life?**

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## Sharing Our Lives

**Read 1** Thessalonians 2:6–8. What is Paul saying here that we could and should reflect in our schools and churches?

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Confronted by the breakdown of community in society, we live in an age in which the biblical understanding of the church has never been more meaningful. As Matthew 18:20 reminds us: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The New Testament vision of what church and community is took shape primarily in the homes of believers. It was here that the community met in small groups, praying, singing, celebrating the Lord’s Supper, learning and sharing Jesus’ words with each other.

These worshiping groups also became the first church schools, as this was the place in which new members were introduced to the Bible and to this new life that was found in Jesus. Paul’s writings, such as Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (*NIV*), suggests that the church took this work of education most seriously.

These early believers soon discovered that it is in community that the gospel can best be lived out. In community, we have reason to sing louder, to pray more fervently, and to be more caring and compassionate. When we hear others speak of God’s goodness, we sense how good He has been to us; when we hear of one another’s struggles and hurts, we sense God’s healing in our own lives, and we experience a renewed desire to be instruments of His grace and healing.

In today’s passage, Paul is asserting that the gospel of God is everything: the power of the Cross, the resurrection of the Lord, the promise of His return. There was simply no better news in all of the world, and Paul spent his life abandoned to the challenge of first and foremost sharing the story of Jesus with the greatest integrity and commitment.

Yet, here Paul suggests that the message of the gospel can best be understood, can best be experienced, through the act of sharing life together. We must never forget that people are closely watching to see if our lives illustrate the message of grace that is found in the Bible.

**Think hard about how you live, and ask yourself: What kind of witness am I to those around me?**

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**Further Thought:** “Christ disappointed the hope of worldly greatness. In the Sermon on the Mount He sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character. Yet He did not make a direct attack on the errors of the people. He saw the misery of the world on account of sin, yet He did not present before them a vivid delineation of their wretchedness. He taught them of something infinitely better than they had known. Without combating their ideas of the kingdom of God, He told them the conditions of entrance therein, leaving them to draw their own conclusions as to its nature. The truths He taught are no less important to us than to the multitude that followed Him. We no less than they need to learn the foundation principles of the kingdom of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 299.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. Stevenson recounts how one night, as his nanny was getting him ready for bed, he slipped over to the window and saw a captivating sight. It was a lamplighter, going from one gas lamp to the next. With childish delight, he called his nanny over to him and said, “Look at that man! He’s punching holes in the darkness!” What role has God given you in bringing light and love to your community? If you are not sure, invite several church members to sit with you and discuss what you might accomplish together.
- ❷ If the church is to partner with God in reaching out to the world, we must embrace Jesus’ words and ministry. The very reality of the Incarnation—of God coming to us, to live in our world, to struggle and to laugh and to cry with us—reminds us that we are called to care for those around us. How will you do this? How might you employ the young people in your congregation to help with this work?
- ❸ Think about the responsibility that we as Seventh-day Adventists have to teach others the wonderful truths that we have been given. How can and should the local church play a key role in teaching these truths to others? At the same time, how can the church be a safe place to discuss these truths with those who are asking hard questions about them? What can you do to create an environment in which serious questions can be addressed?
- ❹ In class, talk about the cultural biases of the society where you live. What are ways your church can teach others to rise above those biases and follow, instead, the teachings of the Scriptures?

## Internship Crisis in France

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Elisabeth Birba was dismissed without explanation only a week into an eight-week hospital internship in France. She was devastated. She needed the internship to pass second-year exams. If she failed, she would lose her stipend for food and housing. Her family lived far away in the West Indies.

Elisabeth fell to the ground and wept. As she cried, she felt impressed to call a friend. Three times she sensed that God was telling her to make the call.

Finally she called. "I lost my internship," she said.

The friend was surprised. "Do you believe in God?" she asked.

When Elisabeth confirmed that she did, the friend gave her the phone number for another hospital. "Call this number if you believe in God," she said.

Elisabeth knew it would be difficult to obtain a second internship on such short notice. She wondered what to do. Then she remembered that she had an emergency phone number. Before leaving for France, she had received the number from a Seventh-day Adventist woman in the West Indies. "If you ever have trouble in France, call my sister Vivian," the woman said.

Elisabeth had accepted the emergency number out of politeness. But now she was so distressed that she called Vivian and told her about the internship.

"Only God can help you," Vivian said. "The only thing we can do is pray."

She asked whether Elisabeth had a Bible. It was covered with dust, but she had one. "You are going to memorize Psalm 91," Vivian said. "Make that psalm yours. When you repeat it, remember it is about you."

Elisabeth wept as she read Psalm 91. Her tears left wrinkles on the page.

Then she called the hospital to inquire about a last-minute internship.

"Call back in three days for our decision," a woman told her.

She prayed and fasted for three days. She cried. She memorized Psalm 91.

On the third day, the woman offered Elisabeth an internship. "You're lucky," she said. "The boss didn't want you but changed his mind at the last minute."

Emotion overwhelmed Elisabeth. That night she could not sleep. She realized that God had given her the internship. At 4:00 A.M. she called Vivian.

"Is something wrong?" Vivian asked.

"Don't worry," Elisabeth said. "Please take me to the Adventist church."

Elisabeth went on to be baptized and to receive a master's degree in France.

"If I had not surrendered to God the day that I called the emergency number, my education would have ended," said Elisabeth, 27. "God can do anything. With Jesus I have succeeded."



*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help people in France and around the world learn about Jesus.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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This lesson begins where all education should: with the value of the student in the light of the Cross. The education coming from the church and its departments must penetrate and rise above any cultural trends that are antagonistic to the kingdom of God.

And yet, we live in a web of competing worldviews and cultural currents that are continually bombarding children and adults alike. This clash causes many truth seekers, young and old, to doubt and raise questions. Yet, our local churches should provide opportunity for these questions to be fielded. Whether the church speaks to the confusion, moral darkness, or gnawing despair of the world, if our answers bear the truth we have learned from Jesus, then we will be fulfilling Jesus' commission to be salt and light in this world (*Matt. 5:13–16*).

After we are done thinking of all these glorious aspirations to spread the truth of God around the planet, it is important to remember the simple things that can make or break our mission.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Illustration and a Proverb**

Saying the word *church* can conjure up radically different things in different people's minds. To illustrate this idea, think back to your school days. Do memories of arithmetic, geography, and science flood your head? Probably not; this is ironic, because that is why we were sent to school in the first place. What probably fill our minds are the pictures of friends, enemies, teachers, and the variegated experiences we had with them all.

Church is much like that. Ideally, it is intended to be a place of worship, of listening to and accepting the gospel, studying the Scriptures, organizing our efforts to win souls, and fellowshiping together as brothers and sisters in the family of God. For many, though, it becomes the locus of hurt feelings, petty doctrinal debates, and gossip. The social side of church often overshadows all the other functions that church is supposed to fulfill. Many just stop coming because the complex and hurtful social dynamics (sometimes with only one or two people) make it virtually impossible to worship and enjoy the presence of God undistracted. So, what is the solution?

There are many different approaches that we could take to answer this question, and, of course, the number of books written on "how to do

church” are legion. The lesson, however, brings out a very simple idea that is worth its proverbial weight in gold if carried out. The idea basically is this: *Of what value or effect is all the doctrinal light we possess as a church if we haven’t learned how to be kind to one another?* This is a prerequisite for church really to function as church. It echoes the Indian proverb that says, “There is no point in giving a man a rose to smell after you’ve cut off his nose.” Jesus is the sweetest-smelling flower there is, but if our unkindness toward others has hurt them (cut off their noses), it will be very difficult for them to appreciate the Jesus we want to share with them. The lesson uses the parable of the good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30–37*) to highlight this principle of kindness, which is requisite and elemental to Christian education. Another story, offered below, underlines this idea from a different vantage point.

### Scripture

Let’s look at the story of the woman “possessed with a spirit of divination” (*Acts 16:16*). Does she spew out a litany of curses and lies? Her message is, “These men [Paul and Silas] are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation” (*Acts 16:17*). Paul finally had enough and cast out the evil spirit. But why stop her if she is endorsing the evangelists and their message? Here’s why: *Because the right message with the wrong spirit helps the cause of Satan rather than the cause of God.* This is why being kind and gracious to one another at church is more than just banal advice. People often accept or reject the truths of a church’s message based on how they are treated by the members. Of course, we like to think that these members became Seventh-day Adventists because of the impeccable logic of our theology, but the fact is, if someone hadn’t invited them over to lunch after church, they could have just walked out the church doors and never come back.

Someone might protest and say, “What about the Holy Spirit’s role in conversion and member retention? Doesn’t the direction of this discussion de-emphasize the Spirit’s role?” The Spirit is readily identified with gifts such as prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, and teaching (*1 Cor. 12:8–10*, *1 Cor. 12:28*)—elements for good Adventist education. These works-oriented endowments are so important within the church, but their influence can become mitigated without the Spirit’s relational gifts, such as helping one another (*1 Cor. 12:28*), serving one another (*Rom. 12:7*), showing mercy and encouraging one another (*Rom. 12:8*), along with the full bevy of the Spirit’s fruits: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (*Gal. 5:22, 23*). Finally, Paul wraps up both lists of spiritual gifts (*Romans 12* and *1 Corinthians 12*) with a more “excellent way,” the way of love (*1 Cor. 12:31–13:1*). Paul elaborates in *Romans 12:10*, encouraging us to “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (*emphasis added*).



To love one another is such a common refrain in Christian circles that at times our demonstration of this principle runs the risk of becoming stale or perfunctory, with members going through the motions of outwardly showing love that does not extend beyond the Sabbath service. But can we really be *showing* love if kindness is not being shown at the same time? For the church to be a place of learning and growing will not only take competent, Spirit-filled pastors and teachers, but it also will take the kindness and love of Spirit-filled members.

### A Statistic

A certain statistic derived from the Gospels and Acts has the potential to radically change the way we see ourselves in relationship to Christ. That change in relationship also is relevant to the topic of education. First, some definitions: look up the noun *Christian* in any dictionary, and the first definition will be something like, “a person who believes in Jesus and/or His teachings.” The word *Christian* serves to show religious affiliation. Acts tells us that Christ’s followers were first called Christians in Antioch (*Acts 11:26*), and this appellation most likely wasn’t a self-designation.

The number of occurrences of the word *Christian* in the Bible is three (*Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Pet. 4:16*).

But today that title is virtually the exclusive and universal term to designate an adherent to Christianity. So, what were the “Christians” called back then before the Antiochian designation? The following statistic answers the question and provides the contrast with the first statistic: The number of occurrences of the word *disciple* in the Bible is 256.

When one self-designates as a Christian, it usually evokes the idea that we adhere to a set of beliefs. But what if we self-designated as disciples? Disciples are students, hands-on learners, and apprentices. Of course, they believe what they were taught, but they are more than believers; they learn the skills of their master so as to repeat them. They make life careers of the same craft that their masters were involved in. And when the master dies, his disciples are the closest thing to an advertisement for the ideals and practices to which their master devoted his life.

Just as most of what we know about Socrates is through his star pupil, Plato, the world has the right to draw conclusions about Jesus through beholding the life of His star disciples: you and me. Also, it is a mistake to think that the term *disciple* (in Greek *mathetes*: learner, pupil) is reserved for the original Twelve. When Luke wrote of the mass conversions in his sequel to his Gospel, he spoke of the increasing number of “disciples” (*Acts 6:1, Acts 6:7*). Ananias, Tabitha, and Timothy are all called disciples (*Acts 9:10, Acts 9:36, Acts 16:1*). Referring to all these “Christians” as disciples is simply an acknowledgment of their

obedience to their Rabbi, who commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (*Matt. 28:19, ESV*).

