

APRIL-JUNE



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



A Lamp for My Feet



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If you sent a critique for this quarterly but are not listed above, it is because your name is not on our master list. Please accept our apologies, and register again at the Web site below.

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Got Questions?

**Sabbath School
University *has answers!***

Sabbath School University is a 28-minute discussion of *CQ* and the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. SSU discusses the lesson content and strategies to enrich your Sabbath School with fellowship, outreach, Bible study, and missions. Sabbath School leaders, don't miss this weekly broadcast on the Hope Channel.



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This Quarter's Illustrator



My name is Rohan Goldsmith, and I am a 39-year-old teacher of visual arts from Jamaica. Jamaica is the largest English-speaking island in the Caribbean with an approximate population of 2.6 million. We are known worldwide for the beauty of our country, our music, and our outstanding personalities.

I am a trained graphic artist who enjoys the challenge of creating new exciting designs. I also paint and enjoy playing basketball. I am a Seventh-day Adventist who is stimulated by reading books on astronomy and religion. I have been married for almost 14 years and have three boys—ages 12, 9, and 2.

Getting the most Out of *CQ*

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the *Adult Bible Study Guide* find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 70,000.

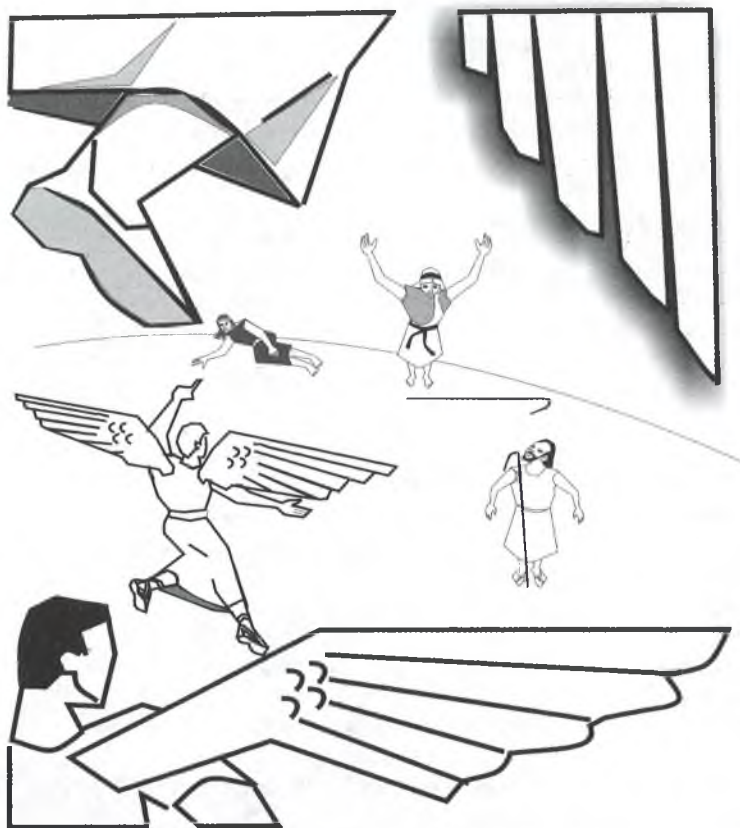
POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
 - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
 - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
 - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
 - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
 - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
 - "**Opinion**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
 - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.

The Voice From Heaven



“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Heb. 1:1, 2, NIV).

Raiders of the Lost Word

INTRODUCTION

2 Tim. 3:16

Imagine, if you will, a time long past. Two individuals are hiding behind an ancient oak tree in a forest of early Europe. Both are panting when one whispers, "Quiet! I hear something in the distance!" After a minute or two, the startled individuals see a long army of torches dancing in the distance. The only sound the two terrified individuals hear that is louder than the horses' hooves is the rapid pounding of their hearts as the army fades in the distance.

"Can we look at it now?" one whispers to the other. "No! Not yet. It isn't safe here. We have to keep moving. We're not out of danger!" the other exclaims.

What drove these two individuals into such danger?

There was a time in Europe when turmoil, chaos, and terror reigned over most of the continent. This time is known as the Dark Ages, when common people were forbidden to read the Bible. Only the ruling church, kings, and noblemen could own one.* In some cases, if a common person was found reading a Bible, he/she could have been put to death. At that time, the Bible had such great power that those in charge of running the church and state could make laws and rule the land just by possessing one and saying that its authority gave them the right and power to do as they pleased.

But with all the power imbued in the Holy Scriptures, was it really God's intention that only a few should possess it and interpret it to their own benefit and personal gain? As 2 Timothy 3:16 states, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (NIV). The Word of God was given to us as a handbook for righteous living through Jesus Christ. Also, Christ said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world" (NIV). Indeed, the Bible is the light that guides our path to Christ and gives us hope of His soon return.

Exhausted after journeying for several days, our two Raiders finally reached the edge of their village. "Is it safe yet? Can I look at it now?" one asks. The other—still out of breath—looks around, then sits on a large rock next to a brook and nods yes to his faithful companion. Together, they kneel and gently unwrap their sacred, life-sacrificing gift from its cocoon of old cloth. The first quietly utters these words, "The Bible. The Word of God that was lost."

The other replies, "Now we can share the Light to all the world as God intended it to be."

**"Can I look at it now?"
one asks.**

*Condit, *The History of the English Bible*, 1881, pp. 55, 58.

Sunday
April 1

The Four Ways Heaven Commu- nicates With Us

LOGOS

Gen. 1:28; 3:8, 9; Numbers 22; 2 Sam. 12:1–7; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 38:14–19; Ezekiel 4; Amos 3:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 3:1

The Sabbath

Of all the many beautiful things God created, He created only one thing in His own image—humans (Gen. 1:27). God created almost everything by speaking. But He formed and breathed life into Adam and Eve without words.

After Adam named all the creatures, he noticed that all had mates but him. So God tenderly performed the first surgical procedure and created a woman as a help meet for Adam. Then He rested on the seventh day, and blessed it and sanctified it (Gen. 2:3).

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Web site (Adventist/Fundamental Beliefs #20 <<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>>), the

**Sometimes the Lord has to
use flat tires or stalled
engines to get our attention.**

“Sabbath is to be a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom. The

Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people.” So God set aside this day as a perpetual memorial of Creation (Exod. 20:11, 12) and communion with Him. On the Sabbath, we can especially experience God’s presence among us. So a relationship, connection, and a continued level of closeness are paramount to Him.

Using Messengers to Deliver Information

Does God still speak through prophets today? Do we have the right to claim the “‘prove Me now in this;” (Mal. 3:10, NKJV)?

I once knew a woman who had been dating a Christian for several years and was wondering where the relationship would progress. Some people absolutely loved him and thought the two of them would make a wonderful married couple. But others, who knew of his past, wanted her to be careful and were less encouraging of the relationship. So after much prayer, she decided to use the “prove Me now” approach. Thus, she asked God that if someone spoke of the prophet Hosea the next Sabbath, that would be her “fleece” (see Judges 6:36–40), a sign that God had sent this man to be her husband. Little did she know that the pastor’s sermon was based on the prophet Hosea! Later that year, the couple married.

The Sword

What publication has 1,189 chapters; 31,101 verses; 783,137 words; 3,566,480 letters; 1,620 promises; 6,468 commands; 8,000 predictions; 3,268 fulfilled prophecies; 3,140 unfulfilled prophecies; and 3,294 questions contained in 66 books? Hint #1—It has 8,674 different Hebrew words in it; and 5,624 different Greek words in it. The answer is the King James Version of the Bible.¹

The Bible is the most comprehensive best-selling book ever to be published. Anything and everything you want to see on television, at the movies, or on the Internet has either already happened in, or been prophesied by, the Bible. “No book has been so loved, so hated, so revered, so damned as the Bible. People have died for the Bible. Others have killed for it. It has inspired man’s greatest, noblest acts. . . . Wars have raged over the Bible, revolutions have been nurtured in its pages, and kingdoms crumbled through its ideas. People of all viewpoints—from liberation theologians to capitalists, from fascists to Marxists, from dictators to liberators, from pacifists to militarists—search its pages for words with which to justify their deeds.”²

God knew that one day you would be able to do an Internet search on *hate* and find 203 million Web sites; on *crime* and find 232 million Web sites; on *sin* and find 287 million Web sites. But He also knew that people would be inspired to Google the word *Bible* and find 163 million Web sites!

Events and Objects

What do a donkey and a bush have in common? How about if I add a rod, a raven, a pillar of fire/cloud, or a fleece of wool? These were all “cell phones” God used to deliver His messages. Sometimes the Lord has to use flat tires or stalled engines to get our attention. Sometimes He has to allow tsunamis, typhoons, earthquakes, blizzards, extreme heat and cold, and floods to remind us that He is the great “I AM.”

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

“As the end of all things earthly should approach, there would be faithful ones able to discern the signs of the times. While a large number of professing believers would deny their faith by their works, there would be a remnant who would endure to the end.”³

1. “The Amazing Bible World History Timeline,” <http://agards-bible-timeline.com/q10_biblefacts.html>.

2. Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (June 1988 edition), p. 5.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 535, 536.

REACT

When was the last time you asked God to use you as an email or a text page?

"God's Inspired Word of Old Inspires Us Today"

TESTIMONY

2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21

"Human minds without the special assistance of the Spirit of God will see many things in the Bible very difficult to be understood, because they lack a divine enlightenment. It is not that men should come to the Word of God by setting up their own way, or their own will or their own ideas, but it is to come with a meek and humble and holy spirit."¹

"Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do."²

**"Never attempt to search
the Scriptures unless . . ."**

"When you have sought to know His will, your part in the operation with God is to believe that you will be led and guided and blessed in the doing of His will. We may mistrust ourselves lest we misinterpret His teachings, but make even this a subject of prayer, and trust Him, still trust Him to the uttermost, that His Holy Spirit will lead you to interpret aright His plans and the working of His providence."³

God has given the Bible to communicate His love and will for us. Let us treasure, not judge, this gift. Let us give it top priority in our daily lives. Meditate on His Word, and share it with others. This is our commission. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you search the Scriptures and allow God to mold and shape your character to be more like Him.

REACT

1. In what ways have you been guilty of passing judgment on portions of Scripture thought not to be inspired by God?
2. How can you show unbelievers your belief that God inspired the writing of the Scriptures?
3. In what ways can you strengthen your belief in God's Word so you can have a deeper relationship with God?

1. Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 919.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 1155.

The Bible: God Speaks in the Rainbow

Tuesday
April 3

EVIDENCE

Gen. 9:8–17; Exod. 33:9–11, 13, 17–23; 34:5–7; 1 Kings 19:11–13; Heb. 1:1–3

Ellen White identifies “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” . . . as the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.* They have been empowered to “prophesy” for 1,260 days—approximately 42 months or 3½ years (Rev. 11:3). According to *Strong’s Lexicon* online, the Hebrew word for prophesy, *naba*, translates “to speak, or sing, by inspiration.” The Greek translation, *propheteuo*, means “to speak under inspiration.” The Old and New Testaments, therefore, prophesy, or speak, under the inspiration of God.

We also have archeological evidences that correlate with the Bible. Many people take trips to the Holy Land where they can retrace the steps of Christ as found in the Bible. There is now also a contemporary scientific paradigm called intelligent design, which states that certain things exist in the universe because God wanted it so. Yet, with all these proofs that the Bible is God’s true and inspired Word, one symbol makes it evident that God speaks with us. Genesis 9:8–17 tells the story of this symbol—the rainbow. In science classes today, the rainbow is broken down into a prism of hydrogen and oxygen molecules in a 2:1 ratio (H₂O, i.e., water) which create a kaleidoscope of colors in the sky

when sunlight is present. But the Bible says that God put His bow in the clouds as a love-covenant to never again destroy this earth with a flood.

Florida was hit with four hurricanes in 2004, and another in 2005. Indonesia was hit with a tsunami in 2004. New Orleans was devastated in 2005 when its levee system broke after hurricane Katrina. These were horrendous disasters involving floods, but the waters did not cover the entire earth. God keeps His word.

The next time you see a rainbow, remember . . . God is speaking with you!

One symbol makes it evident.

REACT

Based on the above texts, how else might God choose to speak to us today?

**The Great Controversy*, p. 267.

How to P-H-O-N-E God—Hearing His Voice

HOW-TO

Amos 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21

Our brains were created to send and receive messages from our neurons, thalamus, and especially our cerebral cortex (which is said to be the seat of conscious sensation and information processing), thus allowing us the ability to make a conscious choice. But how can we whet our communication skills to better understand God's voice? Here are a few pointers:

1. *P—Prayer*: Jesus blessed us with the gift of reasoning through prayer. Even when Jesus was on earth, He was in constant prayer. An unceasing, constant devotion with God opens up our minds by instilling the wisdom and knowledge we need to implement Christlike decisions. Amos 3:7 declares that our connection will be worth it.

2. *H—Honor*: We honor Christ when we respect Him and His Word. The more we honor Him and His Word, the faster our blessings will flow.

3. *O—Obedience*: An obedient heart strengthens the spirit of a struggling Christian. When we willingly adhere to Christ's voice and continue to follow His guidance, we are obeying Him. Second Peter 1:21 highlights the importance of obedience.

4. *N—Newness*: After we have savored our relationship with Christ and have begun to listen to His voice as He speaks through His Word, we become new. We maintain this newness of heart by repeatedly accepting Christ's guidance. This can be accomplished by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

5. *E—Engagement*: We do this by deeply studying the Bible with much prayer. Don't just "read" the Bible. Study it. Search it. Look in it for signs of the times. Also read Ellen White's books, especially *Steps to Christ* and the *Conflict of the Ages* series. A constant determination to know more about God will help us develop a unique communication with Him and healthy responses to His voice. Second Peter 1:20 and 3:1 explain why it is so important to edify ourselves with the Word, God's voice.

Don't just "read" the Bible.

REACT

Communication is a two-way street. We often talk to God. But how often do we listen to Him talk to us?

Choices and Decisions

OPINION

2 Tim. 3:16

The Bible does not list the choices God and His Son had before they “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, NKJV). However, the first two chapters of Genesis describe the decisions that were ultimately made. Genesis 3 tells of the choice of earth’s first humans and the consequences they incurred as a result of their choice. The Bible is filled with the stories of how men, women, boys, and girls reacted to their circumstances. These biblical accounts provide us with insights on how we should approach and handle situations that arise in our lives.

God and His Son are steadfast in their efforts to communicate with us. Sadly, we often select things throughout our busy days that block His voice. The decision to become more receptive to God takes place in four stages. There must first be an *awareness* of the many instruments (Bible, sermons, people, etc.) God uses to capture our attention. As we become aware of the countless ways He speaks to us, we must in turn *acknowledge*, rather than ignore His presence. Next, we must be *willing* to obey God’s plan for our lives. Finally, we must constantly and diligently *work* to replace this finite world with the infinite glory of heaven.

Our decision to listen to God and His Son is a personal choice.

Our decision to listen to God and His Son is a personal choice. Our choices and decisions become simple when we keep in mind 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (NKJV). As we continue to witness the signs of Christ’s soon coming, we must remember moment by moment to “trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”*

REACT

1. According to the four stages above, at what stage was Jonah when he ran from God?
2. When God communicates with you today, how will you respond?

*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 590.

I Listen; I Believe; I Act

EXPLORATION

Ps. 119:11, 12; Matt. 28:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:15

CONCLUDE

God desires to have continuous communication with His children. Sometimes He may speak to us through great events, which ensure we pay attention! At other times, He may speak to us through a still, small voice. One sure means of communication He uses is the Bible! What we must remember, though, is that communication is a two-way process involving four elements—sender—message—receiver—response.

CONSIDER

- Waking up in the still of the morning and earnestly talking to God and studying His Word. Present a particular petition to Him, then wait to hear His response about the direction for your day.
- Searching for opportunities to be used as God's messenger.
- Walking through the most cluttered room in your house with your eyes closed and the lights off, then again with the lights on and your eyes open. Write a poem about the world without the light of God's Word.
- Organizing a debate on the topic, "Be it resolved that the Bible is not entirely inspired by God because it sometimes seems to contradict itself?"
- Dramatizing two events (one biblical and one modern-day) that God used to deliver a message to His people. Emphasize through narration or depiction what the message was and how the people responded.
- Reading and/or singing the song "Give Me the Bible," no. 272 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*.

