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Christian Education



The 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, really, 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.

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.

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The apostle John said that 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 must obviously 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 lesson 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 so that all our members are 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.

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A 36-year-old woman describes how evil spirits interrupted Bible studies three times. A 70-year-old former witch doctor says he couldn't heal his own illness. A 14-year-old girl remembers dodging stone idols thrown by her grandfather. What do they have in common? They are united by mission in the Southern Asia Division, which will receive this quarter's Thirteen Sabbath Offering.

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Education *in the Garden of Eden*



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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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 can still 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?

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?

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?

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.

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:

- ① 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.)?
- ② 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?
- ③ 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 exceed-

ingly 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.



GABRIEL GOLEA is executive secretary of the French-Belgian Union based in Paris, France.

The Family



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.*

“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?

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 they 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.*

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.

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?

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?

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:

- ① 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?
- ② 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?
- ③ 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."

The Law *as* Teacher



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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.*

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 door-keeper 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?

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?*

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:

- ① 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?*
- ② 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?
- ③ 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?
- ④ 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 HAMZAOU

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.

“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.*

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?

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.*

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?

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.*

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?

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?

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?

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, or 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.*

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.

Jesus as the Master Teacher



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*).

Billy 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*).

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?

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.*

“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.*

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.*

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.*

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*.

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.*

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.*

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:

- ① 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?
- ② 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?
- ③ 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.

More Lessons From *the* Master Teacher



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?”

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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 had begun to come 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 were still 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?

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?

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 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.

MORE MISSION!



You 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)
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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. THEN GO OUT AND REACH SOMEONE!

**Adjust times as necessary.*

Worship *in* Education



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 worshipping beings, can end up worshipping the wrong things, or even end up not worshipping 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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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 her about worship? In fact, how did they get on the topic of worship to begin with?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

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

Education *and* Redemption



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).

The 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?

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?

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?

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?

Moses and the Prophets

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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:

- ① How important is the educational work for the mission of the church?
- ② What did Ellen G. White mean when she wrote “Heaven is a school” (*Education*, p. 301)?
- ③ 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.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.*

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?

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?

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 worshipping 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?

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:

- ① 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.
- ② 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?
- ③ 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?
- ④ 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.

Education in Arts and Sciences



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” (*Psalm 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 world-view.

* *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?

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?

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?

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.*

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?

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

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 2,000 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?

Foolishness and Wisdom

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

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?

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?

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?

“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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The Christian *and* Work



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?

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 _____

Eccles. 9:10 _____

Prov. 21:25 _____

Jer. 1:16 _____

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?

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?

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?

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)?

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?

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?

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 Hélène Iborra 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! Hélène thought.

Back at home, Hélène 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.

Hélène 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.

Hélène 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 Hélène, 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."



Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel through literature and other means.

Sabbath: Experiencing *and* Living *the* Character of God



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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

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?

The controversies surrounding Jesus' healing on the Sabbath lead 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?

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.*

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:

- ① 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?”
- ② 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?
- ③ 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.

Heaven, Education, *and* Eternal Learning



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.*

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?

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 _____

Rev. 21:1–6 _____

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?

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 _____

1 Cor. 4:5 _____

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?

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.

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?

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?

“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:

- ① 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?
- ② Dwell more on why the hope of eternal life is so important to our faith. Without that, why do we really have nothing?
- ③ 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.



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.

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 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 Judeans 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; website: www.christianrecord.org.