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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The church has been called a hospital for the spiritually hurting. This is a much more common metaphor than the one that calls the church a university for those perishing in ignorance and spiritual darkness, a university in which we are all called to enroll as lifelong scholars-in-residence, learning from Jesus of Nazareth, the Master Teacher. But the two metaphors, hospital and university, really need to be yoked together in order to give us the fullest understanding of the word *church*. That is, our spiritual healing should be coupled with a religious education that trains us to be disciples.

#### **Discussion:**

- 1. We have our devotional lives, we have Sabbath Schools, and we have the sermon hour. If we are honest, though, as the years pass by, it seems that everything starts to repeat, and the thrill we had at the beginning of our Adventist experience begins to wane over time. What are ways we can augment our personal Christian education or breathe new life into our normal church learning routine?**

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- 2. When we go to a new church, the first thing we notice is not how good the sermon was or how the potluck tasted. We notice the temperature of the church: Was it a cold church or were people friendly? The tricky part is, if it is my church, I may be having a**

great time with my half dozen friends as we fellowship, study, and laugh together. The church is hot, right? For me, yes, but not for the visitor or the loner who is looking at all this tight-knit camaraderie and feeling like an outsider. Church members need to take a moment to assess their surroundings and seek out those who are withering on the outskirts. What are some strategies that safeguard people against feeling left out of God's family?

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### *Notes*

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# Education in Arts *and* Sciences



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Rom. 1:18–21, Ps. 19:1–6, 96:9, Gen. 3:6, 1 Timothy 6, Proverbs 1, Job 38.*

**Memory Text:** “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (*Psalms 19:1, NKJV*).

Education includes what has been called “the arts and sciences.” But when we learn or teach the arts and sciences from a biblical perspective, what does this imply? Are we simply offering select Bible verses that relate to a particular aspect of modern medicine or art history, for example? In so doing, we can relate our practical lessons to the amazing power of God in creating our complex world. But a simple incorporation of Scripture in a textbook lesson is only a small part of true education—the education that is salvific and redemptive.

For such an education truly to function, we need God's Word to inform the teaching of every discipline, from humanities to molecular biology. Without it, we can lose sight of God's enormity, His sovereignty as Creator and Sustainer of our world. In learning to see how God views His creation as organic and purpose-filled, we come closer to understanding how certain disciplines could and should be taught.

This week we will look at some principles involved in how we can teach the arts and sciences from the Christian perspective and worldview.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 5.

## The Lord Alone

There is evidence of the living God in all of His creation. This statement has been repeated so often that it has become clichéd. When we consider, for example, the heart of God in creating this world, which humans have proceeded to damage and mar, we may come closer to how we can best teach the arts and sciences.

Take the human gestation period, for example. Biology tells us that new intelligent human life emerges from one fertilized egg and grows to full gestation after nine months. The marks of a loving Creator are all throughout this cycle. The loving-kindness of God can be seen in the place that a fetus develops: right below the steady beating of a mother's heart. As the fetus enlarges, so does the mother's abdomen, right out in front of her person. The expectant mother is made always aware of her child, just as our heavenly Father is always aware of His children.

**Read** Romans 1:18–21, Psalm 19:1–6, and Nehemiah 9:6. What do they tell us about God's work as our Creator?

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Even after 6,000 years of sin and thousands of years after the world-wide devastation of the Flood, overwhelmingly powerful evidence exists, not just for God as our Creator but for the power and love and benevolence of this God as our Creator. It's so powerful, in fact, that Paul, in Romans 1:18–21, says that those who reject this God will be "without excuse" on Judgment Day because enough about Him can be learned from what He has made. In other words, they won't be able to plead ignorance!

Especially in a day and age in which many humans have come to worship the creation rather than the Creator, how crucial that Christian education in the arts and sciences always work from the assumption that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. In the end, any ideologies and presuppositions that deny or exclude God can lead only to error. Worldly education all but works on the assumption of no God; Christian education must not fall into that trap, nor must it work even more subtly from the principles based on the assumption that there is no God. Either way, humans are bound to wind up in error.

**Think about the incredible wonder and beauty in our world, even after sin. How can we learn to draw hope and comfort from it, especially in times of personal trials and suffering?**

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## The Beauty of Holiness

Psalm 96:9 reads, “Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth” (NKJV).

**How** do we understand this concept, “the beauty of holiness”? What should this mean to a Christian, and how should it impact what we teach about art and the beauty often associated with it?

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Though it has been said that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” we mustn’t forget who it was who created the eye to begin with (*see Prov. 20:12*). Though we have to be careful not to worship the creation itself (*see yesterday’s study*), from the beauty of the creation we can learn about God and, indeed, His love of beauty. If our fallen world still looks so beautiful, who can imagine what it must have been like before the Fall? And this teaches us that God indeed is the Creator of the beautiful.

Study of arts and sciences can and should, then, draw us closer to the character and heart of God. Because we are a part of God’s own artwork and scientific phenomena, we also can learn more about our own identity in Christ.

“God would have His children appreciate His works and delight in the simple, quiet beauty with which He has adorned our earthly home. He is a lover of the beautiful, and above all that is outwardly attractive He loves beauty of character; He would have us cultivate purity and simplicity, the quiet graces of the flowers.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 85.

**Read** Genesis 3:6. What does it teach us about how beauty alone isn’t necessarily good or holy? *See also Prov. 6:25, 31:30.*

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As with everything God has done, we have an enemy who distorts and exploits it. It shouldn’t be surprising, then, that beauty and concepts of beauty can be used against us, as well. Thus, especially in the arts, Christian education, guided by Scripture, must help us learn to be careful in understanding that not all that is beautiful is necessarily good or holy.

**What are some “beautiful” things that are not necessarily holy and good? Or, what are beautiful things that can be made unholy and bad, depending upon circumstances? What standard do we use to make these distinctions?**

## Experts in Error

We know that our world has more than its share of art and philosophy that does not honor God. Many would argue that Christians should not even enter these proverbial tents. Seventh-day Adventist Christians must carefully consider their own business in serving certain industries, patronizing certain establishments, consuming certain media.

**In** 1 Timothy 6, we are given clear instruction as to what pursuits we should avoid, but we also are given ample explanation. In 1 Timothy 6:9, 10, what are the pursuits against which Paul warns?

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**Read** the rest of 1 Timothy 6. What are the key pursuits that Paul endorses?

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Notice in 1 Timothy 6:20 how Paul warns against “what is falsely called knowledge” (*NKJV*). Though he’s working from a different context, the principle is still applicable. That is, think about all the information, all the teaching, all the beliefs, not only now but also throughout human history, that were flat-out wrong. People can, indeed, be experts in error.

For nearly two thousand years, the world’s smartest people, the experts, believed that the earth sat immobile in the center of the universe while all the stars and planets orbited it in perfect circles. Some very complicated math and science were used to buttress this belief, even though it turned out to be wrong in almost every particular. Hence, we could say that these people were experts in error and that this teaching certainly was “falsely called knowledge.”

**Biological science today, for instance, is predicated on the assumption that life began billions of years ago, by chance, with no God and no purpose behind it. At the same time, an incredible amount of complicated and detailed scientific literature has arisen based on this teaching. What lessons can we take away from this about how people can be experts in error? How should this realization impact Christian education in general and the teaching of science in particular?**

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## Foolishness and Wisdom

**Read** Proverbs 1. What does this teach us concerning what true Christian education should be about?

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The Bible draws a steady comparison between foolishness and wisdom. The book of Proverbs does well to remind us of the dangers of foolhardy behavior and keeping the company of fools. The distinction is clear: God desires that His people seek wisdom, to treasure it and abound in it.

Students of the arts and sciences utilize their talents to gain knowledge and to pursue excellence in their studies. Teachers of these disciplines do similarly. We can be capable of artistic brilliance and scientific breakthroughs because of knowledge and ability.

Yet, from a Christian perspective, what does a knowledge of the arts and sciences really mean if it does not involve knowing the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error? All one has to do, for instance, is read a bit about the lives of some of those deemed the world's greatest artists in order to see that having wonderful skill and talent doesn't equate with a moral or upright life. One could argue, too, that great scientists involved in the work of creating biological or chemical weapons of mass destruction might be highly educated, highly gifted, but what are the fruits of their work? As stated before, knowledge, in and of itself, is not necessarily a good thing.

**Read** Proverbs 1:7. How does this text reveal what the key to true Christian education is?

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One Nobel Prize winner, an atheist, a man who studies the universe and the physical forces behind it, wrote: "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." What should this tell us about how knowledge, in and of itself, can not only be meaningless but, even worse, lead to gross error?

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## The Lord Answered Job

**Read** Job 38. What does this teach us about God, not just as the Creator but as the Sustainer of all life? How should this important truth impact how we understand the arts and sciences?

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“Many teach that matter possesses vital power—that certain properties are imparted to matter, and it is then left to act through its own inherent energy; and that the operations of nature are conducted in harmony with fixed laws, with which God Himself cannot interfere. This is false science, and is not sustained by the word of God. Nature is the servant of her Creator. . . . Nature testifies of an intelligence, a presence, an active energy, that works in and through her laws. There is in nature the continual working of the Father and the Son. Christ says, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ John 5:17.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 114.

Unfortunately, as stated earlier, so much of science works on atheistic, materialist presuppositions. This means, then, that a scientist could be staring at something of the utmost beauty, of the utmost complexity, even of both the utmost beauty and complexity together, and yet claim that it arose by chance, with no forethought or intention behind it.

This is, in fact, what science claims all the time. Life on earth, in all its beauty and complexity—from butterflies to humans—is explained as nothing but the result of chemicals billions of years ago forming by chance into simple life that, through random mutation and natural selection, evolved into all that lives and moves and breathes today.

Science, as now constituted, argues that the very idea of a supernatural Creator is “unscientific,” since it cannot be tested scientifically, and thus it is a notion that science cannot deal with. This presupposition is not anything that science itself teaches (in fact, science would seem to teach the opposite: all the beauty and complexity of the world do, indeed, point to a Creator), but is, instead, a philosophical position imposed upon the discipline by scientists themselves.

The problem, however, is that Scripture teaches that God not only created everything but that He sustains everything, as well. This means that any true Christian education in science would have to work from radically different assumptions than what science in general claims. Inevitably, clashes will occur, especially when it comes to origins.

**Further Thought:** Two reasons exist why science, which gets so many things right, gets origins so wrong: first, science, which studies the natural world, must look only to the natural world for answers; second, science assumes that the laws of nature must remain constant. Yet, both these are wrong when it comes to origins.

Take the first one, which requires natural causes for natural events. That's fine for hurricane tracking, but it is worse than worthless for origins that start out with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (*Gen. 1:1, NKJV*). What can science, which denies the supernatural in origins, teach us about origins that were totally supernatural?

And the constancy of nature? This seems to make sense, except that Romans 5:12—"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (*NKJV*)—presupposes a natural environment discontinuous, and qualitatively different, from anything that science now confronts. A world in which death did not exist is radically different from anything we can study today, and to assume they were very similar when they weren't also will lead to error.

Hence, science gets origins wrong because it denies two crucial aspects of the Creation: the supernatural force behind it, and the radical physical discontinuity between the original creation and what's before us now.

## Discussion Questions:

- ① In class, talk about the question of beauty. What is beauty? How do we define it? How might a Christian define and understand beauty differently from a non-Christian?
- ② Christ could have come to earth as a brilliant scientist, to be richly compensated for His groundbreaking research. He could have garnered all fame as a musical performer. Instead, He came and trained as a humble craftsman. He was present at Creation, but He trained as a layperson and fulfilled His duties obediently. What encouragement does this offer us, wherever we may be in our educational or professional journey?
- ③ Although not every Christian is called to teach in schools, Christians can be ever teaching others in word and in deed, with intention or completely without awareness. For this reason, what habits should the Christian cultivate, both as a student of Christ and as a teacher of the world?