CONNECT

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 365, 453, 454.

Arthur Maxwell, *Your Bible and You*, chaps. 1–13.

The Final Word



"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work"

(2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NRSV).

A Written Version of God

INTRODUCTION

John 5:39

In a remote village, there lived a rich man who built his house on top of the region's highest mountain. He decided to share his fortune with the people who lived in his community. Therefore, he cleared a path in the dense vegetation on the mountain and placed signs everywhere to guide whoever would pass by. But as the days went by, he realized that only a few people desired his help and company. He thought that perhaps people were having a hard time following the path on the hill, so he decided to write a guidebook to clarify the route. In that book, he affirmed his deep desire to help the people. He also wrote about his love and concern for the community.

In the book, the man said everything that needed to be said. But even with all the information he provided, only a few people still arrived at the man's house. Most of them got lost in the forest, because they forgot to read the guidebook.

The Bible is literally the Word of God, the exact expression of His amazing personality.

God, the "rich man in the community," desires to share His wealth with us. His Guidebook is the Bible. He made Himself comprehensible

through the Bible. The Bible is literally the Word of God, the exact expression of His amazing personality.

It's interesting that, throughout the centuries, the Bible has gained strength and credibility. Its prophecies, provisions, and orientations are historically and scientifically recognized. Even skeptics admit its value for humanity. However, if none of this would make us believe in its authority, Jesus Himself would convince us. When He faced temptation, He used Scripture to protect Himself. By repeating "It is written," He overthrew the adversary's arguments.

When we're not sure about the route we're traveling, it's essential to study the map. God gave us His map—the Bible—to help us arrive safely at the top of the mountain. All we need is to consult this map, the ultimate Word, the exact expression of His character and will. " 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me' " (John 5:39, NKJV).

A Special Book

EVIDENCE

John 17:17

The Bible is a fabulous book, not only because of the stories it contains, but because of the current lessons we can learn from it. It is God's special revelation to us, for it reveals the plan of redemption He developed in order to save us. Jesus said, " 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me' " (John 5:39, NKJV). This shows that Jesus Himself encouraged studying the Scriptures so we might know Him.

One day I heard my economics professor demeaning my favorite biblical character—David, a king after God's own heart. What I like most about David is that he made mistakes the same way I make mistakes. But God loved him in spite of that. My professor said that the story of David is a legend that represents the efforts of the weak in relation to the strong, and that David never really existed.

This case exemplifies the efforts of people to discredit the Bible. Some time ago, many archeologists doubted the existence of a historical King David. In the November/December 2005 edition of the *Biblical Archeology Review*, I found an article entitled "Jerusalem in David and Solomon's Time." I could clearly read that an inscription made approximately 150 years after David's death was found in Tel Dan, and that it read "House of David." The word *house* is here used in the dynastic sense, thus making reference to David's dynasty.

One day I heard my
economics professor
demeaning my favorite
biblical character.

Jesus reinforced the authority of the Scriptures by quoting them in His tribulations (Matt. 4:4–10). The apostles also used them and promoted its use (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). And how can we deny the influence of the Word of God in the lives of great women and men? "O search the Bible with a heart hungry for spiritual food! Dig into the word as a miner digs into the earth to find the veins of gold. Do not give up your search till you have learned your relation to God and His will concerning you."*

**Messages to Young People*, p. 261.

The Bible in the Enemy's Optic

LOGOS

Matt. 4:4–10; 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Gal. 1:11, 12; James 2; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 3:14–16

Doubts (Matt. 4:4–10)

In the year 2001, I was talking to a friend at the Ellen White Research Center in the Library of UNASP-Hortolândia (former IASP). I had asked her out, and after a long conversation, we decided to remain just friends. I still was somewhat concerned with that decision when, suddenly, a tall, strong, blue-eyed man entered the room. He pointed to one of Ellen White's pictures on the wall and started telling us why he didn't like her.

On the table where we were seated there lay a Bible. He grabbed it and began saying why it wasn't trustworthy. I started arguing with him, trying to show him how the Bible actually was very reliable. But for each argument I had in favor of the Bible, the stranger had five against it. In fact, he used the Bible to show it wasn't trustworthy.

That's exactly how Satan works. He tries to cast doubt in what we believe. That's

**Jesus didn't argue with
Satan.**

how he tried to overcome Jesus. He tried to make Jesus distrust His divine affiliation. "Satan was seeking a dispute with Jesus concerning His being the Son of God. He referred to His weak, suffering condition and

boastfully affirmed that he was stronger than Jesus."¹

The Word in Discussion (Matt. 4:4–10; 22:15–32; 2 Pet. 3:16)

Jesus didn't argue with Satan. He simply used a "thus says the Lord." Satan also used the Word of God to try to convince Jesus, but he used it in a distorted manner.

"When Satan quoted the promise, 'He shall give His angels charge over Thee,' he omitted the words, 'to keep Thee in all Thy ways;' that is, in all the ways of God's choosing."² We frequently hear people distort Scripture by not following correct rules of biblical interpretation that the Bible itself gives. This is especially true when it comes to texts that are difficult to understand. Even Peter mentions how hard it is for some people to understand some of Paul's epistles, and how some of those same people distort what he said. During the very time of Jesus, there were groups of people, such as the Sadducees and Pharisees, who were constantly seeking to

deceive Him with their distortions of Scripture. What really matters is not if you have excellent rhetoric skills to discuss whether something is or is not true about the Bible, but if you know the Bible so you will not be deceived by the cunning wiles of the enemy. "Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God' " (Matt. 22:29, NKJV). " 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' " (Hos. 4:6).

The devil cannot force you to sin. However, he can try to interfere with your ability to discern.

The Word That Saves (Matt. 26:54, 56; 2 Pet. 1:19–21)

The Bible itself has many different ways of proving its own authenticity. The greatest proof, however, is the positive change it makes in the life of whoever studies its pages in earnest prayer.

People may say that God has not inspired the Bible itself, but that instead the revelation is given through the reading of the Bible, along with the work God performs in us and the impressions He puts in our minds. Other theologians believe that only parts of the Bible are inspired. Paul, writing to Timothy, says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV).

What makes the Bible a sacred book has to do with its Author—God. The Spirit of the Lord uses the Bible to change the lives of people. The Word that saves is not the written Word, but the Incarnate Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1, NKJV). He (the Word) has come to fulfill the prophecies and to save sinners. This Word invites you and me to commit ourselves to Him so we might be saved.

REACT

1. Why do we think we can resist the enemy better than Jesus could? Why don't we use the Word of God to overcome all our temptations?

2. Considering God has inspired all of the Bible, how should we relate to it? What biblical counsel should we follow when having to decide whether to go in one direction or another?

1. *The Story of Redemption*, p. 199.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 125.

TESTIMONY

Ps. 119:11

"Jesus met Satan with the words of Scripture. 'It is written,' He said. In every temptation, the weapon of His warfare was the word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a 'Thus saith the Lord,' was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage."¹

"The only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. . . . When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what His promise?"²

"When men, in their finite judgment, find it necessary to go into an examination of scriptures to define that which is inspired and that which is not, they have stepped before Jesus to show Him a better way than He has led us."³

**"The only thing in our
world upon which we can
rely is the word of God."**

"Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost. The ingenuity of men has been exercised for ages to measure the Word of God by their finite minds and limited comprehension. If the Lord, the Author of the living oracles, would throw back the curtain and reveal His wisdom and His glory before them, they would shrink into nothingness and exclaim as did Isaiah, 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips' (Isa. 6:5)."⁴

REACT

Jesus used the power inherent in the Word of God to defeat Satan. How is that same power available to use today?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 120.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

3. Letter 22, 1889.

4. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 18.

The Creator's Manual

HOW-TO

2 Tim. 3:16, 17

The functionality of some technological devices, such as computers, cell phones, and automobiles is guaranteed by certain principles. Therefore, to explain the use and maintenance of those machines, each manufacturer supplies an instruction manual with their product.

As Creator of the universe, God also has provided us with a manual. In fact, no one else could suggest more important tips to us, His masterpiece. His manual to us is the Bible. It provides us with clear instructions concerning how to use the life God has given us. Here are some of those instructions:

1. *Notice the specifications and follow correctly the basic functioning.* Do not disconnect the Bible's content from its Author. Moreover, try always to keep in touch with God. Such contact avoids spiritual malfunctions. Daily reading God's manual will produce the energy needed to maintain the Christian's life. That energy is faith (Matt. 14:22–33).

2. *Experience the benefits offered by the product.* The Bible is a multifunction book. The more you get to know it, the more you'll be able to make use of its applications. Increased health and mental sobriety are a bonus to those who follow its teachings (Dan. 1:11–20).

In the November 2005 edition of *National Geographic*, the cover story revealed the secret of longevity. According to the article, biblical health principles are the best life extenders.

3. *Pay attention to the precaution notices.* Don't open the Bible without praying for spiritual understanding. In case of doubt, contact technical support—the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:17, 18).

**In case of doubt, contact
technical support—the Holy
Spirit.**

REACT

1. How would you react in front of someone who does not believe in the authority of the Bible nor follow its parameters?

2. How can living a Christian life be an “argument” in favor of the Bible?

3. Enumerate some of the consequences someone may suffer for ignoring this given-by-God manual. Contrast these with the benefits of living by His manual.

Thursday
April 12

The Letter of Infinite Love

OPINION

Matt. 4:4–10

This week's topic is the Bible as the ultimate, unquestionable Word of God. Even though some people question it because they want a religion that fits their desires, the Bible's own content supports its authenticity.

The Bible shows its divine origin when centuries ahead of science it describes the development of a fetus (Job 10:11), or when it says that the earth hangs on nothing (Job 26:7). How could the author of Job be ahead of science by nearly 4,500 years, were it not by divine guidance?

God Himself guided the writing of the Bible (Gal. 1:11, 12; 2 Pet. 1:19–21), a God who does not change (James 1:17, NKJV). That's why we can't change even the smallest letter or stroke of the Bible (Matt. 5:18). When Jesus was on earth, He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets" (Matt. 5:17, NKJV). These words help us to understand that even the Old Testament was, and still is, effective and valid in Jesus' sight.

Jesus quoted the Bible to overcome the temptations Satan inflicted upon Him. Although exhausted after fasting for 40 days, He relied on what you and I can rely on—the Word! "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11, NKJV). In the Passover episode, when Christ slips away from His parents to preach in the temple, we learn that

**Sin is just a comma in the
story of eternity.**

even as a child, He knew God's Word. This shows us how important it is to teach the Scriptures to children beginning at an early age (Prov. 22:6; Luke 2:41–52).

The Bible is a letter of God's infinite love, through which He shows us His desire to deliver us from this painful, sad world. This is the love letter Satan tries so diligently to conceal, because sin is just a comma in the story of eternity.

REACT

1. Have you been studying your Bible every day? If not, devise a plan whereby you make room in your day for Bible study and prayer.
2. If you already are studying the Bible daily, what could you do to make your study time more interesting and meaningful?
3. What can you do to be a "live letter" that tells everyone about God's love?

Not Just Any Book

EXPLORATION

2 Tim. 3:16

CONCLUDE

The universe itself gives evidence of having been designed by an intelligent Creator. What does this infinitely intelligent, infinitely good being want from us? As Christians, we believe this information is revealed to us in the Bible. Not only does the Bible provide wise and consistent guidance in our relationships with God and one another, it has held up against repeated attempts to undermine its authority, and it provides ample evidence for its own validity.

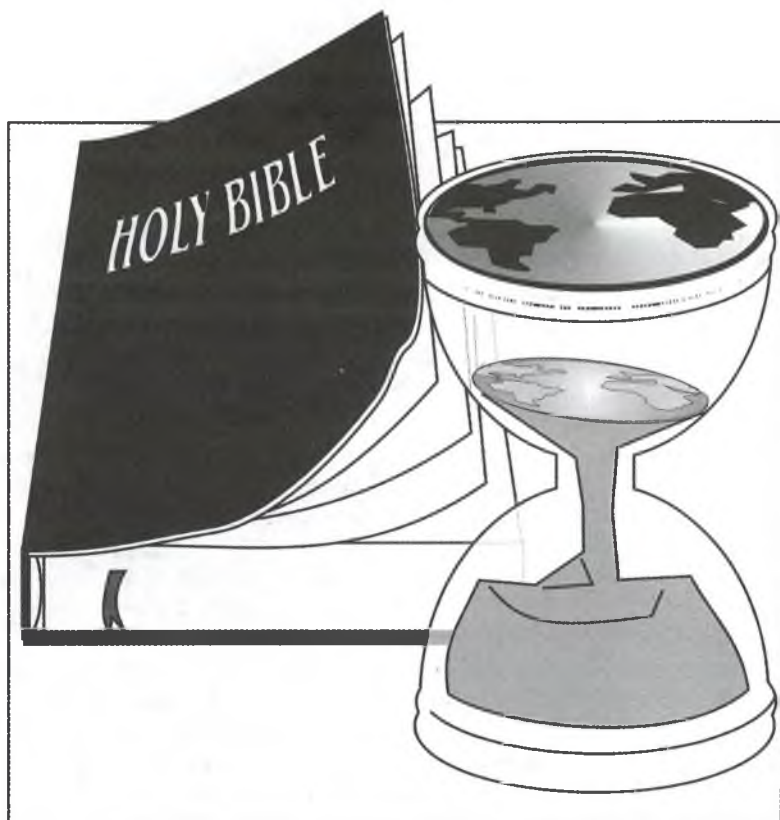
CONSIDER

- Creating a pictorial presentation—on PowerPoint, for example—on archaeological sites or discoveries that have proven important aspects of the biblical narrative.
- Examining the fulfilled prophecies of the Bible. Did you know that the odds for all of these being fulfilled by mere chance or “luck” is ten to the two thousandth power, or one with two thousand zeros after it? (Source: Hugh Ross, “Fulfilled Prophecy: Evidence for the Bible,” <<http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/prophecy.shtml>>.)
- Reading a book presenting the evidence for the Bible’s reliability, either generally, or on some point such as Creation. Write a review on Amazon.com or a similar site.
- Finding a recorded version of the Bible. Listen to it in the car, or at other free moments. How does it affect your appreciation for Scripture?
- Connecting with the people and culture of the Bible by preparing foods that people might have eaten in biblical times. There are several books or Web sites that might be helpful for this.
- Making a systematic plan to read through the Bible, or to commit large parts of it to memory.

CONNECT

David Marshall, *The Battle for the Book*; Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, part 1.

Bible Prophecy Fulfilled



“ ‘Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please’ ” (Isa. 46:9, 10, NIV).

Reading the Future

INTRODUCTION

Isa. 52:13–53:12

I once read a comic strip that showed a pastor preaching fervently from his pulpit. It went something like this: "This generation will not pass away till all these things be fulfilled!!!!!" err, 'THIS' actually meant 'THAT' then, but means 'THIS' now. 'THIS' didn't mean 'THAT,' I mean it did mean 'THAT,' but it is the 'THAT' 'THIS,' not the 'THIS' 'THAT,' I mean, now is the 'THIS,' not 'THAT' 'THIS,' but 'THIS' 'THIS'. . . err, let me explain. 'THIS' means 'THIS' but it is not 'THAT' 'THIS.' It is . . . ah . . . OK, now that we are clear on 'THAT,' let's move on.

It seems that almost every other week you hear about a prophecy seminar, a Revelation seminar, or someone telling you that all the signs point to the end of the world. Sometimes it all just seems overwhelming and confusing. What do you do with all this information when you don't even understand half of what you're hearing?! How does what was written in the Bible approximately two thousand years ago tell us about our future? How is it going to help us have a better relationship with Christ?

**How does what was written
in the Bible approximately
two thousand years ago tell
us about our future?**

There are more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled by the life of Jesus Christ. One man gave this illustration: If you just took eight of these prophecies, the odds of a person coincidentally fulfilling all eight of these would be one in ten to the seventeenth power. Suppose you spread silver coins two feet deep across the whole country of Turkey, then marked just one of them and buried it somewhere in that country. Then, if you chose one person, blindfolded him, and told him to pick just one silver coin, his chances of getting the marked one on his first try would be one in ten to the seventeenth power!*

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the most powerful proofs that the Bible truly is the Word of God. Since all of the prophecies that should have been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ were fulfilled to the finest detail, we can be sure that the Bible itself is God's revelation to us. No human writer could be 100 percent accurate. Second Peter 1:20, 21 says, "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (NRSV).

Those sound like good odds to me. What about you?

*J. McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), pp. 144, 167.

As Certain as Death Follows Life . . .

LOGOS

Isa. 52:13–53:12; Daniel 2; Matt. 24:24; John 13:19

As I write this article on Friday, December 2, 2005, a 25-year-old Australian citizen, a convicted drug smuggler, Nguyen Tuong Van (wen toong van) is in Singapore's Changi prison. He was arrested almost three years prior, on December 12, 2002,¹ about 3:06 P.M., at Changi International Airport with almost nine-tenths of a pound (396.2 g) of heroin strapped to his body. Since his arrest and confession, the one certainty has been that despite a mandatory not-guilty plea, legal challenges, and subsequent appeals for clemency, his life will end on Singapore's gallows. Today it did.² Biblical prophecy too has faced its challenges—legal, political, and personal—but as certain as death follows life, God's plan prevails.

The Parade of Nations (Daniel 2)

A theme that recurs throughout Daniel becomes evident in Daniel 2:21 where he states that God “determines the course of world events; he removes kings and sets others on the throne. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars” (NLT). In verses 37 and 38, Daniel reminds Nebuchadnezzar that “the God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold” (NLT).

Clearly, God is in control. He sets up rulers and takes them down again according to His will. It was vital that Nebuchadnezzar understand this principle; yet it is evident he did not. In Daniel 2, for example, we see God's schedule for humanity, while in chapter 3 we see Nebuchadnezzar's legal, political, and personal challenges. However, history demonstrates that God's plan prevails.

Our Savior, a Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13–53:12)

According to the New Zealand *Herald*, Van lived his last days to the fullest.³ On the eve of his execution, he was thanking his supporters. In contrast, on the eve of His execution we find Jesus' “supporters” sleeping while Jesus communicates with His Father, expressing His willingness to follow the plan they devised thousands of

years before at Creation. This plan meant that Jesus would become the Sin Bearer for every human. For centuries, Jesus had been typified by the many lambs slain for sin. But tomorrow He would be tortured, beaten, and executed according to a divinely appointed schedule.

Writing of the Nguyen brothers, Papua New Guinea's *National* newspaper states of these identical twins that "one had a troubled path, the other led a blameless life until committing a terrible crime to aid his brother."⁴ What love Van must have had for his younger twin Khoa, to risk smuggling drugs through the country that has the toughest antidrug laws in the world. Such love is matched only in Jesus. He too was caught, condemned, and executed! He—the innocent One—demonstrated real love by paying our debt (John 15:13).

False Messiahs and Prophets (Matt. 24:24)

A search of the Internet for "I am Jesus Christ" reveals thousands of would-be saviors. Most homes for people who are mentally challenged have at least one false christ; and recently, while visiting London's Speakers' Corner, I happened to meet one. His claims of divinity are belied by prophecy indicating that when Jesus returns we will meet Him in the air—not on the streets of London (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). So how can we tell that Jesus is the real thing? Read His own words in John 13:19.

REACT

1. If God's will prevails, do humans really have free will? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Is God's will descriptive or prescriptive of the future? Explain your answer.

1. dKosopedia. *Nguyen Tuong Van*. <http://www.dkosopedia.com/wiki/Nguyen_Tuong_Van>. <<http://www.thinkcentre.org/article.cfm?ArticleID=2347>>.

2. WDC Media News. "Nguyen Van Hanged in Singapore's Changi Prison." WDC Media. <<http://www.wdcmedia.com/newsArticle.php?ID=360>>.

3. The New Zealand Herald. "Nguyen living his last days to the fullest, say friends." <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10357670>.

4. *The National*. "When once they were little boys." <<http://www.thenational.com.pg/1206/column6.htm>>.

"In the Darkest Hours"

TESTIMONY

Isa. 53:1; John 13:19

"The prophet [Isaiah] was permitted to look down the centuries to the time of the advent of the promised Messiah. . . . Many who were longing for the light of truth were being led astray by false teachers into the bewildering mazes of philosophy and spiritism; others were placing their trust in a form of godliness, but were not bringing true holiness into the life practice. The outlook seemed hopeless; but soon the scene changed, and before the eyes of the prophet was spread a wondrous vision. He saw the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings . . .

"This glorious Light of the world was to bring salvation to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people."¹

"Looking on still further through the ages, the prophet beheld the literal fulfillment of these glorious promises. . . . The prophet heard the voice of God calling His church to her appointed work, that the way might be prepared for the ushering in of His everlasting kingdom. The message was unmistakably plain:

**"Many who were longing
for the light of truth were
being led astray . . ."**

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
And the glory of the Lord is risen
upon thee. . . ."

"These prophecies of a great spiritual awakening in a time of gross darkness are today meeting fulfillment. . . . The Holy Spirit is

implanting the grace of Christ in the heart of many a noble seeker after truth."²

"In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power. . . .

"We must cherish and cultivate the faith . . . that lays hold on the promises of God and waits for deliverance in His appointed time and way. The sure word of prophecy will meet its fulfillment in the glorious advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords."³

REACT

1. Despite hundreds of well-studied, centuries-old prophecies, most of God's "chosen" missed the Messiah's first advent. Why do you think they did?

2. As the Messiah's second advent looms, do we face a lesser risk of "getting it all wrong"? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 373.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 374–377.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 386–388.

Are Your Prophets at a Loss?

Tuesday
April 17

EVIDENCE

Isa. 46:9, 10

Most people think of prophecy as being concerned primarily with the foretelling of the future by supernatural means. A study of the Bible and the historical context in which it took shape shows us that this definition is incomplete and unbiblical. First, prophecy and prophets were not unique to the God of Israel. Other gods had prophets who supposedly communicated with them and spoke for them (1 Kings 18).

To further complicate matters, there were prophets of Yahweh who had no connection to the Israelite people (Numbers 22; 24, etc.); true prophets whose words were not deemed to be worthy of preservation; ecstatic part-time prophets (1 Samuel 10); people who claimed to be prophets of Yahweh but were in fact false prophets (Deut. 18:20–22); and prophets in the New Testament whose words, again, were not preserved (1 Cor. 14:29–32).

This all makes sense when we consider that the word *prophet*—a loan word from the Greek, and a direct translation of the Hebrew word *nabi*—is a rather general term. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* defines a prophet as “a religious intermediary whose function is to carry messages back and forth between human beings and a deity.”*

Why don't we have prophets in the twenty-first century? Or do we?

In biblical times, as now, there were many prophets with many messages from many divinities. Although it may seem as though people in biblical times had fewer distractions, they still had enough of them to be confusing. Furthermore, the Bible records many examples of people who were confused, and who made the wrong choices in spite of clear guidance from God.

Today, we can avoid such confusion by focusing on the Spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). In other words, true prophecy is not just about predictive accuracy or identifying the true antichrist. All true prophets call our attention to God and the salvation He provides for us in Christ.

Why is it important to know and believe in the correct interpretation of prophecy? Why don't we have prophets in the twenty-first century? Or do we?

**Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996).

Good Reason to Trust

HOW-TO

Isa. 42:8, 9; 46:9, 10

When Derek planned his weekend, he checked the weather. According to the forecast, the weather would be perfect for climbing the Pinnacles. In reality, it rained.

When Shania was diagnosed with asthma, the doctors promised her a lifetime of medication. In reality, she learned some breathing techniques, removed the allergens in her environment, and infrequently uses inhalers.

While we are able to predict what might happen, not one person can guarantee his or her predictions to be any better than an educated guess.

God, however, is different. With total confidence, He declares His knowledge of the future. With complete assurance, He invites us to trust Him (Isa. 42:8, 9; 46:9, 10). How can we take Him at His word? We can do so, because history confirms the truth of His declarations.

God warned Noah the earth would be destroyed. So He instructed him to build an ark. God said there would be a seven-day wait in the ark after the doors closed,

and that rain would fall for forty days and forty nights (Gen. 6:13, 14; 7:4). This prophecy was fulfilled, just as God promised. Through the prophets, God prophesied that the ancient cities of Ninevah, Babylon,

and Tyre would be destroyed (Jer. 50:2; Ezek. 26:1–5, 14; Nah. 2:10; 3:1–7). These prophecies also were fulfilled. God declared the future of the world to King Nebuchadnezzar in a vision, providing the interpretation to Daniel (Daniel 2). Again, prophecy was fulfilled, just as God promised.

Very specific prophecies were made in Psalms, Isaiah, and Matthew concerning Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. These prophecies also were fulfilled, just as God promised.

The prophecies which have not "come true" yet will. How can they not, with a 100 percent successful track record?

REACT

1. If one were to research world history through nonbiblical sources, would fulfillment of Bible prophecy be supported? If so, how?

2. Identify several prophecies regarding Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Then document proof of their fulfillment. How does studying the evidence help to verify that Jesus was the Son of God?

A Friend Like . . .

OPINION

John 13:19

In primary school, I had a friend who told me her mum gave her some lunch money but didn't give any to her sister. We had to keep the secret from her sister and not let her know that she had money to spend at the Tuckshop. It sounded a bit fishy to me. I later found out she helped herself to the money in her mother's purse.

Now I have a friend who likes to make a story good. She once told me of a car her friend was selling that would be worth looking at. She admitted it was a little old, but proceeded to let me know it was in top condition with new tires and all. After inspecting the car, this "top condition" didn't seem so "top" anymore. Over time, I have learned not to take her at her word.

I have known my best friend since we were nine years old, when we met in third grade. It didn't take long for me to learn that she was trustworthy. If she shares something with me, I know she is speaking the plain truth, as she knows it. I can trust her word to be true, and am confident in what she tells me. It is great to know I don't have to doubt her word or investigate to find the real truth.

I have another Friend who is even more trustworthy. That Friend is God. Everything He tells me I know is the truth. I am confident in this, for in God's Word there is evidence. Through His prophets, God has revealed prophecies, and as time goes by, more and more of these are fulfilled.

God wasn't obliged to give us prophecy, but He has. And we can be grateful for this. John 13:19 tells us that He has given us prophecy to strengthen our faith. Trusting is a gradual process, and with each discovery of a fulfilled prophecy, my faith is strengthened. My hope, also, is renewed, for soon all prophecy will be fulfilled, and Jesus will come to take me home with Him.

**Trusting is a gradual
process. . . .**

The Problem With Prophecies

EXPLORATION

Isa. 46:9–11; John 13:19; Heb. 10:35–39

CONCLUDE

The problem with prophecies is that they require two things—*belief* and *understanding*. If we don't *understand* the prophecies and how they relate to us, as spiritual Israel, we've missed the point. And if we don't *believe* in these prophecies, we won't experience their redeeming value. This week, we've seen how true these prophecies are. We've seen how timeless they are. And we've seen how great God is. He's got it all figured out. We don't need to worry about the end. Read Isaiah 46:9–11.

CONSIDER

- Making a diagram of all the prophecies in the Bible. With a pink highlighter, highlight the ones that already have been fulfilled. With a yellow highlighter, mark the ones that are in progress. And with a green highlighter, mark the prophecies that have not been fulfilled.
- Discussing prophecies in a small group setting with other young adults from different cultures, backgrounds, professions, etc. Write down some comments that are made and share them at the end of the session.
- Listening to “Midnight Cry” by Michael English. Contemplate the words, and picture what it's saying about the second coming of Christ.
- Interviewing religious leaders from different religions, asking them how they see ancient prophecies and those that have not been fulfilled. Ask them if they believe in prophecies. If so, which ones? If not, why?
- Meditating on the eternal value that prophecies have in your life and journal your thoughts and feelings. Are prophecies real? Are they important? How do they relate to you? What impact do they have on your spiritual life and beliefs?

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings; The Great Controversy, chaps. 18, 23, 25.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, pp. 25–38.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*.

The Bible Is Reliable



“ ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ ”
(John 17:17, NKJV).

"Theo-caching"

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 90:1

Ever find yourself lost? It's easy to do, especially the farther you find yourself from home. I was about as far away from familiar, northern Wisconsin landmarks as one could be. I was lost. Not geographically. I wasn't in need of a GPS, because I wasn't geocaching. I was approximately 75 kilometers south of Sagarmatha, the "goddess of the sky." Most people know this place as Mount Everest.

As far as landmarks, this one was hard to miss. Though the goddess let me know where I was geographically in relationship to her, she was silent as to what I was seeking—home. The home I was seeking was not so much the place of my childhood, but the place where I belong. I realized while trekking in the foothills of the Himalayas that I was lost in "Shangri-La." I was searching for the cache of promised happiness and eternal youth. But it was eluding me. I didn't know it then but realize it now: I was "theo-caching." I was looking for a map to lead me to the

One who could give me the answers I deeply sought.

The "GPS (God positioning system) device" I needed, was no farther away than the bottom of my backpack.

What eventually surprised me was this: The very map, the "GPS (God positioning system) device" I needed, was no farther away than the bottom of my backpack. But before I discovered that most precious guide, I had to find a few

points of orientation. The foothills of Sagarmatha provided the perfect place. Nepal is the crossroads of three major world religions: Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The "fruits" of their gods and religion were evident in the lives of the people I had encountered. Their lives were marked by both a physical poverty and, more importantly, a spiritual poverty. They served and bowed down to their gods and goddesses because they were afraid. From what I could tell, the problem was rooted in their faulty "GPS (small god) devices."

Opening up my backpack, I pulled out the thin, blue Bible I had stuffed in at my mother's request. Within its pages, I discovered that I was not so much seeking after God as He was seeking after me. He was not a God I had to live in fear of, but a God whose perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). I discovered in the Bible the truth that Moses learned trekking in a mountain wilderness, "Lord, you have been our home since the beginning" (Ps. 90:1, NCV).

Theo-caching with my "GPS" is now my daily joy.

Comparing the Bible and the Qur'an

Sunday
April 22

EVIDENCE

John 1:1

Muslims believe that the Qur'an records the very words of God to Mohammad the prophet. As such, every word in the Qur'an is sacred. Muslims do not believe in translating the Qur'an and must study it in its original Arabic form.

Muslims challenge Christianity by way of comparing the Qur'an to the Bible. Muslims claim that the Bible is open to mistakes in translation, and full of contradictions. They believe that every Qur'an is an exact copy of the original.

What is the Christian's response? The Bible is not like the Qur'an in its origins, textual history, and self-understanding. The Qur'an was spoken by one man over a period of about 20 years. When Mohammad spoke, people wrote his words on palm stalks and stone tablets. These were collected 20 years after his death by Caliph Uthman, who may have crafted the Qur'an to suit his own agenda. All discrepancies and duplicates were burned. Four manuscripts of the Qur'an were created, and all current copies are identical to those original manuscripts. Thus, it is impossible to compare original sources to discover what Mohammad actually said.

In contrast, the Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years by many authors in a variety of historical and cultural settings. Taking this into account helps to explain most of the seeming discrepancies in the Bible. Also, the New Testament is based on more than 5,000 manuscripts, many of which can be dated to within 300 years of their original authorship, with some much earlier. Scholars compare these manuscripts using scientific methods and can determine with a great degree of accuracy what the originals said.

Finally, in contrast to the Qur'an, Christianity teaches that God's Word is not a static thing that cannot be translated; rather, God sent the Word (John 1:1) to earth to translate His message into human flesh. The inspiration of the Bible resides in its thoughts rather than in its specific words. Therefore, translation is essential for God's Word to come alive in new settings and to be comprehensible to people in different cultures.

God's Word is not a static thing.

LOGOS

Matt. 5:17, 18; 24:35; John 10:34–36; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:6, 12–19; Gal. 3:22; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:25

Some Evidence From Jesus Christ

How much of the Scriptures did Jesus consider accurate and sacred? In Luke 11:49–51, He refers to the entire Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) by naming Abel, from Genesis, and Zechariah, from the last book of the Hebrew Bible—2 Chronicles.¹ Thus, in one sweeping statement, our Lord declares His confidence in the historical reliability of the Scriptures by asserting that Abel and Zechariah were real.