## Keeping Two Boys Quiet

By MARCI EVANS

Keeping children quiet in church became a real challenge when my niece, who was struggling with drugs, gave her two sons to my husband and me.

Five-year-old Omarion and his six-year-old brother, Diamonte, had no experience in church. They were full of energy, and they were not used to kneeling for prayer. Moreover, the formal prayer seemed to go on and on up front.

*How do I keep them still and quiet?* I wondered, as the boys shifted restlessly during prayer one Sabbath. *What do I want to teach them about prayer?*

As I cried to God for help, an idea popped into my mind. Why not pray quietly with the boys? Immediately, I began to pray.

“Oh Lord, thanks so much for Diamonte and Omarion’s school, their teachers, their shoes, their toys, and for all Your blessings,” I whispered.

The boys stopped fidgeting.

“Please, Lord, be with their mama,” I said. “She loves them so much. Please heal her from drugs and be near her today. You know just what she needs.”

The boys listened spellbound. They were thinking about their mother, who they missed and loved so much. The prayer continued at the front of the church.

“Lord, please be with Diamonte’s dad, who is living in prison,” I said. “Please give him a good cellmate. Oh Lord, please be close to Omarion’s dad. You know just what he needs! Let him know you are right beside him now.”

I prayed until the prayer ended up front. The boys remained quiet and reverent the entire time. Never once did I have to say “Hold still!” or “Be quiet!”

The next Sabbath, I again whispered a special prayer for my nephews during the time of the formal prayer up front. The boys listened attentively. My prayer was about their lives and their loved ones. It mattered to them. I prayed with the boys every Sabbath until they learned to be quiet and reverent during the formal prayer time at the church. Of course, we kept praying at home.

Who would have thought that such a simple solution would calm twitchy boys? With that solution, the Lord allowed me to be a missionary in the most important mission field—the home. Ellen White tells us, “Let not parents forget the great mission field that lies before them in the home. In the children committed to her every mother has a sacred charge from God. ‘Take this son, this daughter,’ God says, ‘and train it for Me. Give it a character polished after the similitude of a palace, that it may shine in the courts of the Lord forever’ ” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 37).

God is so good. He gives us mission-minded ideas when we need them most.



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## ***Part I: Overview***

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Nature is God's 24-hours-a-day, 3-D, multimedia, stereophonic revelation of Himself. It requires no paid subscriptions, no streaming devices, and is everywhere and always accessible (*Ps. 19:1*). For this reason, an appeal to ignorance for not knowing and following God will be inadmissible in the final evaluation (*Rom. 1:18–20*). The arts, as well, to the degree that they reflect beauty and/or truth, can be a source for seeing God and reflecting on His character.

Biology, physics, and the other branches of science are rigorous and effective tools for understanding different aspects of God's creation. But they often stumble with regard to origins. For example, it has been said that there are only two things for certain in this world: death and taxes. But we know that this was not always the case. Though death is such a natural and guaranteed part of our lives now, it was a nonexistent condition originally (no taxes, either). The physical world was affected by a moral/spiritual decision (*Rom. 5:12*). Biological science, as it currently stands, does not permit this information, and, therefore, its model for the origin of life is often misleading.

God has so masterfully written and organized the laws of the universe, on both a macro and a micro level, that it is understandable why science can effectively study and manipulate the natural world for its purpose without acknowledgment or recourse to God. In a sense, God made the system so well and seemingly independent of Himself that people use the system as evidence against His existence. A Christian education and worldview does not make that mistake but sees nature as both evidence of, and insight into, God.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Science in Perspective**

The history of science shows a piling up of stupendous gains and insights, both theoretical and technological. From medical advances to information technology, we are indebted to the scientific community for its indefatigable efforts to improve modern life. Those advances, however, ride on a veritable ocean of mistakes, discarded theories, and outdated paradigms that were retained past their prime due to many variables, including what all disciplines are susceptible to: prejudice and bias. In light of this history, why should it not be considered eminently reasonable to take scientific "truths" with reserve instead of jumping with all fours onto the next scientific theory, which may slip into the scientific dustbin in a generation? This perspective is not popular because science is not in the business of advertising its mistakes. It also has a way of absolving itself from its errors or carefully concealing them.

Here are two examples: the first, in which science should have taken a bow to the church but didn't, and the second, in which the church was the scapegoat for a more general mistake. (The following two examples are taken in part from John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* [Oxford: Lion, 2009], pp. 24, 68.)

1. Early Christian thinkers (Augustine, Irenaeus, Aquinas), relying on the biblical account, agreed that the universe had a beginning and that God created it. However, for much of the modern scientific era, the consensus was that the universe was infinite in both age and extent. When atheists debated Christians on the existence of God, apologists would use the origin of the universe as evidence of God's existence. The atheists responded with the "fact" that the universe was infinite, thereby undermining that argument. Fast-forward to the late twentieth century, and the consensus among scientists is that the universe indeed did have a beginning. But some were reluctant to admit it. Why? Because it gave Christians a justification for their creationist beliefs. Let that sink in for a moment. The scientific evidence, such as red shift in the light from distant galaxies and background microwave radiation, supports the theory that the universe had a beginning. This supposition aligns with the biblical account. But scientists were resistant to this conclusion because it gave too much ground to religion. Wouldn't it be nice for the scientific community to play fair and simply say, "We blew it, but those Bible-believing creationist Christians got it right"?
2. The "conflict thesis" that says that religion and science are fundamentally at loggerheads with each other gets much of its popular steam from stories such as Galileo's. That such stories are given dramatic headlines only reinforces the thesis, headlines such as: "Galileo, Secular Scientist Extraordinaire Versus the Church, the Institutional Incarnation of Unscientific Religious Dogma." Of course, Galileo was right about heliocentrism, and the medieval church was wrong, but the narrative is skewed claiming that this was a clear-cut case of science versus religion and that science won. The fact is, Galileo believed in God and the Bible and did so for his whole life. His initial trouble was not with the church but with the academy. In a letter in 1615, he claims that the academic professors who opposed him tried to influence Roman Catholic Church authorities to speak out against him. Galileo's scientific arguments were a threat to the reigning Aristotelianism of the academy. Rome aligned itself with a worldview that was supported by the Italian philosophers and professors. This understanding doesn't absolve the Roman Catholic Church of its

treatment of Galileo, but it does show that Rome was simply in harmony with the reigning academic paradigm of the day.

To use Galileo as an illustration of science's victory over religion is to scapegoat the medieval church and distort history. "And though the story has been gleefully transformed into the archetypal example of ignorant religionists fighting intellectual progress, the reality remains more complicated. It wasn't just the stark binary of religion versus science; the Galileo disaster is an example of the tyranny of dogmatic science and scientific tradition over every other means of acquiring knowledge.

" 'The ignoble affair,' wrote Gerhard and Michael Hasel, 'associated with the famous trial of Galileo in the seventeenth century could have been avoided had the church's theological consultants recognized that their interpretation of certain Bible texts was conditioned by tradition based on the cosmology of the pagan mathematician-geographer Ptolemy.' It wasn't just tradition but one that arose from the acceptance of prevailing scientific dogma."—Clifford Goldstein, *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), p. 47.

These two examples show that the battle between faith and science is a straw man in many respects. The idea that big bang cosmology is a *de facto* concession that creationists were right in the first place is virtually unknown today. Now, the big bang theory for the origin of the universe is used against believers as an argument against the existence of God. Many lay creationists don't realize that their victory trophy (i.e., that the universe does have a beginning) has been snatched out of their hand and is being used to figuratively clobber them again.

One positive that has come from our postmodern era is that it has caused us to 'fess up to the fact that scientists are in the same boat as any other academics working in their fields, and that all the science that hits the public marketplace has passed through the human sieve of subjectivity, fallibility, bias, ethical conflict, and more. Modern secularists often look at science through rose-colored glasses and are probably unaware that science has not come close to disproving the existence of God or the reliability of religious belief.

In the end, Christians need not retreat from the study of science as though it were something inherently antagonistic to theism or the Bible. On the contrary, it was the belief in God and an orderly, purposeful, and planned Creation that motivated some of the greatest scientific minds of history to pursue scientific inquiry into the physical world.

### On Beauty

Traditionally, there have been five branches of philosophy. Those branches and their objects of study are:

1. Logic: ideal thinking
2. Ethics: ideal behavior
3. Politics: ideal social organization
4. Metaphysics: ultimate reality
5. Aesthetics: ideal form/beauty

Though many of these subjects can be heard by turning on the radio, reflections on beauty have become rare. Primarily because of the cultural and moral relativism of our age, beauty is considered simply a subjective preference. Deep down, though, we know that this assertion cannot be true. In fact, just as we know that there are bedrock concepts of the “good” that are not relative to time, culture, or place, “beauty” is the same. As one philosopher put it, “Beauty is goodness made manifest to the senses.”

## *Part III: Life Application*

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Turn on the news and people are using arguments and counterarguments (logic) to say how people should or should not behave (ethics) or whether politicians are governing properly (politics). But when was the last discussion you heard on the subject of beauty? Discuss these questions in class:

1. In what way do you think “beauty” is understood from a Christian worldview rather than a secular one?

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2. The role the arts play in our lives may not seem a priority, but when one thinks of how media and the arts are affecting the morality of our nation (think of your own), the significance becomes clear. Andrew Fletcher went so far as to say, “Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws.” Why did he say that? What kind of contributions can Seventh-day Adventists make in music, art, and literature that can be a witness for God?

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3. Society is saturated with clichés about science and religion. Unfortunately, the clichés usually favor science and mock religion. What sort of preparation is needed for Seventh-day Adventist students who enter scientific fields to maintain the credibility of both the Bible and the Christian worldview?

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4. Not all Seventh-day Adventist youth go to Seventh-day Adventist schools. How can churches become “the schools” for these youth in order to reinforce their faith at secular universities?

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## *Notes*

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# The Christian *and* Work




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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:19, Deut. 16:15, Exod. 25:10–30:38, Gal. 5:22–26, Eccles. 9:10, 1 Cor. 10:31.*

**Memory Text:** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NKJV).

Work is God's idea. In the ideal world before sin, God gave Adam and Eve the task of caring for the Garden (*Gen. 2:15*). Like their Creator, in whose image they were made, they were to be employed in creative labor and loving service. That is, even in an unfallen world, a world without sin and death and suffering, humanity was to be at work.

In this “in-between time” (after the ideal world and prior to the promised one), we are invited to view work as one of God's blessings. Among the Jews, every child was taught a trade. In fact, it was said that a father who didn't teach his son a trade would raise a criminal. Meanwhile, Jesus, the Son of God, spent many years doing His Father's will in honest labor as a skilled craftsman, perhaps providing people of Nazareth with needed furniture and agricultural implements (*Mark 6:3*). This, too, was all part of the training to prepare Him for the ministry ahead. The apostle Paul was doing the Lord's work just as surely when he worked alongside Aquila and Priscilla for a year and a half as a tentmaker as he was on Sabbath debating in the synagogue (*Acts 18:1–4, 2 Thess. 3:8–12*). This week we will look at the whole question of work and its role in Christian education.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 12.

## The Many Sides of Work

**“I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God”** (*Eccles. 3:12, 13, NIV*).

Work—that’s a solid Anglo-Saxon word with no frills. One syllable in English, yet it has many possible meanings. Out of necessity, we work to put food on our tables, pay the bills, and save a little for hard times. Losing a job is often worse than putting up with a poor work situation.