Jesus wanted to show the disciples of Emmaus that His sacrifice and resurrection had been prophesied. So “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (Luke 24:25–27, NRSV). Certainly, Jesus connects His own identity as the Redeemer to the Holy Scriptures. He trusted them. We can only be blessed by imitating Him.

**We can only be blessed by
imitating Him.**

Some Evidence From the Apostles

The apostle Paul speaks of the Old Testament as “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2, NRSV). He quotes often from it and never seems to think that it might occur to anyone in his audience to doubt its divine inspiration. When writing to the Thessalonians, he says that his own preaching and teaching was God’s word (1 Thess. 2:13). Of the Old Testament Paul says, “All scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16, NRSV). To the testimony of Paul we can add that of Peter, John, James the brother of Jesus, Stephen, and many more. The New Testament is steeped in quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative for Christians. Surely these saints of God were following the example of Jesus in His love and trust in the Holy Scriptures.

Some External Evidence

Only a few rather late copies of the original sources attest to the documents of classical antiquity. Today, they are treasured by millions as invaluable for the understanding of humanity’s wisdom. Yet there seems to be no serious questioning of their authenticity. We, as Christians, can rejoice in the fact that the New Testament, for instance, counts with about five thousand manuscripts, large and small, some of which were copied “hardly more than a century after the original.”² As far as reli-

ability, based on the number of available written witnesses and their proximity to the original productions, the New Testament is vastly superior to any other existing ancient document.

A Final Thought

A few years ago, a young man who was taking a class on science and religion which I was guest teaching for a day, expressed his dismay at how Christians go about proving the validity of the Bible by quoting the Bible, thereby employing circular reasoning. That is a legitimate concern. But my reply was this: Just as we don't hesitate to ask experts for help in understanding something in their area of expertise, so we should go to the only "expert" on divine inspiration. That expert is the Bible. No other ultimate court of appeals exists.

If we come to the Bible in humble acceptance of its claims, it will teach us about God's gracious and effective approach to the salvation of those who believe and trust in Jesus. It is the Bible that informs us that, because of Christ's work, those who welcome Him as their Savior possess salvation. The Bible teaches us that growth in sanctification is not the cause of salvation but its outcome. That knowledge is some of the best therapy for mental health available anywhere. This Book of God has survived concerted attacks by powerful pagan monarchs bent on its annihilation. There also have been other attempts to destroy the Bible by enemies both ancient and modern. It deserves our love and respect. It deserves to be treasured in our memory. It deserves consecrated, Spirit-guided obedience. The Bible will help us in our struggle with sin (separation from God) and sins (wrongful acts, thoughts, and attitudes): "I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you" (Ps. 119:11, NRSV). How about memorizing some Scripture this week?

REACT

1. What do you love the most about the Scriptures? Why?
2. What teaching of the Scriptures about Christian living makes you uncomfortable?
3. What are the reasons for your discomfort, and how can you put it right with God?

1. Notice that the books of the Hebrew Bible, although identical to ours, follow a different order.
2. Jeffrey W. Bromiley, general editor, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p. 814.

The Supreme Authority

TESTIMONY

Ps. 119:142; John 17:17

"The truth which we profess will be of no avail to us unless we are sanctified through it. . . . The better we understand the truth as it is in God's Word, the better we shall know how to sanctify our lives through God's Word."¹ "Practical truth must be brought into the life, and the Word, like a sharp, two-edged sword, must cut away the surplus of self that there is in our characters."² "If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us, body, soul, and spirit, to His will."³

"We are to receive God's word as supreme authority. We must accept its truths for ourselves. And we can appreciate these truths only as we search them out by personal study. Then, as we make God's word the guide of our lives, for us is answered the prayer of Christ: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' John 17:17."⁴

**"We must accept its truths
for ourselves."**

"The commentaries written about the word do not all agree. God does not ask us to be guided by them. It is His word with which we have to deal. All can search this word for themselves, knowing that the teaching of this precious book is unchangeable."⁵

"In your study of the Word, lay at the door of investigation your preconceived opinions and your hereditary and cultivated ideas. You will never reach the truth if you study the Scriptures to vindicate your own ideas. Leave these at the door, and with a contrite heart go in to hear what the Lord has to say to you. . . . Do not allow what you have believed or practiced in the past to control your understanding."⁶

REACT

How does "receiving God's word as supreme authority" challenge your values, attitudes, and behavior?

1. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 145.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

3. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 21.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 402, 403.

5. *The Youth's Instructor*, July 24, 1902.

6. *Messages to Young People*, p. 260.

How to Survive a Snowstorm

HOW-TO

Rom. 8:34

A few years back, my family and I went through an amazingly stressful time. My wife was in the hospital for open-heart surgery when a huge snowstorm descended on Lincoln, Nebraska, in late October. Thirteen inches of snow fell in one night! Half the trees in the city were smashed. Electricity was out in many places, and roads were closed. My wife's surgery had to be postponed one week so that the surgical team could be rested. The day after the snowstorm, I received word that my father had died. I flew to California for his funeral on Friday, returned on Sunday, and went to the hospital for my wife's surgery on Tuesday. Talk about stress!

During that time, my wife and I started looking anew in the Bible for promises to encourage us. As a religion teacher, I knew the Bible well, but there was something especially meaningful to Sherry and me about reading and writing out those promises while we were experiencing this crisis.

You may feel that it's impossible to find God or to trust the Bible. You may be in a situation where hope has been sucked out of you and the situation seems as bleak as a blizzard in Lincoln. So I have a few suggestions on how to find trust in the Bible.

It's normal to ask questions.

It's OK to ask questions. It's normal to ask questions and to come to a place in life where you question the faith you were raised in. Don't let the fear of all this paralyze you. Do some searching. Where? Read on.

Read the Bible. How can you know whether or not it's true if you don't read it? This isn't reading to find proof texts; it's reading to find God. I read the Bible every day. It's probably one of the most important things I do for maintaining my spiritual link with God.

Get some other books. When we are faced with doubts, it's tempting to think that we are the only ones going through the problem. Many people have been there before and came through believing. Find information about believing, about the Bible and its background.

Talk with other believers. Many of them have stories about how they came to believe. They can listen and help you sort out your questions and doubts.

Thursday
April 26

The Bible Is Not Totally Consistent

OPINION

1 Chron. 10:4, 13, 14

We don't have to look far to develop questions about the Bible's reliability. Start reading in the book of Genesis: "In the beginning God . . ." Stop!

What does it mean, *beginning*? Who was there to report on this "beginning?" Moses? Hardly. How did he get his information? What type of inspiration was it? Did God whisper the words to him or download a DVD (divine vision documentary)? And who is this God? A mountain of questions arises in the first four words of the Bible.

At times, I've heard people say that they can't "believe" the Bible because there are too many inconsistencies in it. I've also heard Christians defend the Bible as being totally logical and consistent. But is it? The Bible is not totally logical and consistent.* Why?

Only in fiction does a storyline run smoothly. In real life, we find many inconsistencies. A blonde, gum-popping waitress earns a Ph.D. in nuclear physics. A movie star becomes president. A Sunday School teacher turns out to be a mass murderer.

But those who invalidate the Bible because it doesn't fit "nicely" are missing one of the best reasons for believing it. We must factor in the power of perspective, as with the four Gospel versions of events surrounding Jesus' resurrection. When the woman (or women) came to the tomb early Sunday morning, was it when the sun had risen (from Mark) or while it was still dark (from John)? At the tomb, was it an angel (from Matthew), a young man (from Mark), two men (from Luke), or two angels (from John)?

What we find in the Gospels are accounts of real people who were so often stunned by a Person (it seems He surprises His closest friends most—even today) that the minor details they reported didn't always align. These people didn't bother getting their details "straight," because they weren't reporting the details. They were reporting their experiences. Of one thing they were certain: Jesus was dead; but He arose. History reveals that they were willing to literally die for that certainty.

Those differing accounts provide yet more evidence toward one awe-inspiring, reliable conclusion—it happened!

*Some of this material is based on *Searching for a God to Love* by Chris Blake (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1999). The book has now been translated into Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Chris Blake, Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.

Getting Into the Word

EXPLORATION

2 Tim. 3:16, 17

CONCLUDE

The Bible is reliable. Even though the diversity of Scripture and its long history of translation make it easy for critics to question its validity and accuracy, that same diversity presents us with a complex and multifaceted picture of the God we worship. The Bible is not always an easy book to understand, yet the heart of its message can be grasped even by a child. As Christians, we live in a vital, life-changing relationship with this complex Book that represents God's written message to His people.

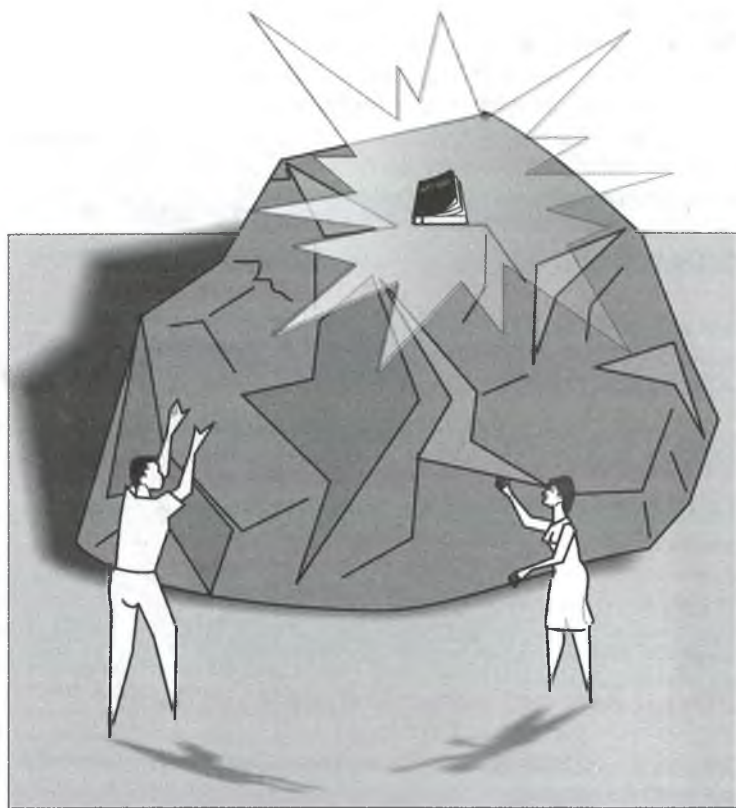
CONSIDER

- Memorizing a favorite chapter of Scripture to recite aloud in a worship service. Discover how the text changes you as you live with it during the time it takes you to commit it to memory.
- Illustrating a favorite chapter of the Bible with a series of cartoons, drawings, or collages. Examples of these chapters might be Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 13, Genesis 1, Galatians 5.
- Interviewing several elderly Christians you know about the role the Bible has played in their spiritual lives over the years. Ask them to recount specific events when some portion of the Bible carried them through a difficult time.
- Preparing a choral or responsive reading of a Scripture passage to share in a worship service or with a small group Bible study.
- Collecting favorite Christian songs about the Bible, or songs based on Bible passages, and burning a CD of your "Bible Collection."
- Writing Bible verses that have meant a lot to you on attractive cards or notepaper and slipping them anonymously to people you think might benefit from the message.

CONNECT

Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*; Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word: An Expanded Paraphrase*; J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*.

When the Rocks Cry Out



“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:24, 25, NKJV).

Tough Choices for Love

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 21; Isaiah 21

According to the Israelite's laws, a man could keep a slave for seven years. On the seventh year the slave could choose between freedom or continue to serve his master. If he had acquired a wife and family during those seven years, he had to choose between his family and freedom; he could not depart with both. . . . In case he decided to remain a slave, his earlobe would be nailed on a doorpost with an awl. The blood on the door signified a covenant; the slave had given up his right to freedom, as long as he lives. This was a decision many fathers who loved their families made (see Exodus 21).

This paragraph reminds me of our Father in heaven. He loves us so much that He holds back no effort or resources to save us, even when the choice is painful. And indeed, one choice was very painful—He gave up His only Son in exchange for us.

Because of His endeavors to love and redeem us, God wants us to know and acknowledge Him in our lives. To that end, He uses various channels. In His interactions with us, our Father spares no effort

**Like diamonds, our hearts
hold two properties.**

to save us from sin. He uses drama (Isa. 20:1–6), miracles (Mark 6:35–43), prophecy (Nah. 3:2–7), and straightforward statements (Luke 19:40).

What is our response to such love?

Diamonds are the toughest rocks to crack, and the most beautiful rocks to behold. Like diamonds, our hearts hold two properties: (1) They can be hardened, refusing to believe and accept Christ unless we have evidence, or (2) they can be beautiful, having faith like Moses and Abraham, and bearing faith's fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

"The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith."*

**Education*, p. 169.

In the School of Nature

LOGOS

Isa. 20:1; Nah. 3:2–7; Luke 19:40; John 20:24–31; Rom. 1:20; Heb. 11:24–27

From nature, we can learn about God and His character and to have faith in Him (Rom. 1:20). Therefore, if we fail to understand God as He is pictured in the Bible, perhaps His creation will help us. For example, God reveals Himself to us through one of the naturally occurring agglomerations of mineral particles forming the earth's crust. In other words—rocks. In Psalm 18:2, David wrote that God was his Rock, while in Psalm 62:7, the psalmist exclaims that God is “the rock of my strength” (NKJV). In 1 Corinthians 10:1–4, we learn that the rock from which the Israelites received water (Exod. 17:6, 7) symbolized Christ. Indeed, rocks serve many purposes. And it is from these purposes that we can learn a great deal about God and His plan of salvation.

Rocks Act as Reservoirs

Nonporous rocks keep water near the surface or even at the surface. Rocks also can influence the circulation of underground water. To Christians, water symbolizes life. It represents cleansing from the dirt of sin and spiritual rebirth through baptism. Read 1 Corinthians 10:4.

**We are like precious gems
and minerals.**

“Christ combines the two types [the symbols of water and rock]. He is the rock, He is the living water.”¹

“The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught. As the life-giving waters flowed from the smitten rock, so from Christ, ‘smitten of God,’ ‘wounded for our transgressions,’ ‘bruised for our iniquities’ (Isa. 53:4, 5), the stream of salvation flows for a lost race. As the rock had been once smitten, so Christ was to be ‘once offered to bear the sins of many.’ Hebrews 9:28.”²

Rocks Form the Parent Materials for the Formation of Soils

Rich, fertile soils are essential for healthy plant growth. Read the parable of the sower in either Matthew 13:1–23 or Luke 8:1–15. The true Rock (Christ) provides the parent material for spiritual formation and nourishment.

Rocks Are Used in Building

Christ, the Master Builder, our Chief Cornerstone, is a solid Rock and a sure Foundation. Upon this Rock, His church is built. Read Psalm 27:5 and Matthew 16:18.

Minerals and Other Valuable Substances Are Extracted From Rocks

Christ's advice to the church of Laodicea is to buy from Him pure gold tried by fire in order to be rich (Rev. 3:18). Laodicea symbolizes the church in the last days. Therefore, this advice is particularly for us. To our heavenly Father, we are like precious gems and minerals. Gold is the most valuable of all. Therefore, we learn from nature exactly how valuable we are to God and how valuable His salvation is to us.

Jesus said that harm shall come to people upon whom the Rock falls, for they shall be crushed (destroyed). But those who fall upon the Rock shall only be broken (Matt. 21:44). We need to be broken by Jesus, so He can put us back together in His likeness.

Like the Bible, the rocks

- *Speak of God.* Whenever we see and touch them, we can remember that we are in God's classroom and can learn about God from them.

- *Reveal God's purpose for us.* Jesus is our Rock. As such, He is the Foundation of our justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- *Encourage us to trust our Creator and to be faithful to Him.* Read Psalm 62:7. Knowing that God is the Rock of our strength can greatly encourage us when we face problems and trials. Such encouragement helps us to remain faithful.

As we walk and mingle among rocks, let us remember that we still can trace God's handwriting in nature.

REACT

1. What other things can rocks teach you about God and the plan of salvation?
2. If a new Christian were to ask you how the rocks could encourage him/her to trust God, how would you answer?
3. What else can the following items from nature teach you about God's love and care: flowers, birds, wheat and tares, and sheep? What texts in the Bible support your answers?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 412.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 411.