Work can give a person a sense of worth. Work is a common way to answer the question “What do you do?” or even “What are you?” Most retirees continue to work part-time as long as they are able, whether for pay or as a volunteer. A job offers a reason for getting up in the morning. Give a teenager a job, and there’s one fewer candidate for delinquency.

**Read** Genesis 3:19. What is the context here, and what does it say to us about another side of work, at least for some?

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Suddenly the work given before the Fall changes after the Fall. Here is reference to another side of work. For some, work means only the drudgery of daily toil, which will end with death. They labor on in jobs that they despise, hoping to retire while they still have their health. For others, work can even take over one’s life, becoming the center of one’s existence, even the all-encompassing source of one’s personal identity. Away from their work, these people feel depressed or disoriented, unsure of what to do or where to turn. In retirement, they may fall apart physically and psychologically and often die prematurely.

Christians need to learn how to work God’s way. Work is more than an economic necessity. Man is more than just an employee. Rightly understood, one’s lifework is an avenue of ministry, an expression of one’s relationship to the Lord. Part of a teacher’s task is helping students find the work where their skills and God-given interests intersect with the needs of the world.

**What do you do? That is, what are you doing with your life, and how can you better glorify the Lord by doing it?**

## Work and Nurture

Vocation or work deals with the “doingness” of life. Even those with the most cerebral of jobs end up in some way doing physical labor of some sort, even if it means merely pushing computer keys.

**What** do the following texts teach us about work—using “hands” as a symbol?

*Deut. 16:15* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Eccles. 9:10* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Prov. 21:25* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Jer. 1:16* \_\_\_\_\_

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God has given us “the work of our hands” so that we can find fulfillment and joy (see *Prov. 10:4, 12:14*). In psychology, “self-efficacy” describes the belief that every person has the ability to accomplish something meaningful in life. Self-efficacy is not increased by repeating “I think I can! I think I can!” Only actually doing something increases self-efficacy.

While “the work of our hands” is God’s blessing to us (see *Ps. 90:17*) and allows us to live a meaningful life, God’s ultimate plan is that “the work of our hands” would bless others. Paul writes that we must work, doing something useful with our hands, so that we may have something to share with others. Paul surely lived by that principle:

“You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ ” (*Acts 20:34, 35, NIV*).

Nehemiah’s simple prayer should be ours: “Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands” (*Neh. 6:9, NKJV*).

**What is your attitude toward your work? What ways might you be able to use your work to be more of a blessing to others?**

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## Work and Excellence

**Skim** over Exodus 25:10–30:38. How particular was God when He asked Moses to erect a tabernacle of worship? What does this tell us about God’s character?

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When God told Moses to build a tent “for Him,” Moses could have said, “No problem, Lord! I have been pitching tents ever since I ran away from Egypt 40 years ago. . . . Just give me a minute!” For any man living in the seminomadic Midianite culture of the day, putting up a tent was simple stuff. He could have done it blindfolded, reflex-only, with his mind on other, far more important things. What Moses may not have expected was a very detailed set of blueprints (for an otherwise very simple architectural structure) plus a long “how-to-do-it list” regarding every piece of furniture inside, as well as for the priestly garments—nearly 150 point-by-point instructions. To build a simple table, Moses had to follow a seven-step assembly procedure (*Exod.* 25:23–30).

The attention to detail that God showed in the building of His tent (as well as later on in the instructions for the sacrificial rituals) shows a prevailing spirit of excellence, a desire to produce nothing less than a masterpiece. The materials were of the highest quality, the design was impeccable, the work had to be outstanding—the message was clear: “With God, sloppy work is not accepted!”

However, although the standard appeared to be high, it was God Himself who provided not only the impetus but also the human resources for reaching it. We read in Exodus 31:1–6, 35:30–36:1 that God Himself gave the people the needed skills. These men were “filled with the Spirit,” giving them ability and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship, so that the building of the tabernacle and its furniture would proceed as “the LORD has commanded” (*Exod.* 36:1, *NRSV*). Moreover, the same two master designers also were endowed with the “ability to teach” (*Exod.* 35:34, *NKJV*) so that their knowledge and skill would continue to abide within the Israelite community. Although these two individuals are singled out in the story as being the leaders chosen by God, other people received similar gifts and joined the work (*Exod.* 36:2).

Thus, being fallen, sinful humans is not a valid excuse for treating any task with anything less than utmost dedication. God expects us always to perform at our best, putting our talents, skills, time, and education to good use for great causes.

## Work and Spirituality

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (*Gal. 5:25, NKJV*). One’s work and spirituality are inseparable. Christianity is not a garment that can be put on or taken off as one changes moods or passes through different phases of life. Instead, Christianity creates a new being who manifests himself or herself in every dimension of life, including work.

**Read** Galatians 5:22–26. Which gifts that Paul describes also describe you and your work?

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*The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* describes the “spiritual” person as “one who manifests the fruits of the Spirit in his own way.” From this, we may conclude that through our connection with Christ, we human beings will function as believers in all aspects of our lives.

A patient lay dying at Florida Hospital as his closest friend kept a vigil at his bedside. Nurses moved in and out of the room, caring for the patient’s needs. Seeking to keep the conversation moving, the friend asked the nurses where they had their training. Many had said that they were educated at Florida Hospital College.

This made a big impression on the friend. He then subsequently made several visits to Florida Hospital College to see what it was like. Why? Because he had told people that the nurses trained at this school seemed to him to constantly give more tender loving care to his dying friend than did those nurses who had been trained somewhere else. That is, he was able to see a big difference between them and others in regard to their attitude toward his dying friend.

Thus, he asked many questions about the college and its mission, and eventually he left a gift of \$100,000 to educate more nurses such as those he had seen in action. Yes, spirituality is a way of life.

**How do you manifest your own spirituality in the day-to-day tasks of your life? What kind of impression do you think that you make (because, in the end, you do make an impression)?**

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## Work and Stewardship

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (*Eccles. 9:10, NKJV*). The wisest of men use these words of counsel regarding stewardship in every aspect of life.

When asked to comment on Christian stewardship, many confine their thoughts to the Christian’s fiscal responsibility. Although money is certainly an important aspect of stewardship, to limit it to money alone is much too narrow. In organizational theory stewardship refers to management’s responsibility to develop and utilize properly all available resources.

In the church, what are the resources with which God has blessed us? Peter clearly states that every person has gifts endowed by the Creator; and he refers to such endowed Christians as a “holy priesthood” (*1 Pet. 2:5*) with responsibility to God for their stewardship of all of God’s gifts: money, time, energy, talent, and others.

**Read** Ecclesiastes 9:10 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. What is the message to us in these verses about how we should work and how we should educate people to work?

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One of the common pitfalls of life today is the tendency to compartmentalize the different aspects of living. There is one’s work life, one’s family life, one’s spiritual life, and even one’s leisure life. The tendency to separate these areas of life so there is little or no crossover between them is to be desired in some instances. For example, it is not good to bring home one’s work so that it interferes with family responsibilities. Neither should the pursuit of leisure curtail the time we spend with God.

However, such restriction should not apply to the role our spiritual life must play in all of our existence. The Christian’s work grows out of fellowship and work with God. Work is one way by which we can practice the presence of God. To compartmentalize our religious life, to limit God to one day, one hour, or even just one area of living, is to reject the very presence of God in these other areas.

**Two questions: First, ask yourself if you do, indeed, compartmentalize your spiritual life. Second, if you do, how can you learn to let spirituality reign in all that you do?**

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**Further Thought:** Genesis 3, Ecclesiastes 2:18–23, Ephesians 6:5–8; read Ellen G. White, “The Temptation and Fall,” pp. 52–62, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Work—a curse or a blessing? It seemed to come as part of the curse of sin (*Gen. 3:17*). A closer reading reveals it was the ground that was cursed, and not the work. Ellen G. White states that God intended this commission to work as a blessing: “The life of toil and care which was henceforth to be man’s lot was appointed in love. It was a discipline rendered needful by his sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion, to develop habits of self-control. It was a part of God’s great plan for man’s recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60. Might we perhaps have made it a curse through monotony, overwork, or overvaluing its role in our lives? Whatever our situation, we must learn to put work in its proper perspective. And Christian education must help train people to learn the value of work, while at the same time not making an idol out of it.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Read Ecclesiastes 2:18–24. How can Solomon consider work both a blessing and a curse in the same section of the Bible? What are hints in the text about what can make the difference in how we approach our work?
- ❷ It is through work that we care for (nurture) our families. How can we pass on a positive attitude about work to our families?
- ❸ The line between doing an excellent job and being a workaholic is sometimes a fine one. How do we keep from crossing that line? (*See Eccles. 2:23.*)
- ❹ Paul stated very clearly: “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (*2 Thess. 3:10, NKJV*). This principle, of course, makes great sense. What might be some examples where it doesn’t apply? That is, why must we be sure not to make this an ironclad rule that must never be broken?

## Great Hope in a Doctor's Office

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

A series of major life changes troubled H         in Paris, France.

After raising two children, she lost her mother. Wishing to do something new in her life, she took a job at a luxury store. But then she suffered a leg ailment that required surgery. After the operation, she had to visit a physician regularly for foot examinations.

During one of those visits, she saw a small book lying on the table in the physician's waiting room. Its title, *The Great Hope*, seemed to be calling out to her.

*This is just what I need!* H         thought.

Back at home, H         read *The Great Hope* from cover to cover that same day. She was fascinated with the story about earth's last days and the second coming of Jesus. She decided that it was not by chance that she had stumbled across the book in the physician's office.

She saw a note in *The Great Hope* saying it was an excerpt from a bigger book called *The Great Controversy* and inviting her to send away for the full volume. She went online and ordered Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*.

Also in the book, she saw the words "Seventh-day Adventist Church." She was not familiar with the denomination. But then she remembered that she had a late grandmother who had become an Adventist in her old age. They had never met.

H         decided to read the Bible next.

*After reading this book, I absolutely must read the Bible now,* she thought.

She had many questions about her life, but she didn't know where to look for answers in the Bible. She didn't feel qualified or knowledgeable. Then she remembered that her grandmother had become an Adventist after studying the Bible with an Adventist pastor. She needed to find an Adventist pastor.

Going online, she found an Adventist church and began twice-a-week Bible studies with its pastor. As the months passed, she learned about the seventh-day Sabbath and baptism by immersion. She and her husband were baptized.

H         has no idea who left *The Great Hope* at her physician's office, but she knows it wasn't the physician, who wasn't an Adventist. Today, she leaves

copies of *The Great Hope* in physicians' offices across Paris. "I am very grateful that I came across the book," said H        , 56. "I am convinced that it was no accident. My self-esteem has grown, and I have more to learn as I study the Bible and Ellen White's writings. God had a plan. I love my church."




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*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel through literature and other means.*



## ***Part I: Overview***

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Work is one of the big three pre-Fall practices that have carried over into our current post-Fall situation (*Gen. 2:15*), the other two being Sabbath keeping (*Gen. 2:2, 3*) and marriage (*Gen. 2:21–24*). So, work, or being meaningfully occupied with tasks, comes directly from a sinless paradise. All three practices, if done under the Lord’s guidance, are small tastes of a past Eden or future Eden, whichever direction one’s meditation takes him or her. Like everything else in this world, though, work can have its sinful downsides, which we can all identify with. The good news is that God is in the restoration business and is fully prepared to turn our current occupations into platforms for Christian growth and witnessing.

We will be spending most of our adult life working. So, unless we are able to integrate our commitment to Christ somehow with our vocation, we’ll spend an inordinate amount of our life not taking advantage of a God-centered existence. We can be thankful that the admonition to “walk in the Spirit” can be turned into a promise that says, whether we walk through an office, a construction site, or farm, Christ can be in our hearts and by our sides the whole time (*see Gal. 5:25*).

It is a further encouragement to know that any work we perform, not just overtly religious work, can be Spirit-inspired. God told Moses that He filled Bezaleel “with the spirit of God” so he could craft metal, wood, stone, and fabric to make a tabernacle (*Exod. 35:31–35*). If God can bless Bezaleel’s work with the Spirit, He can bless ours.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Scripture**

It is easy to get ideas in our heads that seem very biblical but aren’t. The past and future paradise serves as an example. If we were left to craft Eden or the new earth, our first attempt might be to make it a place of blissful, idle pleasure. For some, a place of constant worship to God would be the only paradise. Many would not naturally have included “work” in the first or final home for God’s children. But there it is:

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (*Gen. 2:15, ESV*). Isaiah portrays the new heavens and new earth as a place where our gardening skills once again will be needed, “and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” (*Isa. 65:21*). “Work” in today’s world often serves as a distraction at best and

a hindrance at worst to our cherished relationships, including our relationship with God. How then can “work” be part of the ideal?

To put it simply, wouldn’t “working” the garden be a distraction from worshipping or being with God? That question is similar to asking, “If God is all Adam needed, why did He make Eve? Isn’t God enough?” It turns out that the Creator God knows exactly what is ideal for His own creation. God gave our first parents quite a few things that would engage their attention and time—the animals, the exquisite natural beauty, the responsibility of “replenish[ing] the earth” (*Gen. 1:28*), having “dominion” over the creation (*Gen. 1:28*), and finally “work[ing]” and “keep[ing]” the Garden of Eden (*Gen. 2:15, ESV*). These innocent and holy endeavors are God’s intentions, and He obviously wouldn’t give them to us if they endangered our closeness with Him or one another. We can have a sense of “togetherness” with God even though we are doing other activities, in much the same way that we enjoy time with loved ones by *doing activities together*.

Today’s “work” place is obviously not as holy an environment as the sinless paradise that God originally created. But that doesn’t mean that a sense of “togetherness” is not still a realistic goal for us to experience. Perhaps the simple testimony, as attested to by the Scriptures, of “walk[ing] with God” (*see Gen. 5:22, Gen. 6:9, Gen. 48:15*) illustrates the continual companionship that we can have with our Lord, even while working.

### Scripture

Let’s think about this key verse: “And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it” (*Exod. 36:2*). Notice the extra verbs packed into the last clause of this verse: *to stir*, “to come”/“approach,” “to do.” Let’s first look at this Hebrew phrase of a stirred heart (*nasa’ + lev*) and let it inform us as to the nature of the work they did. The word for “stir” is a common word occurring more than 650 times in the Old Testament and basically means to lift or carry. But when placed with the “heart” it becomes an idiomatic expression reflecting either a good thing or a bad thing. The “good thing” verses are as follows (the “bad thing” comes at the end of the discussion):

“And they came, every one whose *heart stirred* him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation” (*Exod. 35:21*).

“And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose *heart stirred* them up in wisdom spun goats’ hair” (*Exod. 35:25, 26*).

Add to this the Bezaleel text, and those are all the positive “heart

stirring” texts in the Old Testament. Other versions join “stir” with concepts of “volunteering,” “willingness,” “being moved” (*NET, ESV*). Notice what these verses have in common: they all have to do with the sanctuary, they all involve wisdom or skill, and they all involve willingness without coercion. These factors instruct us in the art of maximizing our joy in whatever work we perform. First, being skilled and improving in whatever profession we are in turns work into a personal blessing for us as our skills and “wisdom” grow. Second, doing our work to please the Lord, like the women spinning their goat hair for God’s tabernacle, reorients our thinking away from getting caught up in the strife of our jobs and instead reminds us that the work we do (and how we do it) is our offering to the Lord. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (*Col. 3:23*). Third, in light of the first two factors, our jobs shouldn’t feel like a trap we are trying to escape but something we can passionately do from the heart—the stirred heart. So, when we work, (1) we should work for the Lord’s glory and honor, (2) we should exercise and reinforce the skills He has given us, and (3) we should do all our work with a willing spirit and passionate heart.

Let’s look again at that last clause of our key text, “even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.” The other word worth mentioning is the word “to come,” or “approach.” This word *qarav* means to draw near and is used in the sense of coming close to the altar to offer up one’s sacrifice (*Lev. 9:8*). It also shares the same root with the word *offering* (e.g., a lamb offering [*Lev. 3:7*]). But what are Bezaleel and the women offering? They are offering their labor, their time, their skills. Basically, they themselves are the offering. Does this not shout Romans 12:1? “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (*Rom. 12:1*). A picture emerges that connects our work, ourselves, and our worship together in a profound unity.

Incidentally, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) the Hebrew word *qarav* (to approach) is translated *pros-poreuomai*. Interestingly, this word occurs a single time in the New Testament, and it involves two men *approaching* Jesus (*Mark 10:35*). Unfortunately, they are not approaching to worship or to serve but to self-serve. They are James and John, and they approach Jesus to ask for the most honored positions possible (*Mark 10:37*). And thus, with this verse we conclude our reflections with a look at the “bad” use of a “stirred up heart.” Remember, it literally means “to lift the heart,” and as one can guess, a heart lifted up can be an arrogant, self-serving heart (*2 Kings 14:10*). James and John approach God not for worship but to be worshiped, not to serve but to be served. In this particular instance,

James and John are the antithesis of the goat-hair-spinning women.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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#### **Reflect and Discuss:**

1. What if we swapped out the word *work* from our vocabulary and instead inserted the words *service for God* every time we talked about our jobs? How would our attitudes change?

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2. Achieving excellence (wisdom/skill), willingly serving, and keeping God before us as we perform our daily work are collectively a noble cause. What can we do to turn some of these ideals into tangible reality in which work becomes an improved experience?

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3. Have you ever enjoyed a particular task that to everyone else looked like work but for you was an effortless pleasure? How is that possible?

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4. How can Adventist education encourage a more biblical view of vocation that contrasts with the secular notions of a career that are driven exclusively by financial incentives?

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5. Do you look forward to the new heaven and new earth as much, knowing that “work” will be a part of our eternal existence? Why, or why not?

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6. How does knowing that “work” will be part of our future for a very long time add significance to the fact that the Sabbath also will be a permanent fixture in our eternal lives (*Isa. 66:23*)?

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# Sabbath: Experiencing *and* Living *the* Character *of* God



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Genesis 1, 2, Exod. 16:14–29, Isa. 58:1–14, Matt. 12:1–13, Luke 13:10–17.*

**Memory Text:** “And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (*Mark 2:27, 28, NKJV*).

Jodie was the only Seventh-day Adventist in her graduate program, and her choice not to attend some social events on Sabbath made her beliefs very visible.

One day one of her friends, Gayle, called her. Gayle's husband was going to be out of town for six weeks, and she asked Jodie if she wanted to spend the next six Friday nights with her, because she knew Jodie did “nothing” on those evenings, anyway.

For the next four Friday nights they ate together, played music, shared their Christian experiences, and generally enjoyed each other's company. The fifth weekend, Gayle told Jodie that she had been downtown shopping and looked at her watch. *Oh, good*, she thought. *Sabbath is very soon*. She suddenly realized that over the four Friday nights she had experienced something new in her Christian experience. She had grown, learned more of her God, and deepened her faith. Sabbath had been an opportunity for education and personal development.

It's an interesting story about how we can think of the Sabbath as not just a day for rest but as a means of education, as well.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 19.

## Time to Be Astonished

Have you ever wondered why God chose to give us two harmonious Creation accounts in the first two chapters of Genesis? Genesis 1 recounts the Creation week and the growing wonder of the earth as it is given form and then life, culminating in the creation of man and woman on the sixth day. Genesis 2 looks at the same account but from a different perspective, with a special focus on the sixth day. Adam is at the center of the picture now, and everything is described as being there for him and the woman: the Garden, the rivers, and the animals.

Creation is too deep for one single account. First, we learn of the powerful, artistic Creator who has an eye for perfect beauty. Then we meet the God of relationships, who wants humanity to love and care for each other and the rest of creation.

**Read** Genesis 1 and 2 and then reflect on how the first Sabbath (*Gen. 2:1–3*) links back to the first Creation story and forward to the second Creation account. How do your conclusions help you understand what God’s blessing of the Sabbath and making it holy might mean?

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Imagine yourself as Adam or Eve on that first Sabbath. It’s your first day alive, your first day with your spouse, and your first day with God. What a day of education! You start to learn of the God who could create such beauty. You marvel as you see an elephant one moment and a frog the next, each unique. You smile as you see the antics of the giraffe or buffalo. You are silent in awe of the many colors and shapes, enraptured by the symphony of sounds; you revel in the range of delights in taste and smells and enjoy exploring the delights of different textures. Most of all, you start learning about relationships: responsibility, caring, love. You experience it with your Creator; you start to practice it with the rest of the created.

The first Sabbath could not have been a passive experience for Adam and Eve. It was a God-created opportunity for them to focus on their Creator and the created. It was a time for them to be astonished.

**List the different educational opportunities that Adam and Eve had during that first Sabbath. Which of these opportunities would still be relevant today, even if in a different form? How can they enrich your Sabbaths?**

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## Time for Rediscovery

When Moses is asked to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, it is clear that the masses have lost their perspective as children of God. They need to rediscover who the God is who asks for their worship and gives them so many promises of an amazing future. The Sabbath is a pivotal learning experience in their journey of rediscovery. It also becomes a clear signal to other nations of the special relationship between God and this nation. The experience of the manna epitomizes God's way of educating the Israelites.

**In** Exodus 16:14–29, what lessons are there for the Israelites to learn?

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God provides the miracle of the manna for the Israelites, giving them just enough food for each day. If He gave them more than that amount, they then might forget who their Provider was. So, every day He performed a miracle for them, and they saw God's care. On the Sabbath, however, the situation was different, just as the day was to be special. Now two miracles were performed: double food on Friday, and the food did not spoil overnight. That left the Sabbath for the Israelites to marvel at the God who was their Deliverer and to rediscover what it meant to be the people of God.

The Israelites were to eat this manna 40 years (*Exod. 16:35*). God also instructs Moses to keep an omer of manna to remind the Israelites of how He fed them in the wilderness (*Exod. 16:32, 33*). It also would have been a reminder of the particular experience of the Sabbath day.

There also are other occasions when God makes clear to the Israelites that the Sabbath is special.

The Sabbath was a way God helped the Israelites rediscover their identity and their God. They were asked to obey and keep the Sabbath holy, but this was in the context of developing a deeper understanding of the character of their Creator and about building a lasting relationship of promise.

**You are talking to a teenager who is finding Sabbath “boring.” He is keeping it only because that is what the Bible and his parents say he must do. What suggestions will you give to help him (re)discover the Sabbath as a positive learning experience?**

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## Time for Learning Priorities

The ups and downs of Israel's experience with God were closely linked to the way they related to the Sabbath. God saw their unwillingness to respect the Sabbath as a sign of His irrelevance in their lives (*Jer. 17:19–27*). A renewed commitment to the Sabbath also was part of restoration—a signal that priorities were right. Isaiah 58 pictures an interesting contrast.

**Read** Isaiah 58:1–14. What is God saying to His people here that is relevant to us today?

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The Israelites are posing as followers of God—in their worship, in their fasting—but the way they live their lives after they have finished worshipping shows that they are only going through the motions of correct behavior; there is no sincere heart commitment to the law of God.

Isaiah continues in chapter 58 to identify what God does expect from His people.