"Cast Away Your Doubt"

TESTIMONY

John 20:24–31; Heb. 11:1

"Jesus accepted his [Thomas's] acknowledgment, but gently reproved his unbelief: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' The faith of Thomas would have been more pleasing to Christ if he had been willing to believe upon the testimony of his brethren. Should the world now follow the example of Thomas, no one would believe unto salvation; for all who receive Christ must do so through the testimony of others.

"Many who are given to doubt excuse themselves by saying that if they had the evidence which Thomas had from his companions, they would believe. They do not realize that they have not only that evidence, but much more. Many who, like Thomas, wait for all cause of doubt to be removed, will never realize their desire. They gradually become confirmed in unbelief. Those who educate themselves to

look on the dark side, and murmur and complain, know not what they do. They are sowing the seeds of doubt, and they will have a harvest of doubt to reap. At a time when faith and confidence are most essential,

"Unbelief is seldom overcome by controversy."

many will thus find themselves powerless to hope and believe."¹

"In His treatment of Thomas, Jesus gave a lesson for His followers. His example shows how we should treat those whose faith is weak, and who make their doubts prominent. Jesus did not overwhelm Thomas with reproach, nor did He enter into controversy with him. He revealed Himself to the doubting one. Thomas had been most unreasonable in dictating the conditions of his faith, but Jesus, by His generous love and consideration, broke down all the barriers. Unbelief is seldom overcome by controversy. It is rather put upon by self-defense, and finds new support and excuse. But let Jesus, in His love and mercy, be revealed as the crucified Saviour, and from many once unwilling lips will be heard the acknowledgment of Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'²

REACT

1. In what ways do you think God communicates to you, and why?
2. How differently do you treat those with doubts as compared to how Christ dealt with Thomas?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 807, 808.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 808.

Rock of Our Rock

EVIDENCE

Ps. 31:3; Matt. 16:18

When Jesus Christ said He was the Rock upon which He would build His church (Matt. 16:18), it was no mistake, for the only way a thriving church can exist is for it to stay anchored to Christ.

There always will be people who will hide in the rocks (Rev. 6:15, 16). And when Christ returns, it will be too late for them. Will they regret having neglected opportunities to find refuge in Christ, the Rock?

At times, it is easy to become so depressed with life that we forget our Rock is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. God has spared no way for us to remain close to the Rock in times of storm. He even sacrificed His Son, the Rock.

And so, we must ask ourselves: (1) What do we need? and (2) What is the significance of Jesus—the Rock? Here are some answers:

1. *The present is revealed in the past.* Read Hebrews 13:8. The rocks teach us that the past is not wholly forgotten, that it can be revealed again and again.

2. *God is our Provider.* Water gushing from the rock as described in Exodus 17:6 shows that God can provide us with solutions to even our most severe problems.

3. *We find true meaning in our Rock.* Our Rock provides stability. When we build on Him, our lives shall stand despite the storms. We will not fall like others who build their lives on worldly principles. See Matthew 7:24–27.

4. *Our Rock is our Lord.* A Christian's life is a focused life. When we devote ourselves to Jesus, He becomes the Rock we fall back on (Luke 8:6). Being a genuine seeker means we have a positive attitude regarding His lordship over our life.

**A Christian life is a focused
life.**

REACT

1. Why is Jesus referred to as a rock and not stones?
2. What other items in nature convey the same strength as a rock? What can these items teach us about God?

The Stones or Us?

HOW-TO

Luke 19:40

Many people in this day and age are quite successful at being “of” the world. On the other hand, only a few have managed to be “in” the world but not “of” it. Hebrews 11:24, 25 says, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (NKJV).

How can we be “in” the world but not “of” it, like Moses? Following are two ways:

1. *Remember that no matter what, God loves us.* Sin can destroy us and leave us feeling helpless. Nahum 3:3 refers to “a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses” (NKJV). In the world today, one’s friend—be it a man, woman, or child—can get HIV/AIDS without the devil feeling any remorse. Rather, he looks for others to destroy as well. But the Lord is always there to give us hope

and comfort. He is never pleased by the suffering in this world. He still cares for us, despite the fact we so often turn our backs on Him. “Where shall I seek comforters for you?” (Nah. 3:7, NKJV). Jesus is our Comforter.

The Lord is asking us to believe in Him and worship Him because there are blessings in store for us.

2. *Give glory to God. Praise His name.* The devil seeks to draw us

away from the Lord. He succeeds when we no longer take the time to give glory and honor to Him through songs, praises, prayer, and meditation. But even then, Jesus tells us that if we keep silent, the stones will cry out (Luke 19:40).

Most people today do not believe in the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. They do not believe they must give glory to His name. “‘Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (John 20:29, NKJV). The Lord is asking us to believe in Him and to worship Him, partly because when we do, He can bless us. If we believe in Him wholeheartedly, we will learn to worship Him and to praise His name.

We have learned this week how even the stones can teach people about God. But He would much rather that we teach people about Him through our Christlike lives, by praising His name, by glorifying Him with deeds of kindness, and sharing the plan of salvation with others.

Even now, He is inviting you to worship Him at His throne of grace.

Who Is Your Rock?

OPINION

Ps. 31:3

Africa has been characterized by many traditions. Luanda Magere was a tribal leader. The name *Luanda* literally means “rock.” He was a hero to the people in his community. They worshiped him and regarded him as the most high. Luanda led his people to war with rival communities and could not be defeated, because the people believed he was a rock and therefore, no spear could go through him.

The reason for his great strength remained secret until he married a woman from a rival community. One day, Luanda fell very ill and could not be healed traditionally. He told his wife to stick his shadow with a sharp object and then apply traditional thyme. Luanda’s health became much better, and his wife went back to her people to reveal the secret behind his strength. When the enemies invaded Luanda’s community, they pierced his shadow, and Luanda died.

Today, some people still believe that the rocks in that village are part of Luanda’s spilled blood. Hunters sharpen their weapons on them, believing that doing so will bring them good luck.

The Christian, however, has a far greater Rock. The blood of this Rock was shed to save them from sin. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matt. 7:24, 25, NKJV).

Once we have chosen to accept God’s word, we are to share the Rock with others (Matt. 28:19, 20) for Jesus said, if you keep quiet, “the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40, NIV).

If you keep quiet “the stones will cry out.”

REACT

1. What does it mean in practical terms that the “rocks cry out”?
2. What can you do today so God will not have to rely on rocks to tell others about Him?

Building a Rock-Solid Faith

EXPLORATION

Ps. 89:26

CONCLUDE

In Scripture, rocks are used to illustrate many spiritual lessons. Jesus is the Rock—a spiritual reservoir of living water, the water of our salvation. Just as rocks are the basic material for making good soil, the true Rock provides the materials for nourishing the soil of our hearts. The Rock is the cornerstone, the building block, the foundation, that cannot be moved. Rocks also contain valuable minerals, such as gold—the most precious metal. How precious is the true Rock! Wise people build their house on the Rock. And when the rains and storms of life come, they are firmly fastened to the Rock so that nothing can shake their faith.

CONSIDER

- Taking a hike on which you collect a variety of rocks. When you return, study the rocks, and write down as many spiritual lessons as you can think of.
- Finding a large smooth stone that can be used as a paperweight on which you paint with acrylic paint a pretty design along with a Bible text. Give it to someone who needs encouragement.
- Reading the story entitled “Stone Soup” to a group of children and then discussing with them the lessons learned from the story. (You can find the story on the Internet by going to a search engine.)
- Going on a Maranatha mission trip in which you help build a church. Keep a journal of your experiences and the spiritual lessons you gleaned from helping to provide a place of worship for spiritually thirsty people.

CONNECT

Matthew 7:24–29.

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 411–421, chapter entitled “The Smitten Rock”; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 33–61, chapter entitled “The Sower Went Forth to Sow.”

The Bible and Science



**"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but
fools despise wisdom and discipline"**
(Prov. 1:7, NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 1; Leviticus 11; Deut. 14:1-21

Now more than ever, people are trying to determine the role God and religion should have in science and in society. Lately, in the United States, it seems there's a different news story every week about whether creationism should be taught in public schools as an alternative view to the long-held theory of evolution. This is just one example of the clash between science and religion. On November 16, 2005, Anderson Cooper of CNN hosted a segment on healthy living and increased life span. The segment was based on the November 2005 cover story in *National Geographic* about three populations with statistic-defying longevity. One of the populations was Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California, U.S.A., whose average life span exceeds others by ten entire years!

Scientists have found that the typical Adventist lifestyle (which excludes most if not all meat, caffeine, alcohol, and smoking, and which includes the observance of resting one day a week) contributes to the general good health and life span of church members. Obviously, we're doing something right! And all we're doing is following biblical principles.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the accuracy of the Bible. During this quarter, we've been talk-

When did scientific knowledge and religious knowledge become mutually exclusive?

ing about why we believe this Book. But sometimes it feels like all the forces of science are waging war against its teachings! Everyone always hears about how science contradicts these teachings. Why doesn't anyone talk about how scientific discoveries actually reinforce the Word of God? When did scientific knowledge and religious knowledge become mutually exclusive?

Despite this exclusiveness, the Bible should be the foundation of our knowledge. Because its words are inspired by God, it should be our primary source of information concerning why and how we're here, where we're going, and what we should do along the way.

As you study this week's lesson, ask yourself how you can reconcile the differences the world draws between science and God's Word, and why it is important to your life to do so.

No Reasonable Doubt

EVIDENCE

Gen. 1:1–3; Eccles. 1:6; Heb. 11:3

Hebrews 11:3 states that by “faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (NKJV). Does this mean we must simply accept the Bible by faith? That there aren't archaeological discoveries and scientific findings that corroborate the Bible?

Ron Wyatt validates his discovery of Noah's ark in Turkey with the use of modern technology. Working with archaeologists, Ron and his group first measured the giant shipwreck. It measures 512 feet. A chunk that had broken off measures 3 feet, giving it a length of 515 feet. According to Genesis 6:15, God instructed Noah to make the ark 300 cubits long and 50 cubits wide. Wyatt asserts that Moses, the author of Genesis, used the Egyptian Royal Cubit, the ancient standard of measurement, in his description of the ark. Three hundred Egyptian Royal Cubits equals 515 feet. High-tech scanners revealed the presence of compartments within the wreck, as well as one window, one door, and a ramp. These correlate to the biblical description of the ark.*

**No archaeological discovery
has ever contradicted a
biblical account.**

Many scientific facts that evolved after extensive and costly research are stated in the Bible. In Ecclesiastes 1:6, Solomon describes atmospheric circulation, and in verse 7, he describes the hydrologic cycle. In Isaiah 40:22, the prophet states that the earth is round. As late as 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail westward to prove this very fact. Job 26:7 comments on the earth's gravitational field.

Further evidence includes the fact that hundreds of prophecies have been fulfilled. The prophecies of Daniel identified future kingdoms and events that correlate with recorded history. Jesus, in Matthew 24, listed specific events that would herald His second coming. These events we see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears. If there was ever a time when we should embrace the words of the Scriptures, it is now.

*Mary Nell Wyatt, “The Discovery of Noah's Ark,” *Wyatt Newsletter* 08: July 1994.

Undeniable

LOGOS

Gen. 1:1; 2:1, 2; 7; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 100:3; 139:14; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; Jer. 33:22; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2

Creation (Gen. 1:1; 2:1; Ps. 100:3)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1, NKJV). The Holy Scripture offers this account of origins as a fact. There are no arguments, no apologetics, no assumptions. Just a categorical statement: "God created." Many humans have difficulty conceptualizing anyone more powerful than themselves, or believing in someone they cannot see. Yet the Bible will not pamper our inabilities or cater to such limitations. It offers no rationale, reasoning, or explanation. In one sweeping bold claim, it challenges our best mental capacity: "God created the heavens and the earth." No one we know could do it. The probability of self-origination is astounding and fits no known natural processes. The fact:

Somebody did it. Can we discover who that somebody is? More importantly, can we get to know that somebody? Read Deuteronomy 4:29.

His is a global offer.

We Are Created (Ps. 100:3)

Read Psalm 100:3, and break it down to bare reality. Who could ever claim that only the act of sex makes a child? An extraordinary process, expertly preprogrammed in the ovulating female, becomes automatic following fertilization. And for the one who must see in order to believe, this process occurs *outside* of our capacity to see 46 DNA segments, 23 from each parent! In the developing fetus, DNA maps facial features, mental capacity, personality, and even vulnerability to such things as myopia and diabetes. There is enough DNA in our bodies that if strung end to end, it would reach to the moon and back 500,000 times. It is God, the Expert, who made us and not we ourselves. Read Psalm 139:14.

Use the best descriptive words to define yourselves: *cool, awesome, gorgeous, handsome, wonderful*. And let's not forget such characteristics as *generous, talented, loving, peaceful, brilliant, and sharing*. But most importantly, let us discover ourselves and one another, and thrill at the fact that *somebody made us*. And know that that Somebody is God.

The Flood (Genesis 7)

Read Genesis 7:1. Ask yourself the question, If I had the option to live eternally, how would I desire to characterize that life? God's creativity guarantees all our desires, and offers to supply all we need for an eternal existence. Long-term planning generates that kind of healthy self-concept and worldview. Unfortunately, there are people who crave the short-term, who desire to be satisfied *now*, regardless of the expense or the consequences. Then sin moves in like a flood, sweeping away our best dreams, and turning our mountain tops into valleys of skeletons, as in the valleys of Siberia where the flood buried over 50,000 animals in mass graves. Suddenly, treacherous cold engulfs us. There is no place to run, no place to hide. And our world becomes encased in an ice age of frozen hearts, just as ice stretching millions of square miles encased the mammoth and millions of other animals. Sin is a cold death in a nondescript grave. The alternative? The warmth of somebody bigger than you or I.

Second Chance (Deuteronomy 4)

Who is this Somebody?

Because He is merciful, longsuffering, compassionate, and forgiving, this creative Somebody offers us a second chance. Every opportunity God finds to present Himself to us, He reminds us of these characteristics which mark His personality. You cannot find God without discovering His good intentions. His is a global offer, but singularly personal. And He values a personal response. God values people giving their very best, starting with investing the "whole heart" as the only motive that gives meaning to all their other actions. He wants us to give Him everything, to venture beyond the call of duty, but always pulled and driven by love. He goes as far as to claim promises offered to a faithful past generation as reason enough to bless a new generation, even when they are messing up.

Who Is This Somebody? (Isa. 45:18)

"I am the Lord" (Isa. 45:18). "Do not fear. I will help you" (Isa. 41:13, NIV). He offers us training wheels, to help us build up our strength for the struggles we will face. Who is this somebody? Read John 1:1-3. Jesus is the Lord, the Creator. He came to earth to get to know what we feel, to show us the way to victory. He wanted us to know our possibilities, to know and to tap into the power, strength, love, and wisdom He placed in us. Hebrews 1:2 says that He was "appointed the heir of all things" (RSV). Why would this be so? Did God need an heir? Ah, Jesus is Heir, so He could give it all to us. We become "heirs" of His restorative promises—of His re-creation.

Still Greater Power

TESTIMONY

John 3:16

"God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with His works; all true education leads to obedience to His government. Science opens new wonder to our view; she soars high and explores new depths, but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation."¹

"There should be a settled belief in the divine authority of God's Holy Word. The Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science. Human knowledge is an unreliable guide."²

"While the knowledge of science is power, the knowledge that Jesus came in person to impart is still greater power. The science of salvation is the most important science to be learned in the preparatory school of earth."³

"To many, scientific research has become a curse. God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in discoveries in science and art; but even the greatest minds, if not guided by the Word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation."⁴

**"The Bible is not to be
tested by men's ideas of
science."**

"Geologists claim to find evidence from the earth itself that it is very much older than the Mosaic record teaches. Bones of men and animals as well as instruments of warfare, petrified trees, etc., much larger than any that now exist, or that have existed for thousands of years, have been discovered. . . . In the history of the flood, inspiration explains that which geology alone could never fathom. In the days of Noah, men, animals, and trees, many times larger than now exist, were buried, and thus preserved as an evidence to later generations that the antediluvians perished by a flood."⁵

REACT

Which Bible texts best describe for you the "science of salvation"? Why do these texts appeal to you?

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, pp. 741, 742.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 114.

3. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 19.

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 522.