This is not all. Read Isaiah 58:13, 14. Why does God focus on the Sabbath at the end of this chapter? The prophet uses phrases here similar to those in the rest of the chapter: keep “from doing as you please”; don’t go “your own way”; avoid “doing as you please or speaking idle words” (*NIV*), the prophet warns. In other words, the Sabbath isn’t the time to go through the routine of worship only to be thinking your own thoughts and living a life irrelevant to the one of worship. The Sabbath is to be a “delight” and to be “honorable.” In the context of the rest of the chapter, Sabbath is about delighting in learning the character and purposes of God and then living that character and those purposes in our relations to others. Knowing how to go through the form of Sabbath observance and worship is not enough. Learning must impact life. Sabbath is time for learning and living priorities.

**Do you delight in the Sabbath? If not, what can you do to change that? Have you learned to “honor” the Sabbath? Discuss what this might mean with the rest of your Sabbath School class. Be as practical as you can.**

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## Time for Finding Balance

Jesus respected and upheld the law of God (*Matt. 5:17, 18*). Yet, Jesus also challenged the religious leadership over their interpretation of the law. None of His challenges was more threatening to the establishment than the choices He made on Sabbath keeping. The synagogues did not fail to make the Sabbath an opportunity for education—the Torah was read and interpreted without fail. The scribes and Pharisees knew the letter of the law. However, Jesus went much further in His Sabbath-day education of His followers.

**Read** Matthew 12:1–13 and Luke 13:10–17. What was Jesus teaching the people in His time, and us today, with these events?

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The controversies surrounding Jesus' healing on the Sabbath led into important spiritual debates about the nature of sin, the reason for the Sabbath, the relationship between Jesus and the Father, and the nature of Jesus' authority.

Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath is summarized well in our memory verse for this week: "And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" (*Mark 2:27, 28, NKJV*). He wanted to emphasize that the Sabbath should not be a burden. It was "made" (created) as a unique opportunity for people to learn of the character of God, who made the Sabbath, and to learn experientially by valuing His creation.

By raising questions through His actions, Jesus pushes His disciples, the Jewish leaders, and the crowds to think more deeply about Scripture and about what their faith and their God meant anyway. It is so easy for any of us to get so caught up in rules and regulations that might not be bad in and of themselves but that become an end in and of themselves rather than means to an end—and that end should be a knowledge of the character of the God we serve. And this, then, leads to our faithful obedience to Him based on our trust in the merits of Christ's righteousness for us.

**What about your own Sabbath keeping? Have you turned it into a day of just "don't do this" and "don't do that" rather than a time to truly rest in the Lord and know Him better? If so, how can you change so that you can get from it what God intends for you?**

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## A Time for Community

Jesus modeled for His disciples the practice of weekly attendance at the synagogue. After His resurrection, they continued this pattern, as did other followers of Jesus. The synagogue became one of the main venues for the apostles to raise questions relating to the Resurrection, and the Sabbath provided a key opportunity for the community to gather together and learn. After all, Jesus was the Hebrew Messiah, the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, which was read in the synagogue each Sabbath. What better place, then, did the believers have for promoting Jesus than in the synagogue, especially when they were witnessing to Jews and to others “who fear God” (*Acts 13:16, 26, NKJV*)?

**Look** at the following texts. What do they tell us about how Jesus’ followers witnessed in public arenas? As you read these texts, think about where they were speaking, to whom they were speaking, what was said, and what were the results: *Acts 13:14–45; Acts 16:13, 14; Acts 17:1–5; Acts 18:4.*

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The apostles’ testimony was both personal and scriptural. Paul elaborated on the history of Israel, starting with “our fathers” (*Acts 13:17*) in Egypt, and followed their history from the settlement to the judges, to the kings, and to David, from whom he had a perfect transition to Jesus.

Paul and others also showed how their personal experience and understanding made sense within the context of the Scriptures. They presented information, and they debated and discussed. The combination of personal testimony and Scripture delivered through preaching, teaching, and discussion was very powerful. As the Bible passages show, some of the religious leaders were envious of the authority of the apostles and the resulting power they had over the people, both Jews and Gentiles.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a strong history, too, of encouraging testimony and scriptural exposition through both preaching and teaching/sharing. The combination of Sabbath School with the divine (preaching) service and other Sabbath meetings (youth meetings, for example) gives a strong formal educational base to Seventh-day Adventist worship. While this needs to be complemented by other learning experiences, it is essential to the educational experience of the Sabbath.

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Sabbath,” pp. 281–289, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshippers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,’ the Lord said also to them, ‘Ye shall be holy men unto Me.’ Ex. 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshippers of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

“Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. . . . As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 288, 289.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Often Seventh-day Adventists spend time considering what is not acceptable to do on Sabbath. Develop a set of questions that would keep Sabbath keepers focused on the ideals discussed in this lesson and that emphasize Sabbath as an educative experience. For example: “What do I do on Sabbath that enables me to learn more about God’s character?”
- ❷ Consider the quotations from Ellen G. White given above. They suggest that it is not just the formality of keeping Sabbath that distinguishes Sabbath keepers in the community. What would individuals be like that are “partakers of the righteousness of Christ” and have been made “holy”? What does this have to do with the Sabbath?
- ❸ In what ways can you enrich your Sabbath experience? Identify three goals that focus on what you would like to learn through Sabbath observance in the next 12 months.

## Escape From Father in Paris

By MALIKA LEOCADIE

I was born into a non-Christian family in Algeria, but I didn't live like people of my faith were supposed to live. My parents left me with my grandmother and moved to France when I was three. After I turned 18, my father brought me to Paris to take care of his new wife and children.

My time with them was hell. Father was a hard man. Not only did he order me to tidy up the house and care for the children, but he also used me as if I were his wife. When I refused his advances, he beat me. After several years, I tried to commit suicide.

Father forbade me from leaving the house except to take the children to school. One day as I walked the children to school, I met a young man, a next-door neighbor, who took pity on me. Seeing the bruises on my face, he gave me a piece of paper with his mother's phone number. But I didn't call for help.

Instead, I spent a lot of time looking out the window, longing to be free. The young man saw me and told his mother, "Did you see the girl who is always looking out the window? She will be my wife one day."

I didn't hear the conversation, but I sensed that the young man wanted to marry me. I dismissed the thought. I couldn't marry someone outside my faith.

My life reached the point that I couldn't stop crying. Father came into my room every night. I didn't want to live. One night, I looked out the window at the dark sky and poured out my heart to God. I was sure that a God lived in the sky. I remembered Grandmother telling me about a God. "I will marry that young man," I told myself. "I will have a house and children."

The next day, Father beat me again and left the house. His wife insulted me and went on an errand. The children were at school. I called the young man.

"I want to go with you," I said.

"I'll get you in an hour," he said.

I packed all my belongings. Getting into his car, I learned that his name was Juleen and that he was a Seventh-day Adventist from the West Indies. His mother, Simone, had made arrangements for me to stay with another Adventist family where Father would not find me in Paris. The family also was from Algeria.

That's how I met Jesus. Today Juleen and I have our own home and children. We worship every Sabbath in church. My father eventually found me and, weeping, asked for forgiveness. I forgave him.

Father has since died, and the rest of my family has rejected me for becoming a Christian. The church is my new family.



*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel around the world.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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So much more than just a 24-hour break from work, the Sabbath is a theologically rich and intimate gift of time from our Creator. Whatever we know about the Sabbath, “rest” assured that there is always more to discover.

But what does the Sabbath have to do with education? Think back to the moments in which you have learned the most about God. The studies, the sermons, the fellowship, the special speakers, the songs, the seminars, the vespers, the camp meetings, the potlucks—how many of these moments included the Sabbath hours? With some reflection, for many of us, the Sabbath has been a “university in time” wherein we have been inducted, schooled, and continue to be lifelong scholars-in-residence in the ways and kingdom of God.

The Sabbath also provides time to relearn what we forgot. The Sabbath/manna test was really a trust/obey test to reacquaint Israel with their God after a disorienting sojourn in Egypt. Jesus used the Sabbath to restructure holiness along the lines of relieving human suffering instead of prioritizing traditions that augmented Sabbath prohibitions (*Matt. 12:11, 12*). His brilliant but terse rebuke—“ ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath’ ”—stands as a monument of reeducation and correction (*Mark 2:27, NKJV*). Jesus is “Lord also of the sabbath,” and we can learn of the One by studying the other (*Luke 6:5*).

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **A Testimony on Motivations**

Think for a moment about how to educate one’s heart and mind to be obedient to God, including His Sabbath commandment. Over the years, there seems to have been a shift—a good shift—in strategy when motivating people to obey God’s laws.

We can emphasize the negative consequences of disobedience (misery, bondage, penalties, and death). We also can use positive motivations, in which obedience is so attractively presented that people would feel as though they were missing out on a grand adventure if they were to neglect God’s laws.

I became acutely aware of this dichotomy within motivations in talking to Christians other than Adventists. When they learned that I was an

annihilationist (not believing in a place of unending eternal torment), two different Christians, unacquainted with each other, made the same comment on two different occasions, as if reading from a common script: “Don’t you lose leverage for evangelism and soul winning by not using an eternally burning hell?” I remember how struck I was by that comment and, repressing my shock, let them know that I felt that the character of Jesus and His plan of redemption were winsome enough to draw people effectively to God. They both quickly followed up, somewhat embarrassed, with something along the lines of, “Of course, yes, that would work, too.” I quietly thought, *Yes, I should hope so*. But their knee-jerk response to my annihilationism basically was, “How can you get people into heaven without turning the heat up in hell?” Notice how theology inexorably affects evangelism.

I came to realize, maybe for the first time, that *Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, and, by extension, education, is uniquely compelled to discover the heart of God so as to present Him in a way in which people are drawn*, rather than psychologically forced. And I mean psychologically forced. Because, frankly, if eternal burning torture is the reality of the lost, I couldn’t care less who God is, at this point—just tell me the magic words or orthodox doctrines to believe so that I may escape the eternal sulfuric nightmare! Who knows to what degree churches fill their pews based on that argument? But Adventist education puts no such tool in its toolbox to use on its students. Of course, final death and regret are legitimate negatives and, in some cases, may be invoked to kick-start serious thought by a student about his or her future. But for every negative, there are a dozen positives that press one to act on what he or she will receive, rather than on what he or she will avoid. Think of a happy marriage: is it fear of the pain and complex consequences of divorce that keeps spouses together, or have they found another source that keeps them bonded? Let’s apply these reflections to understanding the significance of the Sabbath.

### Scripture

There are 89 chapters in the four Gospels. It is relatively easy to see how many of those chapters speak of Jesus’ understanding of the Sabbath. There are 11 instances. This translates to a ratio of one out of eight chapters of the Gospels that deal with the Sabbath. That substantial figure is rendered more relevant when remembering two facts: (1) Jesus did so many things that if it were all written, John “suppose[s] that even the world itself could not contain the books” (*John 21:25*). (2) The earliest Gospels were probably written 30 or so years after Jesus’ death. Now put those two facts together. Among most Christians, there is an assumption that the institution of the Sabbath ended at the Cross. But if that were the case, wouldn’t it be odd that 1/8 of the Gospels dealt with Jesus’ Sabbath reforms? If the Sabbath institution had been defunct for 30 years,

especially in light of the fact that there was so much other material about Jesus' life that could have been recorded, how would this emphasis on the Sabbath be relevant for the fledgling church? A quick answer is to say, at least, that the Sabbath was likely still kept by early Christians. Though true, that is arguably the least interesting conclusion. There may be a deeper significance than that, however. Here are a few fascinating connections between the Sabbath, salvation, Jesus, and His kingdom. (The following is taken from Gnana Robinson, "The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath—A Comprehensive Exegetical Approach" [PhD dissertation, University of Hamburg, June 1975], pp. 413, 414):

1. Matthew and Luke's genealogies are organized according to a sabbatical, sevenfold arrangement or one that is based on multiples of seven. Matthew, for example, offers three groups of 14 generations in which Abraham, David, and Jesus are the high points. Jesus is the continuation and culmination of the salvation pattern, which began in Israel. Luke has 77 generations, starting right from Creation to Jesus. Tying Jesus to Creation through genealogy shows that His salvation is for all of humanity, a fundamental truth that the Sabbath symbolizes.
2. The fact that Jesus is "Lord of the Sabbath" (*see Matt. 12:8*) means that the Sabbath belongs to the Messiah as it belonged to Yahweh in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant that God had with Israel, that they might know that the One who is Lord of the Sabbath is God (*Ezek. 20:20*) and that He is the one who sanctifies them (*Ezek. 20:12, Exod. 31:13*). The foreigner who kept Sabbath also was guaranteed to receive a "place . . . [and] an everlasting name" in His house (*Isa. 56:5*), which is to be a house of prayer "for all people" (*Isa. 56:7*). "In this sense, Sabbath is certainly given for the sake . . . of man, for his salvation." Jesus reinforces these same points by asking rhetorically whether the Sabbath is a time for "sav[ing] life" (*Mark 3:4*) and freeing the suffering from "bond[age]" (*Luke 13:16*). The Sabbath is intimately connected with salvation in the Old Testament (*Deut. 5:15*), and it is the same with Jesus in the New.
3. Just as the temple in the Old Testament functioned as the place of forgiveness, release, and salvation, so Jesus, being greater than the temple, is now the locus of salvation. The salvation that Jesus brings is poignantly seen in His healings (the word for "save," *sozo*, is often used to refer to physical healing [*e.g., Matt. 9:22, Mark 6:56, Luke 17:19*]). Jesus chooses to demonstrate His healing/salvation actions on the Sabbath (*e.g., Mark 3:4; Luke 13:10; John 5:1, 9*). Each of these cases and more could have waited till another day besides the Sabbath, but perhaps Jesus intends to "show the imminence of the



Kingdom of God (Lk. 4:16-19; Lk. 7:22)” and purposefully links the Sabbath with salvation so that the Sabbath remains “the sign of the Messianic Kingdom.”

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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The insights featured in the commentary section are the tip of the iceberg when it comes to seeing the significance of the Sabbath in Scripture. We Adventists spend so much time just trying to educate others to obey the Sabbath command with the same handful of texts. Thus, we are prone to overlook the breadth of Sabbath theology throughout Scripture. Finally, lest all this Sabbath talk be dismissed as simply Adventists stretching the Scriptures to find more Sabbath support, the above theology that weaves Jesus, the Messianic kingdom, new creation, and the Sabbath together *was not authored by any Seventh-day Adventist*. One does not have to be a Seventh-day Adventist to see these connections; one just needs a Bible and an open mind.

Here are some practical tips for learning more about the Sabbath other than the fact that it is still to be kept:

- 1. Read and listen to more advanced theological material put out by the church’s Biblical Research Institute or the Adventist Theological Society. Even if you only understand 40 percent of what you read, you will still learn, and your comprehension will increase with continued exposure.**

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- 2. Form a small reading group that works through more challenging Sabbath material. In this way, you can help to support one another.**

*Notes*

# Heaven, Education, *and* Eternal Learning



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 3:16, 1 John 5:13, 1 Tim. 1:16, 1 Cor. 13:12, Zech. 13:6.*

**Memory Text:** “‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’ ” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV).

A poet, fearful of death, asked about how a person could live without “knowing for sure what dawn, what death, what doom, awaited consciousness beyond the tomb?” He created in his poem what he called the IPH, the Institute of Preparation for the Hereafter. Yet, how can one prepare for the hereafter if one doesn’t even know what happens to a person in it?

Fortunately, the Bible gives us great insight into the subject of heaven, the new earth, and the learning and living we will do throughout eternity. As we have seen all quarter, the IPH is here and now, in this life, and all our education—regardless of the field of study—should be preparing us for that “hereafter.”

After all, any school can pass on a lot of good information, a lot of good practical and helpful knowledge. But what good does it do if a person were to gain all that knowledge yet lose eternal life? This week we’re going to look at what inspiration tells about the ultimate graduate school, a school that goes on forever and where we will be learning and growing throughout all eternity. In this school of the hereafter, we’ll learn things that, in this present world, we can’t even begin to imagine.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 26.

## The Fate of the Dead

In the 1600s, a French writer named Blaise Pascal was ruminating on the state of humanity. For him, one point was very clear: no matter how long a human being lived (and back then they didn't live all that long), and no matter how good that person's life was (and life wasn't all that great back then either), sooner or later that person was going to die.

Moreover, whatever came after death was going to be longer, infinitely longer, than the short span of life here that preceded death. Thus, for Pascal, the most logical thing a person could or should find out is what fate awaits the dead, and he was astonished to see people get all worked up over things such as "loss of office, or for some imaginary insult to his honor," yet they paid no heed to the question of what happened after they were to die.

Pascal had a point. And that's no doubt why the Bible spends a great deal of time talking about the promise awaiting those who have found salvation in Jesus, the promise of what will await them in the future.

**Read** the following texts. What hope is offered us? *John 6:54, John 3:16, 1 John 5:13, 1 Tim. 1:16, John 4:14, John 6:40, Jude 1:21, Titus 3:7.*

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Eternal life makes so much sense in light of the cross; in light of the cross, nothing else makes sense *but* eternal life. That the Creator of the universe, the One who "made the worlds" (*Heb. 1:2*), the One in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (*Acts 17:28*), that He, God, should incarnate in human flesh and in that flesh die . . . for what? That we ultimately rot, like roadkill?

That's why the New Testament comes laced with promises of eternal life, for only the eternal guarantees restitution. A million years, even a billion years, might not possess enough good moments to make up for the bad. Eternity alone can balance all things out, and then some, because the infinite is more than the finite, and always infinitely so.

Pascal was right: our time here is so limited in contrast to what is coming. How silly not to be ready for the eternity that awaits us.

**What do you say to someone who shows complete indifference to what happens after death? How can you help that person see just how illogical such a position really is?**

## A New Existence

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). What does this tell us about just how different from this world our new existence will be, an existence in which death, sorrow, and pain are gone?

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A Christian was talking to a friend about the hope of the gospel, the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The person responded negatively to the whole idea. “Eternal life?” he said with a shudder. “What a horrible thought! Our seventy to eighty years here are bad enough. Who’d want to stretch this out forever? That would be hell.”

This person would have a point, except that he didn’t understand that the promise of eternal life isn’t a mere continuation of this life here. Please—who would want that? Instead, as the text above says, the old things are passed away, and all things have become new.

**What** do the following texts tell us about the new existence that is coming?

2 Pet. 3:10–13 \_\_\_\_\_

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Rev. 21:1–6 \_\_\_\_\_

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The important question for us in all this is: What does it take to be part of this new existence? How do we get there? How can we be sure we are going to be part of it? What things in our life, if any, could stand in the way of our being part of what God has promised us through Jesus?

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## Then Shall We Know

**“Heaven is a school; its field of study, the universe; its teacher, the Infinite One. A branch of this school was established in Eden; and, the plan of redemption accomplished, education will again be taken up in the Eden school.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 301.**

If you are like most people, you have a lot of questions—questions about sin, suffering, sickness, death, about why this happened, why that happened, why the other things happened.

We have questions about the natural world, too, and all its mysteries. For all the incredible progress science has made in helping us understand more about the world and the universe as a whole, so much is still beyond our grasp.

From the simplest life-forms to the sky over our heads, from the motion of subatomic particles to the whirling galaxies that are scattered across the cosmos, we are confronted with a reality that is so much bigger and deeper than our minds can now grasp, especially with the little bit of time we have here and now to study these things for ourselves.

On the other hand, when you have an eternity to study, then no doubt a lot of mysteries will be resolved for us.

**What** do the following texts tell us about what we will learn once this whole sorry episode of sin and suffering and death finally ends?

*1 Cor. 13:12* \_\_\_\_\_

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*1 Cor. 4:5* \_\_\_\_\_

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We are promised that we will be given an understanding of things that, for now, remain hidden to us. What a wonderful hope, too, that once we do see and understand things that now seem so difficult, we will have nothing but praise for God! The key for us now is to hold on to our faith, trust in God’s promises, live up to the light that we have, and endure unto the end. And the good news is that we “can do all things through Christ who strengthens” us (*Phil. 4:13, NKJV*).

**What heavy questions weigh on your heart? What things now seem so incomprehensible? How can learning to trust God on the things that you do understand help you with the things that, for now, you don’t?**

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## The School in the Hereafter

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17–19).

**What** hope do these texts offer us? What might some of these unseen eternal things be that we are waiting for, that we are promised through Jesus? See also Rev. 21:1, 2; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 7:14–17.

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However real the promises offered us in Jesus, however many good reasons we have to believe in them, the fact remains that the Bible gives us just hints, glimpses, of what awaits us. One thing that we can be sure of, however, is that it's going to be great, because just think how great life would be in an existence without the ravages of sin!

All our pain, all our suffering, all the things that we struggle with here come from sin and the consequences of sin. Christ came to undo all that, and He will restore the earth to what God originally had intended it to be before sin entered. In fact, it will be better, because amid all these glories we will forever be able to behold the scars on Jesus' hands and feet, the cost of our redemption.

“There, when the veil that darkens our vision shall be removed, and our eyes shall behold that world of beauty of which we now catch glimpses through the microscope; when we look on the glories of the heavens, now scanned afar through the telescope; when, the blight of sin removed, the whole earth shall appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God,’ what a field will be open to our study! There the student of science may read the records of creation and discern no reminders of the law of evil. He may listen to the music of nature's voices and detect no note of wailing or undertone of sorrow. In all created things he may trace one handwriting—in the vast universe behold ‘God's name writ large,’ and not in earth or sea or sky one sign of ill remaining.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 303.

**Try to picture what it will be like living forever in an entirely new world, one without all that makes life here so hard. What do you envision it to be like? What things are you particularly looking forward to?**

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## The Great Teacher

As we have seen this whole quarter, one central aspect of Christ's ministry here on earth was that of a teacher. From the beginning of His ministry, whether through acts or deeds, Jesus was constantly teaching His followers truths about Himself, about the Father, about salvation, and about the hope that awaits us (*see Matt. 5:2, Mark 4:2, Luke 19:47, John 6:59*).

Indeed, all you have to do is skim through a Gospel, any Gospel, and all through it you will find Jesus teaching. And though, even now, through His Word, the Lord continues to teach us, in the new world this teaching will continue, as well. But imagine how different it will be in an existence unencumbered by sin and all the limitations it places on us.

**“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (*Zech. 13:6*).**

**What** do you think this text is talking about?

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“The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. . . .

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

**Of all the incredible truths that we will learn about through eternity, nothing will captivate us more than the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. Think how deep and rich it must be that we will be studying it throughout eternity. Even now, how can you learn to better appreciate what Jesus has done for us through the Cross?**



**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The School of the Hereafter,” pp. 301–309, in *Education*; “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 662–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“The lion, we should much dread and fear here, will then lie down with the lamb, and everything in the New Earth will be peace and harmony. The trees of the New Earth will be straight and lofty, without deformity. . . .

“Let all that is beautiful in our earthly home remind us of the crystal river and green fields, the waving trees and the living fountains, the shining city and the white-robed singers, of our heavenly home—that world of beauty which no artist can picture and no mortal tongue describe. Let your imagination picture the home of the saved, and remember that it will be more glorious than your brightest imagination can portray.”—Ellen G. White, *Heaven*, pp. 133, 134.