5. *Christian Education*, pp. 191, 192.

How to Keep Things in Perspective

Wednesday
May 9

HOW-TO

Prov. 2:1, 2; 16:21

Most students, especially those in public school, will be faced with the dilemma of having to learn scientific theories that are incongruous with the Word of God. However, learning about science doesn't mean having to abandon biblical teachings. Here are some strategies for balancing religious and scientific beliefs.

1. *Remember that theories are not facts.* Many scientific teachings are theories. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, a theory is an "unproven assumption." The purpose of scientific research is to find out how things work. Researchers use what they know to assemble the pieces of how such things came to be. With every small advancement made, many other larger assumptions are made to discover further information. Until hypotheses are proven to be unquestionably true, they remain theory. Scientific teachings that don't match with the Bible are theories, not facts.

2. *Study your Bible, not just your textbooks.* Proverbs 2:1, 2 reminds us that when we are looking for wisdom and knowledge, we should first treasure God's commandments, be attentive to His wisdom, and incline

our hearts to understanding. Proverbs 16:21 continues this line of instruction by saying that those who are wise in heart are discerning. The more time you spend with God, the clearer things will be to you. Sorting out what matches biblical truth from what doesn't will help you keep things in perspective.

3. *Ask questions.* Read Jeremiah 3:33 and Matthew 7:7, 8. If something doesn't make sense to you, ask your pastor or Sabbath School teacher for help. You also can consult a Bible dictionary or concordance for guidance in specific areas.

4. *Don't get discouraged.* Read Hebrews 11:1. It's easy to get discouraged when your friends, teachers, professors, or even parents tell you you're wrong. However, being faithful means accepting biblical teachings before scientific theory.

Scientific teachings that don't match with the Bible are theories, not facts.

REACT

1. Why do biblical teachings help to clarify scientific theories?
2. Why do so many scientific theories seem to contradict the Word of God?

Thursday
May 10

God's University— Now Enrolling

OPINION

Ps. 118:23

Science is all about learning, making new discoveries, and pondering ideas. Throughout college, I tied my classes to my faith; my analogies and self-made proverbs were related to the science classes I took.

One day, while sitting in cell biology, the professor taught about calmodulin. She mentioned the word *ubiquitous* in relation to calmodulin and Ca^{2+} (calcium). Because I didn't know what the word meant, I wrote it in the margin of my notes so I would check its definition later. Here is what I learned from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*—"ubiquitous: existing or being everywhere at the same time; constantly encountered; widespread." I said to myself, *Wow! This describes God! He is everywhere at the same time. He is constantly encountered. (Even those who try to run away from Him will one day meet Him in the judgment.) God is ubiquitous!*

God is the originator of cell biology, physics, neuroanatomy, embryology, and more. "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16, 17, NIV). Studying such topics can draw believers into worship and

**Dare to be a nerd and
delight in learning about
science and its Author.**

leave doubters scrambling for more arguments.

Science is just one subject in God's university that teaches us about His character. "The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us" (Ps. 118:27, NIV). The heights of education and closeness to God are limited only by our choices. Dare to be a nerd and delight in learning about science and its Author, the Lord God Almighty. Dare to enroll in God's university today. His admissions office is always open.

REACT

1. How does God reveal Himself in other apparently secular topics (art, theatre, mathematics, politics, etc.)?
2. Have you ever considered confronting an instructor who taught evolution as if it were fact? If yes, what would you say?
3. If possible, name a field of science or learning where God cannot be revealed.

Josya-Gony Charles, Miramar, Florida, U.S.A.

The God of Science

EXPLORATION

Col. 1:17

CONCLUDE

To understand the role of religion and the role of science in human life, we must begin with the correct first assumption: God is the Creator of all. The Bible is the Book of first things, because it reveals God as the only One who can speak and bring matter into its form. Science is our attempt, as conscious created beings, to understand the physical realities of the universe. Attempts on our part to prove the Bible with science are futile, because God and His Word came first. We can live with complete assurance that God is the Master Designer behind everything discovered through scientific endeavor and that His Word is unassailable truth.

CONSIDER

- Taking a walk in a remote place. Bring paper and a pen or a recording device, and quietly document as many evidences of God's creativity as you can see, hear, smell, and touch. Be careful about taste.
- Writing down everything you eat and drink for one week. At the end of the week, identify the natural source of each item. Bring the list to class to compare notes on God's life-giving provisions.
- Renting the DVD *March of the Penguins*. As you watch, identify and make note of the patterns of relationships that God programmed into penguins that are common to all relational beings.
- Listening to audio tracks of insect sounds with some friends. Create a drum and percussion song based on the sounds and rhythms and share it with your class.
- Finding articles about the recent court case on the teaching of intelligent design in the Pennsylvania, U.S.A., school district of Dover. Write a summary of the two sides in the case and the conclusions of the judge who ruled against teaching intelligent design.

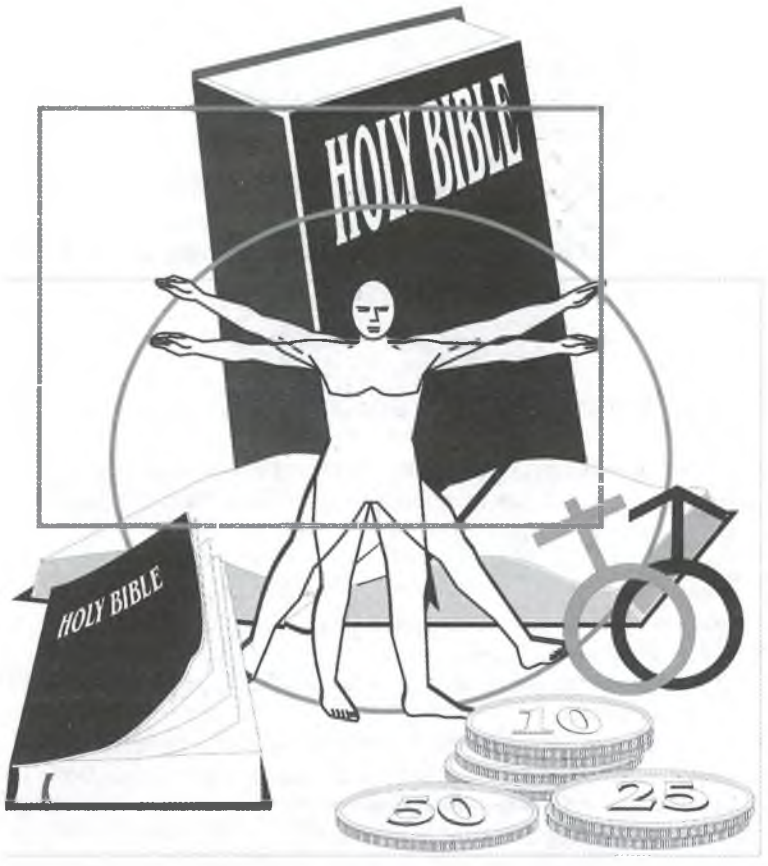
CONNECT

Ellen G. White, "Science and Revelation," *Signs of the Times* articles, 1884:
<http://www.grisda.org/resources/GRI_ref-egw.htm#SCIENCE%20AND%20REVELATION>

Leonard Brand, *Beginnings*.

Tim Lale, Boise, Idaho, U.S.A.

The Word in Our Lives



“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12, NIV).

You Are What You Eat

INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 5:17

"You are what you eat." So goes a popular saying. More and more, science is proving this statement true. But what about our spiritual food? Can we ingest the Word so it actually becomes part of our lives? What is so special about the Word that it can actually become a part of us and change us? It is because the Word is not just words. It is not merely information written on paper. It is the thoughts of God communicated to humankind. The Word is the Son of God who became flesh (John 1:1–14). And it is the power of that Word dwelling in us to transform us into new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20).

History holds many stories that prove the power of the Word to change lives. One such story involves Pitcairn Island and a group of mutinous soldiers from the *Bounty*. After seeking refuge on the island, the lives of these sailors and their descendants were often filled with suffering, misery, and murder. By the time John Adams had become the sole surviving mutineer, he had introduced the other islanders "to religion through a Bible and a Church of England prayer book taken from the *Bounty*. In the changed life of John Adams—from criminal-minded sailor to peace-loving patriarch—those on Pitcairn found eloquent testimony to the Divine power that changes lives."¹ After Adams's death, it was written of him that the "facts are quite clear. There is no question as to what he was and did after all his shipmates on the island had perished. He had no human guide or counsellor to turn him into the way of righteousness and make him feel and shoulder responsibility for bringing up a group of boys and girls in the fear of God. He had a Bible and a prayer book to be the instruments of his endeavor, so far as education, or rather lack of education, served him. He may well have recalled to mind memories of his own childhood. But there can be only one straightforward explanation of what took place, that it was the handiwork of the Almighty, whereby a sailor seasoned to crime came to himself in a far country and learnt and taught others to follow Christ."²

The Word is not just words.

As you study this week's lesson, ask yourself how the Word of God can change your life.

1. "Pitcairn Island & Pacific Union College," Pitcairn Islands Study Center; retrieved from <http://library.puc.edu/pitcairn/studycenter/pit_puc.shtml>.

2. Ibid.

Words That Shape, Fill, and Enlighten

LOGOS

Pss. 19:7–10; 119:5, 105; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:20–24; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:21–24

By commencing His Book with the account of the creation of our world and all that is in it, God does more than merely outline the relationship between creature and Creator. He does more than document the origins of humankind. He provides the greatest evidence for the authenticity of all Scripture as the word of a divine and all-powerful God. The evidence: His Word brings change.

Even before the words of 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 were written, God in Creation declares the power of His Word to bring about change, thus empowering all of Scriptures to give instruction, correction, reproof, and to guide doctrine. The power of the chapters and pages that follow Genesis 1 are emphatically declared in the simple phrase “God said . . . and it was so” (Gen. 1:9, NKJV).

The account of Creation demonstrates the power of God's Word and establishes as evidence of this power the fact that His Word will produce change. The chronicle of Creation reveals three incredible changes brought about by the mere utterance of a word from God. First, His word gives form to the nothingness of a wasteland called

God's words are life itself.

earth. Second, His word fills the void where nothing existed. And last of all, His word dispels the permanent darkness that covered the earth. In the transformation of a formless, void, and dark world into the Eden paradise, the power of the Bible, God's Word, is first revealed. And it is in this account of our origins that all future readers of the Bible are clearly informed, “Change will occur!”

Like the formless, void, and dark world that was transformed by His word into a paradise, any human who likewise receives the Word of God will undergo transformation. A transformation like no other and that only the living, active Word of God can bring about. Exposed to God's Word, our formlessness takes shape, our emptiness becomes filled, and our darkness gives way to His light.

The Shaping of Nothing (Ps. 19:7; 2 Cor. 5:17)

God's words are life itself (John 5:36). This life seeks us out in the midst of our nothingness, a human without form, lying in a wasteland of sin. In this wasteland and nothingness, the law of God, through His grace, begins to transform our nothingness. The perfection of God's law, expressed through His Word, transforms the

soul (Ps. 19:7). The end product of this transformation is a completely new creature. God's words are life, and the person converted by them is now in Christ and is, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "a new creation; old things have passed away" (NKJV). Our nothingness is transformed by the Word of God into a creation reflecting His character.

Filling the Void (Ps. 19:8; Rom. 10:17)

Just as God's word during Creation filled the emptiness of the earth, His Word today fills the hollow abyss that we are without Him. Romans 10:17 assures us that the instruction, or hearing, received from the Word of God convicts us of truth. This conviction in turn fills us with faith. A new creation convicted of truth and filled with faith receives God's statutes, and the heart of this new creature rejoices (Ps. 19:8). God speaks. And His words create in us faith. God's words give us joy; they fill us, and make us whole.

Lighting the Darkness (Ps. 119:5, 105)

Just as God's word gave the earth light, His Word today gives us light. As new creations in Christ, filled by His Word with faith, we are not left to wander in the darkness. Our cry becomes that of the psalmist, who exclaims in Psalm 119:5, 6, "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed" (NKJV). And again like the psalmist, our cry is answered by Psalm 119:105, where he recognizes that the direction we seek is the Word of God, "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path." God's Word guides every step of the person who has been transformed from nothingness to a new creation in Christ.

God's word transformed a shapeless, empty planet into a perfect home for the first two people. Neither the earth nor anything in it could have resisted the change brought about by God's word. Change had to occur when God's word entered the planet. Likewise, when a person takes God's written Word in hand and receives it in heart, change must occur. Nothing in a person can stop this change. Receiving the Word means change. The Bible, by the mere fact that it is the Word of God, will change everything about us, if we only receive it.

REACT

1. What keeps you from receiving the Word of God and allowing it to change you?
2. How can you use the Word this week to instruct, correct, or reprove your actions?

The Galactic Textbook

TESTIMONY

Ps. 19:7–10

The written Word of God has the ability to impart true wisdom to the simple. "The subjects treated upon in the Word of God, the dignified simplicity of its utterance, the noble themes which it presents to the mind, develop faculties in man which cannot otherwise be developed. In the Bible a boundless field is opened for the imagination."¹

The vast subject matter of the Bible is unparalleled. "In its pages are found history the most ancient; biography the truest to life; principles of government for the control of the state, for the regulation of the household—principles that human wisdom has never equaled. It contains philosophy the most profound; poetry the sweetest and the most sublime, the most impassioned and the most pathetic."²

The Bible is not only capable of imparting wisdom but, even now, it is capable of converting the soul. "The truths of the Bible, received, will uplift the mind from its earthliness and debasement. If the Word of God were appreciated as it should be,

both young and old would possess an inward rectitude, a strength of principle, that would enable them to resist temptation."³

"Habits of self-control are formed and strengthened. The infirmities of

childhood—fretfulness, willfulness, selfishness, hasty words, passionate acts—disappear, and in their place are developed the graces of Christian manhood and womanhood."⁴

The Bible is a source of perfect enlightenment. "If the Bible were read more, if its truths were better understood, we should be a far more enlightened and intelligent people. Energy is imparted to the soul by searching its pages."⁵

"The follower of Christ . . . is to regard the Bible as the voice of God speaking directly to him. Thus he will find the wisdom which is divine."⁶

**The vast subject matter of
the Bible is unparalleled.**

1. *Child Guidance*, p. 507.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 505.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 506.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 505.

4. *Ibid.*

6. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 474.

The Silence of the Lamb

EVIDENCE

John 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:24

During the Roman era, torture and crucifixion were nothing new. The accused would be tried and beaten in an effort to gain a confession. These harsh methods must have ensured many a “confession.” One can imagine that people “confessed” merely to end the ordeal.

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that Jesus, having been accused of blasphemy, was treated cruelly (John 19:1, 2). The surprise comes in that He confessed nothing (Matt. 27:14). How could He? Jesus was the Word that spoke the world into existence. However, Isaiah compared Him to a lamb and a sheep (Isa. 53:7).

Why did Jesus not confirm or deny the accusations against Him? To speak the truth would free Him. To tell a lie would defeat His purposes for coming to earth. So it was better to be beaten and made to carry His cross. What a vast difference from speaking the world into existence!

For centuries after Jesus’ death, the practice of crucifixion continued. It wasn’t until Constantine was publicly convicted that anything changed, and in A.D. 337 it was abolished “out of respect for Jesus Christ, who died on the cross.”* Since that time the cross has been a symbol of Christianity—a reminder of the silent Lamb “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24, NKJV).

**Why did Jesus not confirm
or deny the accusations
against Him?**

REACT

Jesus the Word and Jesus the silent Lamb—how do these two images work together to give us a more complete picture of God?

*The History Channel. Encyclopedia. Crucifixion. From <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=206829>>.

How to Be Transformed

HOW-TO

2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12

We live in a society obsessed with change. The desire to change our bodies is a particular fixation. The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) reported that in 2004 there was a 44 percent increase in cosmetic procedures over 2003.*

As Christians, however, we should be more concerned about being transformed into people who are pleasing to God. But how do we effect this change? There aren't any plastic surgeons that can snip away hatred or impatience, none that specialize in faith augmentation, none that can implant love or lift up our eyes toward God.

The tool that can effect our transformation is the Word of God. How do we allow it to transform us? Here are a few simple steps:

1. *Reading the Scriptures on daily basis.* Deuteronomy 8:3 reminds us that spiritual food (God's Word) is even more important than physical food. If we require daily food, then how much more important is it that we saturate ourselves in the Word of God on a daily basis?

There aren't any plastic surgeons that can snip away hatred.

2. *Inviting the Holy Spirit's guidance.* Often we come to the Bible with our own preconceived notions. Or we come looking for permission to follow a path of our own choosing. Only a humble acknowledgment and acceptance of the Holy Spirit's role will effect the transformation we are in such desperate need of.

3. *Obedience to the Word.* James 1:22-24 says it best: "Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it. If you hear the message and don't obey it, you are like people who stare at themselves in a mirror and forget what they look like as soon as they leave" (CEV). The Word of God can transform us only when we apply the Bible's principles to our lives, when we compare our lifestyles and purposes to what God intends, and when we honestly seek, with His help, to obey His commands and follow His purposes.

* The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. Cosmetic Surgery Quick Facts: 2005 ASAPS Statistics. <<http://www.surgery.org/press/procedurefacts-asqf.php>>.

Watch Cogs and Changed Lives

OPINION

Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:24

I like logic. Things have to make sense to me. When I was four or five years old, I got my first wristwatch. It wasn't long before I decided I had to figure out what made it tick—literally. I pried the back off to get a look at the internal workings.

Is the change the Word makes in our lives logical? Can we open it up and see what makes it tick? Go ahead! Pry it open, and you will find a series of organized cogs and springs, all working together, interrelated. Well, not exactly. The process of change is difficult to describe. The results, however, are usually quite similar.

In my career as a nurse, I have seen hundreds of people cling to the power of God's Word. Whether they are facing surgery, death, or even recovery, those who have been exposed to the changing effect of God's truth will consistently turn to the Bible in their time of need. It renders comfort and strength to the soul. In contrast, those who have not accepted God's truth will exhibit feelings of anger, fear, and frustration in the same situations.

Those who believe in the Word can have peace in the storm. During the fiercest hurricane the Cayman Islands have ever experienced, I witnessed calm as believers sang hymns of praises to their Creator.

Throughout the centuries there have been many stories of persons traveling in the wrong direction, suddenly turned around through an encounter with God's Word. Hardened criminals, dabblers in the occult, persons hooked on drugs—changed!

Indeed, the change may not be logical. One cannot explain exactly how it happens. There is one fact that makes a lot of sense, though. Jesus is the Author of the Word. indeed He is the Word. Therefore, the more we absorb the Scriptures, the more we absorb Jesus.

To those uninitiated into the dynamic power of the Word of God, all this will seem as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). But to this logical mind, there is more than enough evidence from centuries of changed lives to convince me.

REACT

How can we share the power of God's Word to change lives with someone in darkness?

**The more we absorb the
Scriptures, the more we
absorb Jesus.**

"Thy Word Is Truth"

EXPLORATION

John 17

CONCLUDE

Knowledge of another being depends more on that being than on us. What an awesome gift, then, that God chooses to reveal Himself to His creation. The first chapters of the Bible not only testify to the power of God's creative word, but also to the fact that He chooses to *fellowship* with us! God continues to talk with us through His personal revelation in each page of the Bible. Indeed, Jesus' last prayer on earth was not only for the believers to whom He had been revealed as the Word, but for those of us who would believe down through the ages because of God's continued revelation through their testimony.

CONSIDER

- Reading Psalm 119 in its entirety, noting that this was an educational tool for Jewish children. The psalm is an acrostic poem, with the verses of each stanza beginning with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Memorize one section and continue to study the text until you've memorized the entire psalm. (Alternatively, get a group of people to each memorize a portion of Psalm 119 so you can recite the text in its entirety as a group.)
- Writing your own psalm about the Word of God.
- Making a scroll containing a text of particular significance to you. Include on the scroll your own commentary regarding the text.
- Sharing with others the difference the Word of God has made in your life.
- Compiling all the prophecies of the Bible and, where applicable, their fulfillment.
- Setting concrete, tangible personal goals for improving the time you spend in God's Word.
- Spending time in nature, observing each part of God's creation in the order He spoke it into existence. When you come to the creation of humankind, be sure to spend time fellowshiping with God through prayer and reading His Word.

CONNECT

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap. 11; Ken Boa and Larry Moody, *I'm Glad You Asked*, chap. 6.

Revelation of Hope



“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”

(Rom. 15:4, NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 42:11; Rom. 8:24; 1 Pet. 1:13

Have you ever felt hopeless? Why was that?

Many years ago, I was struggling with a sin in my life, and I had fallen once again. It wasn't a mere slip either. I knew the Holy Spirit was warning me even while Satan was tempting me. But I chose not to listen. So there I was afterward, thinking it must be too late, and that God couldn't possibly forgive me now. Hopelessness loomed before me.

Yet somehow, a glimmer of hope sprang up, and I decided I would choose to believe God could forgive me, just in case it was true (Rom. 4:18). Today I know He has forgiven me, and I no longer struggle with that sin any more. I have seen God's grace in my life so many times since then. It was hope that kept me on the Christian path, or I would have given up long ago.

**The hope of love returned
inspires the man to ask,
"Will you marry me?"**

But what exactly is hope? *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines it as a "desire accompanied by expectation." It is something that to you would be positive and that you believe can come true. Based on this, I realized that hope is all around us.

The hope of victory keeps the soldier fighting.

The hope of winning keeps the athlete training.

The hope of succeeding keeps the student studying.

The hope of healing brings the patient to the doctor.

The hope of love returned inspires the man to ask, "Will you marry me?"

The hope of reunion keeps the parent praying.

The hope of eternal life allows the martyr to lay down his or her life for Christ.

In our daily conversation, hope is often no more than a casual wish—"I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." Yet it is some form of hope that drives most of our actions. Hopelessness leads to inactivity and death. And a Christian living on this sin-ridden planet must hold on to hope to be able to hold on to faith. To be able to rejoice when persecuted, we must have the hope of heavenly reward (Matt. 5:12). To be able to believe in a God of love when faced with evil, we must have the hope of an honest and fair judgment (Ps. 9:7, 8).

One day we won't need hope anymore. All our hopes for eternity will be fulfilled. There will be no more sin and evil from which we hope to escape.

In the meantime, hope is essential. As you study God's Word this week, you will find plenty of it.

Hope for Sinners

EVIDENCE

Ps. 91:4

Biblical history reveals the lives of many people who committed great sins. But after they made their mistakes, God still gave them the light of hope. As we study about Jacob (Genesis 27), we find that by deceit, he received a blessing from his father. Yet the story doesn't end there. After he began suffering from the consequences of his own sins, his parents compelled him to leave home. He fled for his life to Padan Haran (Gen. 28:10), because he feared his own brother Esau.

After traveling for a day, he stopped to rest, and while he was sleeping, he received a vision in which God said to him, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you" (Gen. 28:15, NKJV). Remember that Jacob was on the run. He had betrayed his own brother and deceived his own father. But God still promised to be with him. Despite Jacob's sin, God intervened to give him hope. Even though we are sinners, we can still receive hope from God. What is really important is that we love God and give our lives to Him.

God is waiting for you with open arms.

Many years later, we find Jacob returning home with great wealth and a family. God had indeed blessed Him. But once again, he is plagued by fear. In his hour of anguish, the angel of Jehovah appears and Jacob wrestles with the angel (Gen. 32:24). Realizing he cannot overpower Jacob, the angel dislocates Jacob's thigh and asks Jacob to let him go. But Jacob replies, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Gen. 32:26, NKJV). And so we learn that in the hour of our greatest anguish, God is ready to help us. But we must be willing to say, "I won't let You go until You bless me."

God loves you. He tells you, "There is hope for you, My child, if you will only come to Me just as you are. I will do great things in you and for you, the same as I did with Jacob."

No matter how sinful you realize yourself to be, God is waiting for you with open arms. Come to Him, and He will do great things for you, just as He did for Jacob.

REACT

Read Psalm 73:28. What works of God have been especially beneficial to you? How can you declare those works to others?

In What Shall We Hope?

LOGOS

Ps. 34:7; 91:4; Rom. 3:21, 26; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 1:9; 2:12

“Seeing Is Believing” (Ps. 34:7; 91:4)

Camping can seem like such a wonderful idea while viewing nature slides during a family reunion. The voices of romantic recollection and humorous anecdote swell the feelings of oneness on such occasions that are foretastes of heaven more than they are the rule of life in this sinful world. However, the type of camping endured by most of those who lived in Bible times was camping by necessity rather than pleasure. Whether shepherds watching their sheep by night, fugitives fleeing an enemy, or an army in pursuit of national security or conquest, campers of old faced perils few of us have ever experienced or want to. Such camping was difficult to prepare for, because carrying everything needed to meet every possible

contingency created a burden of material dependence that bogged down the very objectives the camper sought to meet. David—the shepherd, the warrior, the fugitive—often camped with little or no preparation. Or perhaps he was prepared to the max. He had camping partners—

How can we have more hope in this apparently hopeless world? Look up!

God and His angels who were prepared for anything.

Hope always is an elusive dream to those who are guided by sight. Even a brief review of the daily news reveals a successive avalanche of authorities scrambling to promote opposing solutions to give hope to those who seek it. Too often, these solutions only compound the problems they are trying to solve. However, hopelessness can be our friend when it teaches us to value God's resources above anything we see. There is no greater revelation of hope than the Author of hope. Read Psalm 91:4.

“Well, I Declare” (Rom. 3:21, 26)

Hope is not developed by the echoes of self-proclaimed declarations. Declare what you will. Repeat it over and over again. State it as loud as you can. Cry it with great pathos. In the end, only truth offers hope, and only saving truth offers saving hope.

On the theme of our redemption, we must be careful what we declare and how

we declare it. Jesus gave us an example of just the right self-declaration that would put us in a right relation to the facts in our case. Read Luke 18:10–14. The publican agrees with God in reference to himself as “a sinner” (verse 13). And he frames his confession in the hope that God is able to do what He has promised—that is, be merciful to sinners (verse 13). It is then and only then that God will declare any of us justified (verse 14). But the Pharisee’s self-declaration got no further than his skin. The results may have boosted his self-esteem; but in the long term, he must come to see himself on the wrong side of the escalator. “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled” (verse 14, NRSV).

“And Calls Those Things Which Do Not Exist As Though They Did” (Rom. 4:17; 1 Pet. 3:18)

When God declared to Abraham the “impossible”—namely, “one who will come from your own body shall be your heir” (Gen. 15:4, NKJV)—He followed up with a lesson on salvation so Abraham would have faith. Read Genesis 15:5.

Did Abraham find enough evidence to utilize his hundred-year-old body together with Sarah’s infertile womb to become the father of many nations? Read Romans 4:18–21.

The stars in the heavens that Abraham gazed upon were wonderful preachers. Paul asks, “How shall they hear without a preacher?” You see, Paul knew that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, indeed *‘Their sound has gone out to all the earth / And their words to the ends of the world’*” (Rom. 10:14, 17, 18, NKJV; italics added). Here Paul is referring to Psalm 19, where we read that “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard” (verses 1–3, NKJV). Perhaps it was those innumerable stars that convinced Abraham to believe in a way which counted as righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

How can we have more hope in this apparently hopeless world? Look up! Abraham did—literally!

REACT

1. What “necessities” of life eclipse your view of God’s revelations of hope?
2. How might the estimation you place in yourself apart from God be a bit too optimistic?
3. Think of ways you can expose yourself to sufficient doses of unpolluted starlight.

“The Justifier of the One Who Has Faith in Jesus”

TESTIMONY

Rom. 3:21, 26

“As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is ‘the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:26. And ‘whom He justified, them He also glorified.’ Rom. 8:30. Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven’s treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen.”¹

“The Lord’s people cannot of themselves answer the charges of Satan. As they look to themselves they are ready to despair. But they appeal to the divine Advocate. They plead the merits of the Redeemer. God can be ‘just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:26. With confidence the Lord’s children cry unto Him to silence the accusations of Satan, and bring to naught his devices. ‘Do me justice of mine adversary,’ they pray; and with the mighty argument

**“When Satan seeks to cover
the people of God with
blackness, and ruin them,
Christ interposes.”**

of the cross, Christ silences the bold accuser.

“‘The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ When Satan seeks to cover the people of God with blackness, and ruin them, Christ interposes. Although they have sinned, Christ has taken the guilt of their sins upon His own soul. He has snatched the race as a brand from the fire. By His human nature He is linked with man, while through His divine nature He is one with the infinite God. Help is brought within the reach of perishing souls. The adversary is rebuked.”²

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 163.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169.

Live Long and Prosper

HOW-TO

1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 2:18, 19; 1 John 1:9

We all desire to be fit, healthy, and strong. And just as proper fitness can have miraculous results in our lives, a well-developed relationship with God will result in an eternal life of health and well-being. God promises all His children that through their proper exercise of faith and belief in His Word, they will be rewarded a long and prosperous life in His company.

In our spiritual life, God offers to be our personal Trainer. His Word contains a master plan for living a long and prosperous spiritual life. "The secret to continuous power-flow is in adjusting yourself to God's controlled pace and tempo." Here are some guidelines for doing just that.

Find the perfect Trainer. In Jeremiah 29:11, the Lord assures us that His goal is to prosper us, to give us a bright future. We need to look to the One who knows exactly what we need to succeed.

"As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps."²

Proper nourishment. Colossians 2:19 reminds us that we are God's body and that we can grow only through nourishment and strength from Him. "Not until the life of Christ

becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and without."³

Cleansing. Just as our bodies need to be renewed, so do our hearts. First John 1:9 states that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven and cleansed, refreshed and renewed. With a clean heart, we can begin to build on a firm foundation.

Diligence. A successful fitness plan takes dedication, discipline, and diligence. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, we are told to be strong and steady. Honest work for the Lord will always be rewarded. "Be not satisfied with reaching a low standard."⁴

In our spiritual life, God offers to be our personal Trainer.

REACT

What are some ways you can jumpstart your spiritual fitness plan? What areas of your life especially need the help of the ultimate personal Trainer?

1. Norman Vincent Peale, *Stay Alive All Your Life* (Prentice-Hall, 1957).

2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

Thursday
May 24

Hope — An Anchor for the Soul

OPINION

John 14:1, 29; Heb. 6:13–20

“A hurricane is predicted to hit . . .”

“An earthquake of magnitude 8.5 has just shaken . . .”

“Terrorists have just bombed . . .”

“A potentially fatal disease could spread worldwide, leaving thousands dead . . .”

Do you feel a twinge of fear when you hear headlines like these? Or perhaps waves of personal despair are sweeping over you, and you find yourself coming up wide-eyed, gasping for air, grasping for a glimmer of hope . . .

Hope. It's not a flimsy wish, but a rock-solid confidence, a certainty in the sovereignty of an Almighty God and His unchanging Word. It's an anchor that our loving heavenly Father has given us that will hold through eternity.

When I hear headlines full of disaster and tragedy, it drives me to my loving God, my Savior, who has told me ahead of time everything I need to know so I can

have hope! These are all signs that prove His Word is true. They drive me to His Word and to a deeper faith and trust. I actually see His goodness that leads us to repentance and into His loving arms.

His love for us is a relentless, passionate love. Even though it

breaks His heart, He will allow whatever it takes to bring us to the end of ourselves. When we reach that point, we will allow Him to draw us into His arms.

He longs for our hearts to be His alone. He longs for our freedom, peace, and joy. The only way we will experience this is through hope in His promise—the promise of His Word—the promise of Jesus.

So, dig into His Word until you find this hope, until you find everything your heart longs for—until your heart is so full it overflows to a world that is drifting in the storms, searching for an Anchor.

REACT

What kind of a God does your response to tragedy reflect? What does your response reveal about our relationship with Him?

The Gift of Hope

EXPLORATION

Rom. 15:4

CONCLUDE

From the beginning, God knew that in a sin-infected world our greatest need would be hope. Hope that tomorrow could be better. Hope that wounds could heal. Hope that sins could be forgiven, and hope that promises would be kept. He filled His Word with stories of people like Jacob, Abraham, and the adulterous woman so we could see that in Jesus there is hope for every human struggle. As faith in Jesus grows, so does the life-infusing miracle of hope.