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. . . . Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Dwell more on the point that Pascal made, about people who seem so unconcerned about what eternity will bring. Why do you think people are like that? Why is this such an irrational attitude to have?
- ❷ Dwell more on why the hope of eternal life is so important to our faith. Without that, why do we really have nothing?
- ❸ Think about all the incredible mysteries that exist in the natural world. Be it biology, geology, astronomy, physics, chemistry—in all fields everything turns out to be so much more complex than people originally thought. Scientists, for example, no longer talk about “simple life-forms” because, as it turns out, even the simplest life-forms are not so simple, after all. Each new breakthrough, each new discovery, seems only to open up more questions for us that need answering. How does all this help us understand how much we will be learning in the “school of the hereafter”?

## No Quiet Work on Sabbath

By GARY ROGERS

My construction crew had everything ready for the roofing to go onto Essential Life Center, an urban center of influence that we were building in Cambodia's second-largest city, Battambang. So, I called a company in the capital, Phnom Penh, to supply workers to install the roof. Before finalizing the contract, I explained that we represented a Christian church and didn't work on Saturday. I was assured that the roof would be finished before then.

But after the workers arrived, I quickly saw that they would not finish before Sabbath. I emailed a reminder about the terms of our contract to the head office. My phone rang as I spoke with one of my own workers, Koy Sopaon, at the construction site on Wednesday. "I'm calling about your email," a company executive said. "We need Saturday to finish. If the guys can't work on Saturday, we'll have to pay them extra to wait until Monday."

"We spoke about this earlier," I replied. "We cannot work on Saturday."

The executive changed his approach. "We'll be quiet," he promised. "We won't make any noise. We don't need to use hammers or other noisy tools on Saturday. No one will even know that we are on the roof."

"If you have a few minutes, let me explain why we don't work," I said.

The executive agreed to listen.

"The Christian Bible tells us that God created this earth in six days," I said. "On the seventh day, He did three things: He stopped His work, He rested, and He made the day holy. He did that to remind us that He is our Creator. He has asked us not to do any work—us or anyone who is working for us—on every seventh day, which is Saturday. This way, we can remember and worship Him."

"Ohhh, I understand," the executive said. "We'll rest on Saturday."

Sopaon, my worker, listened curiously to the phone call. Afterward, he looked at me and asked, "Why does my church worship on Sunday?"

Inviting Sopaon to sit down, I gave him a history lesson on the change of the Sabbath. Later, at lunch break, I saw Sopaon studying his Bible. He expressed amazement that the Bible teaches that the seventh-day is Sabbath.

On Friday, I told Sopaon, "You've seen new truth about God's day in His Word. Wouldn't you like to follow Him in His truth and keep Sabbath holy?"

"Yes, I would!" Sopaon exclaimed.

Sopaon attended worship services in the half-built center of influence that Sabbath. Nobody worked on the roof overhead. Today he is a deacon and Sabbath School class teacher at the completed church.




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GARY ROGERS, 63, has worked in Cambodia as a Global Mission builder since 1996. Essential Life Center opened with help from a 2018 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

## ***Part I: Overview***

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Most are unaware of a strange apathy they live with. There are at least a dozen goals we have on a given day, from doing chores to meeting deadlines. We are kept busy identifying these short-term ends and then pursuing the means to accomplish them. But when it comes to identifying the goal of life and the means to accomplish that, we freeze like the proverbial deer in the headlights. How is it that humans can be so concerned about the fate of their favorite sports team but indifferent or apathetic to their own eternal fate or that of their families? Jesus, desperate to break through this apathy, says, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (*Mark 8:36*).

Those who choose not to sacrifice the fate of their souls for temporary gains will not be disappointed. Our new existence will be filled with God’s presence (*Rev. 21:3*), and every physical/spiritual need will be met (*Rev. 7:16, 17*). Because Jesus invested the time to teach us about God and His ways while He walked the earth, we can infer that this education will continue throughout eternity. There will be no disappointments, no boredom, and no apathy. We will not be disembodied spirits floating around as vapors, striking the occasional harp. Far from it. “The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. . . . The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Scripture**

The glories that await those redeemed from the earth cannot be exaggerated. First, there is the absence of pain in all its forms: no crying, no sorrow, no death (*Rev. 21:4*). There will be no future source of sorrow, because He who sits on the throne says, “Behold, I make all things new” (*Rev. 21:5*). Sin is the root of suffering, and every part of it is kept out of the precinct of the redeemed (*Rev. 21:8*). Second, all our past sufferings are consoled, since God Himself will have “wipe[d] away all tears from [our] eyes” (*Rev. 21:4*). We will be “kings and priests unto God” (*Rev. 1:6*) with the undeserved and staggering privilege of sitting with Him on His throne (*Rev. 3:21*). One can only imagine the heights of worship and praise that will flow uncontrollably from hearts overflowing with gratitude for what God and the Lamb have done for us. Can you see us joining the

24 elders and casting our crowns before His feet (*Rev. 4:10*)? How can words adequately describe such a scene?

### The Perpetual Novelty of God

As good as this sounds, though, what will keep us occupied for all that time? As finite humans, we wrestle with the concept of eternity. Our current experience shows that even things once pleasurable seem to lose their edge over time.

The reason the new earth/heaven will never grow dull is because even though “every pleasure has a shelf life, God . . . is the perpetual novelty.” There is no doubt that our hearts will continue, throughout eternity, to be filled with wonder as we behold Him, listen to Him, and learn from Him. Think of how the Holy Scriptures have held the attention of Jews and Christians for thousands of years. Now realize that *every day* with God will give us a new Bible—one full of information we never had before as we watch how God engages afresh with His creation and speaks wisdom to a thousand different situations. We will be in awe. But there is no reason to wait to be in awe of God till heaven. Abraham Heschel shares, “Never once in my life did I ask God for success or wisdom or power or fame. I asked for wonder, and [H]e gave it to me.”

So, how do we know heaven will be beyond our wildest dreams? Because we were hardwired for a purpose—to know and enjoy God forever. So, unless one thinks God is a poor engineer, we need never worry about boredom, apathy, or monotony in our eternal home. As C. S. Lewis mused, “God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn.”

### Scripture

We can assume that a sense of wonder motivates learning. Again, from observing children, how often is a moment of awe followed by intense inquiry? “Wow! Look at that! How does that happen?” or “Why does this do *that*?” Another feature that motivates learning is mystery. Paul considered himself a steward “of the mysteries of God” (*see 1 Cor. 4:1*). Who wouldn’t want to hear and learn what God had to say?

Paul continues with the idea that when the Lord comes things are going to become clearer: “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart” (*1 Cor. 4:5, ESV*). In context, he offers this idea as a defense

of his ministry. Even though Paul uses this idea in a rather narrow context, the text can obviously be applied to a whole range of things that we don't fully understand presently. Things from the created world alone are sources of inestimable inquiry that are sure to keep us learning and discovering with delight for eternity. And as already noted, the inexhaustible plans, purposes, and character of God will provide infinite learning opportunities.

Another text that is often used to highlight the unimaginable glories of heaven is, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (*1 Cor. 2:9*).

This text has thrilled many with the anticipation of how amazing heaven will be. However, the specific context of this verse does *not* support the idea (1) that no one has seen what is being talked about and (2) that heaven is primarily what is referred to as that which God has prepared. First, the very next phrase after the text in question is "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." So, that which hadn't been "seen" or "heard" has now been revealed to Paul and company through the Spirit. Is this speaking of Paul's receiving a preview of heaven? Not likely. The verses before our text are speaking of the "wisdom of God" hidden in a "mystery." This mystery is tied to the opening thought of the chapter, which speaks of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." A quick phrase search for "wisdom of God" and "mystery" in Paul's epistles makes it apparent what Paul is speaking about when he says "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." He is speaking of the gospel of a crucified Christ and its magnificent results (*Eph. 1:9, 10; Eph. 3:3–6; Col. 1:26, 27; Col. 4:3; Eph. 3:10, 11*). The more contextualized understanding of this famous text doesn't take away from the glories of heaven. It adds to the glory of knowing God and His purposes as seen in Jesus the Christ and says we can experience these glories *now* through the Spirit. This is our "heaven"-on-earth experience.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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If there were only one fate, that fate would be inevitable no matter what we did. But the Bible is clear that two fates exist (*John 5:29*). We choose; and the choice could not be easier. Consciously applying this choice is a great way to start each day. Instead of reaching for our phones, checking our social media sites, or watching the news first thing in the morning, why not say out loud, before your feet hit the floor, everything you choose

as a follower of Christ—something like this:

1. Today, I choose to walk with God.
2. I choose to be a disciple of Christ and learn all I can from Him.
3. I choose to see and treat others the way Jesus did.
4. I choose the satisfying joy of holiness over the fleeting pleasures of sin.
5. I choose eternal life over eternal death.
6. I choose to let Jesus make me a new creation in Him.

In your Sabbath School class, ask your students to come up with more “I choose” statements to start their day.

Virtually everything we know, we learned. This idea makes education foundational to life. From the knowledge it takes to tie our shoelaces to the saving knowledge of the gospel, education covers it all. Part of what makes heaven “heaven” is that learning continues forever. If we had God figured out in the first 100 years, either He wouldn’t be God or we would be, both of which are false. Thank God, He is both the Giver and the object of a final precious gift to His creation—the gift of eternal learning.

## *Notes*

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The prophet Isaiah's words are laden with meaning, words such as "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (*Isa. 53:5, NKJV*). Such words create powerful images. This explains why Isaiah's words still speak to us today. In his suffering-servant poem (*Isa. 52:13–53:12*), Isaiah brings the Messiah into finer focus more than anywhere else in the Old Testament. Seeking to preserve his nation's identity by taking a remnant from denial and anchoring them to reality, Isaiah called upon his people to behold their God, the One who knew them by name and promised to redeem them from fire—but only if they would listen and obey.

Isaiah's words strengthened King Hezekiah to look for the miracle that was Jerusalem's only hope (*Isaiah 36, 37*). If Jerusalem had fallen then, rather than to the Babylonians a century later, the Assyrian policy of scattering conquered peoples could have vaporized Judah's national identity. Thus, there would have been no Jewish people from whom the Messiah, the world's Savior, would arise. This quarter we look at Isaiah, his words, his times, his predicaments—but mostly at his God, the God who, both then and now, cries out to us, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (*Isa. 43:1*).

## Lesson 1—Crisis of Identity

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Hear, O Heavens!** (*Isa. 1:1–9*)

MONDAY: **Rotten Ritualism** (*Isa. 1:10–17*)

TUESDAY: **The Argument of Forgiveness** (*Isa. 1:18*)

WEDNESDAY: **To Eat or Be Eaten** (*Isa. 1:19–31*)

THURSDAY: **Ominous Love Song** (*Isa. 5:1–7*)

**Memory Text**—*Isaiah 1:18, NKJV*

**Sabbath Gem:** The Judaeans forgot they belonged to God and lost their true identity as the covenant people. God does an amazing work to restore His people to Himself.

## Lesson 2—Crisis of Leadership

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The King Is Dead. Long Live the King!** (*Isa. 6:1*)

MONDAY: **"Holy, Holy, Holy"** (*Isa. 6:1–4*)

TUESDAY: **New Personality** (*Isa. 6:5–7*)

WEDNESDAY: **Royal Commission** (*Isa. 6:8*)

THURSDAY: **Appalling Appeal** (*Isa. 6:9–13*)

**Memory Text**—*Isaiah 6:1, NKJV*

**Sabbath Gem:** People want trustworthy leadership. This lesson looks at Judah's leadership crisis and the sad results that followed.

**Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind** The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on audio CD, and via online download to people who are legally blind or physically disabled. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services for the Blind, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981; email: [services@christianrecord.org](mailto:services@christianrecord.org); website: [www.christianrecord.org](http://www.christianrecord.org).