CONSIDER

- Watching the video *Journey Out of Darkness*. This is an inspiring account of how God fulfilled the hopes of a life that had gotten way off track. List things you hope God is like, and use a concordance to find verses that confirm these attributes.
- Finding or writing a poem or Bible verse about hope and sharing it in a card with someone who needs hope.
- Reading the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–45 and listing his experiences—the pit, Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife, the prison, and the palace. Next to each one, write how he must have felt at that time and how God used the experience to prepare him for His ultimate purposes.
- Taking a video camera and doing some person-on-the-street interviews. Ask questions about what people think about the conditions in the world and what they think gives people hope. Share it with your Sabbath School class.
- Listening to Twila Paris's CD, *Cry for the Desert*, at a time when you can really focus and meditate on the words of the songs.

CONNECT

Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*; Russell Burrill, *Hope When the World Falls Apart*; Ardis Stenbakken, editor, *Bouquets of Hope*.

The Bible and Health



“ ‘I am the Lord, who heals you’ ” (Exod. 15:26, NIV).

The Secret to a Long and Healthy Life

Sabbath
May 26

INTRODUCTION

Gen. 1:29; Exod. 15:26; John 14:15; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20

Every human yearns to have a long, active, and healthy life. Millions of dollars have been spent in the United States alone on human health. The health-related industry is one of the fastest growing industries; however, the human lifespan on this earth averages approximately 75 years for a developed country and about 40 years in some of the poorest countries of Africa.

Sardinians, Okinawans, and Seventh-day Adventists are among the people who may live 100 years or longer and still remain healthy and active. Their common secrets? They do not smoke. They put their families first. They are physically and socially active. Plus, they eat lots of fruits and vegetables. Seventh-day Adventists also have a strong faith in the Lord and keep the Sabbath. Marge Jetton is one such Adventist. She is 101 years old and is still driving and filling up the gas tank herself. Marge states, "We need somebody to lead our life . . . God is a good friend." Dr. Ellsworth Wareham, who is still doing heart surgery at the age of 91 years, mentioned his favorite secret to a healthy and long life: "God is our leader and protector."*

Faith means doing what the Lord wants us to do.

What is the relationship between faith and an active, long life?

In part, faith means doing what the Lord wants us to do (John 14:15; notice the motivation for obedience in this verse). And He wants us to have a strong and healthy life. A healthy life helps us to have a healthy mind through which God can communicate to us. Because our body is His temple, it is important to glorify Him with it (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

The X-rays of Egyptian mummies reveal that they had heart disease, arthritis, rheumatism, and sexually transmitted diseases, because of their lifestyles. The X-rays also show that they had tooth decay and obesity. But God promised ancient Israel the following: "I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you" (Exod. 15:26, NIV).

This week, we will study the relationship between God and our health and why it is important for us to have a healthy, active, and long life.

**National Geographic*, "The Secrets of Long Life." Nov. 2005.

Sunday
May 27

Need Help? The Faith Factor

LOGOS

Exod. 15:26; Matt 4:23; 8:16, 17; Luke 4:16–21; Rom. 6:4, 9–11; Phil. 4:4–9;
Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8–10; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3 John 2

God's Plan

God created the human race to live eternally, but the entrance of sin brought disease and death. Before the Flood, it was common for people to live 700 years or more. The longest lived was Methuselah, Noah's grandfather, who lived 969 years. But after the Flood, Abraham lived only 175 years; and when the Jews left Egypt and entered the Promised Land, the average life span was approximately the same as today.

God put His guidelines for health and happiness in the Bible. God will not force us to follow these guidelines, but failure to do so will result in poor health. God promised the Israelites they would not inherit the Egyptian diseases if they followed

His commandments and kept His statutes (Exod. 15:26). Genetic weaknesses and deformities, along with diseases such as cancer and AIDS, are the results of what humanity has sown.

Healing constituted approximately one-third of Christ's ministry.

God's Health Laws

The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses between 1491–1451 B.C., contain remarkable scientific principles. The Bible also contains scientific knowledge regarding hygiene and sanitization. We'll discover that the Bible contains medical guidelines that were more extensive and thorough than the knowledge of Egypt and other ancient nations at that time.¹ The entire Bible contains high level medical principles and laws designed to protect us from various diseases.²

The Value of Health

The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16–7:1). Poor health habits harm the body, and therefore degrade and can possibly destroy the temple of the Holy Spirit. God wants us to be healthy. Read 3 John 2.

"True religion and the laws of health go hand in hand. It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of break-

ing away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind. Men and women must be taught to take a careful review of every habit and practice, and at once put away those things that cause an unhealthy condition of the body, and thus cast a dark shadow over the mind.”³

Christ’s Ministry

Healing constituted approximately one-third of Christ’s ministry. Read Matthew 8:16, 17, and 1 Peter 2:24. Christian tradition describes Jesus as the Great Physician. He sought to heal the whole person, not just their physical ailments (Matt. 8:16, 17; Mark 2:1–12). He risked persecution by healing on the Sabbath. Just as grace is freely given to all, the Gospels attest that Jesus healed whoever came to Him, including many people the religious leaders considered unclean and outside the bounds of their community (Matt. 8:5–13).

Believe It or Not—the Faith Factor

Medical research shows what the Bible states as truth—faith plays an important role in determining our health. A Harvard School of Medicine Conference in 1995 concluded that “attending divine worship in church each week, reading the Bible every day, and the continuous life of prayer are remarkable medications to mind, soul, and body.”⁴ This conference also reported that weekly attendees of a church in Maryland, U.S.A., had a significantly lower number of heart attacks and emphysema (down to 50 percent), cirrhosis (down to 74 percent), and suicide (down to 53 percent).⁵

REACT

God’s people have within the Bible guidelines to healthful living. Do following these guidelines mean we will never become ill? Explain your answers.

1. Grant R. Jeffrey, *Signature of God, Immanuel*, p. 157.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

3. *Counsels on Health*, p. 445.

4. S. I. McMillen, M.D., and David E. Stern, M.D., *None of These Diseases* (2000), p. 241.

5. *Ibid.*

Food for a Healthy Life

TESTIMONY

Gen. 1:29; 3:18; Isa. 55:2; Dan. 1:15; 1 Cor. 10:31

"Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of endurance, and a vigor of intellect that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet."¹

"The diet appointed man in the beginning did not include animal food. Not till after the Flood, when every green thing on the earth had been destroyed, did man receive permission to eat flesh."²

A research scientist and nutritionist formerly with the National Cancer Institute said, "Eat a lot of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, some soy or other beans in your diet every day. Use fats and animal foods in tiny amounts or skip them if you prefer. Believe it or not, this is all you really need to know."³ Soybeans and their

**Living a healthy life is our
choice to make.**

products are high in fiber; rich in high quality protein, isoflavon, and genistein; and high in inoleic acid. Isoflavon and genistein can protect us against a number cancers, including breast, colon, lung, prostate,

skin, and leukemia. Fifty percent of fat in soy oil is linoleic acid, which is more effective in lowering blood cholesterol than oat bran.

Modern medical research proves that for a healthy and long life, humans should eat beans, nuts, fruits, and vegetables. High consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains is now widely recommended by many physicians and nutritionists to prevent many degenerative diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, stroke, and certain cancers.

Living a healthy life is our choice to make. What will your choice be?

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 296.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

3. W. Dysinger, *Heaven's Lifestyle Today* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1997), p. 32.

Resolution or Revolution?

EVIDENCE

Dan. 1:8

My friends were quite surprised to see me. They almost didn't recognize me. "Yes, I'm changing," I said.

But they responded, "You're different. You're fatter now!"

About eight years ago, when I was a student at the Klabat University, my weight was 65 kilograms (approximately 150 pounds) which was adequate for my height of 173 centimeters (approximately 5 feet 8 inches). Now, however, I weighed 80 kilograms (approximately 200 pounds) more. No wonder they almost didn't recognize me!

Comparing what I ate in the campus dining room with what I eat today, I realize how differently I eat now. On campus, I ate nutritious foods. Now, however, I eat more junk food. To make matters worse, I don't get enough rest or exercise.

Daniel and his friends had the chance to live like kings in Babylon. But they chose not to defile themselves with the king's food (Dan. 1:8). They chose not to destroy their faith with what they were eating. Their decision can teach us much about commitment.

At the beginning of each new year, I like to make New Year's resolutions. My objective for the last several years has been to reduce my weight by avoiding meat and by not eating an evening meal. Unfortunately, I could never keep this resolution.

I realize now that in order for me to change, I have to make a radical commitment. I have to make a "life revolution" rather than New Year's resolutions.

"Since the first surrender to appetite, mankind have been growing more and more self-indulgent, until health has been sacrificed on the altar of appetite." *

Don't let appetite become the ruler your life. With the help of God's Holy Spirit, you can control it. If you are still living out your old life, take to heart these words of Paul: "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6, NKJV).

I have to make a "life revolution" rather than New Year's resolutions.

* *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 147.

Double Blessings

HOW-TO

Prov. 15:13; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:20

We would not only be a blessing to ourselves by living a healthy life, but to others as our lifestyle serves as a testimony to others. Thus, we become ambassadors of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. As Their ambassadors, it is as though They Themselves are making Their appeal through us. "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20, NKJV).

Let's get started!

1. *Eat a healthy diet.* "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NKJV). You are what you eat. So be sure to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Plan your menus around healthy food. Take time to see what the ingredients are in the food you want to buy. Avoid eating junk food. Even when you're eating out, you can still find healthy food on the menu. Remember that fruit makes a great dessert.

**Only then can we soar
above the storm.**

2. *Get active.* The modern lifestyle makes life easier. But as a result, most people have become less active. Take time to enjoy nature, fresh air, and sunshine. Walking is an easy, fun activity for all ages. Turn off the television or computer for half an hour and go outside. It's also a great way to catch up with family and friends. You can even power walk and power talk at the same time! Find a more challenging exercise to do once or twice a week to maintain heart health.

3. *Maintain a positive attitude.* "Happiness makes a person smile, but sadness can break a person's spirit" (Prov. 15:13, NCV). In this sinful world, bad things happen in our life. It is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle them. When the storms of life come upon us, we can rise above them by setting our mind on God. The storms do not have to overcome us. We can allow Him to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the tempest that bring sickness, tragedy, failure, and disappointment in our lives.

Only then can we soar above the storm.

REACT

What can you do/change to have a healthier life?

Back to Eden's Menu

OPINION

Exod. 15:26; Col. 3:8-10

Early one morning, my mobile phone rang. To my surprise, it was someone calling me to tell me that one of our colleagues had passed away during the night.

Why, I wondered?

He was a friendly, middle-aged man with a good position. It seemed that everything was going his way. It's true that about two months ago I visited him in a hospital after he had collapsed from a stroke. But several days later, I met him in the office with a tie and a full pack of smiles.

Why did this tragedy happen? Were his wife and his children ready? Did they understand?

Death, sickness, and a plethora of health problems are now part of modern life. This is an indication that the quality of life and the environment continue to decrease. New diseases are found every day, and some of them are dangerous because there is no knowledge or medicine to combat them.

Fortunately, He knows the best way to live life, and Eden's menu is one way He has given us to be healthy, to preserve our environment, and most importantly, to know and to obey Him. "The mechanism of the human body cannot be

**I met him in the office with
a tie and a full pack of
smiles.**

fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent. It is not as the result of a mechanism, which, once set in motion, continues its work that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live and move and have our being. The beating heart, the throbbing pulse, every nerve and muscle in the living organism, is kept in order and activity by the power of an ever-present God."*

In the beginning, God told Adam and Eve to eat only fruits, nuts, and grains. I believe this rule is still applicable, because of the decreasing quality of our environment.

Following God's advice is the right thing to do in order to be healthy. Staying as healthy as we can be leads to a fruitful life of service to God and to others.

REACT

1. Why do people not want to follow God's advice in choosing their food?
2. What can you do to make your immediate environment more conducive to good health? What can you do to make the world's environment healthier?

* *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417.

Living to God's Glory

EXPLORATION

1 Cor. 10:31

CONCLUDE

God is concerned with our well-being, and has given us in the Bible physical, mental, and spiritual guidelines to help us maintain that well-being. In a world where it is often easier to eat the wrong things, think the wrong things, or do the wrong things, it is sometimes difficult to follow these guidelines. But in committing ourselves to maintaining our health, we allow ourselves to become partners with God in achieving the life He wants for us.

CONSIDER

- Making a video or photographic diary of your effort to improve your health in some way. Track changes over a period of time.
- Setting a goal based on reliable information, preferably from a health professional. Some obvious goals are weight loss and blood cholesterol.
- Writing a mission statement describing your health goals as they relate to your physical, spiritual, mental, and social well-being.
- Listening to music that helps you choose the right things in regard to your health and well-being? Exercise to this music if you want.
- Moving beyond the sprouts and grapefruit that constitute healthy eating in the minds of many. Explore the produce section, or go to a world foods market. What is a jicama? Find out, and enjoy it!
- Making friends with people who can support you in your efforts to live more healthfully. Your church might not be a bad place to start looking.
- Determining where you want your current habits and lifestyle to be 10 or 20 years from now. Do you think these habits would please God? If so, how can you maintain them?

CONNECT

Counsels on Health.

Des Cummings, Jr., *Creation Health: Secrets for Feeling Fit and Living Long*, 2003.

The Bible and Happiness



“ ‘The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’ ” (John 10:10, NKJV).

"In All Its Fullness"

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 146:5

Browsing through some Christian literature one evening, I came across a headline that immediately grabbed my attention. It read, "Money can't buy happiness, but its absence can cause unhappiness." Keen enough to dig out the meaning behind this headline, I began to devour the story paragraph by paragraph, page after page. Inside, I found a twofold story of a miser and his counterpart who used his money to buy what he needed to make him happy.

The miser had enough money for a comfortable life. But he remained unhappy with his bags full of cash because he lacked several basic things in life which he actually needed. His counterpart, on the other hand, used his money to buy a nice house and a good car. He also acquired a good education and married a wonderful wife, all because of his money.

After reading the story, I concluded that happiness, like love, cannot be bought.

As Christians, how do we define happiness?

You cannot put a price tag on happiness, but you can on all of its accessories. This week, we are studying one of the most sought-after goals of life: happiness. If each of us could list those temporal things that make

us individually happy, I fear that all the libraries of the world might not be able to contain the volumes we would create. Just think about what makes you happy: a baby's smile, graduating with honors, a state-of-the-art spouse, a nice house with an expensive car to match . . . the list is endless.

The quality of happiness we should experience as Christians matters a great deal as far as our faith is concerned. As much as we live in a sin-stained world, with all its alluring incentives, we should not forget our role as leading lights for those who are still in the dark. Heaven expects us to lead a purpose-filled life in all aspects according to the biblical framework. Sadness is what we experience when dark clouds of sorrow, grief, hunger, and other disasters overwhelm us. Happiness is what we experience when life seems so carefree that we laugh, eat, drink, make merry, sing songs, and dance. However, in both cases, do we remember our Creator? Do we make merry within the bounds of God's Word? Do we allow Him to help us through the disasters? As Christians, how do we define happiness? Can you and I rely on the Bible as the true source of happiness? These questions and others form the bedrock of our study this week.

The Unmarred Happiness of Eden

Sunday
June 3

EVIDENCE

Prov. 3:13

Even the richest person in the world is still afraid of one thing—death. Fear makes us doubt our lives. Fear is also a necessity in that it can protect us from danger. However, it is also the parent of invention, whispering that we need more deadly weapons to protect us against the loss of our property and lives.

It was not a part of God's plan for us to live with fear. Our first parents in the Garden of Eden, with their perfect minds, experienced a kind of happiness that no amount of money can purchase, that no worldly standard can match. "In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time—that true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works."*

Had it not been for Adam and Eve's unwise choices, this standard of happiness would still be in effect today. However, now the broken law of God demands the life of the sinner. For this reason, God, in His unfailing love for us, gave us His only Son, to make atonement for our transgression. Christ alone can redeem us from the curse of God's law and bring us again into perfect harmony with heaven.

It was not a part of God's plan for us to live with fear.

How then, can we know Christ better so His saving grace can grow in the inner sanctum of our hearts? Many of us still choose to find happiness in sources far from Christ and the Bible. Nevertheless, the Bible warns that no matter where we choose to find happiness, we must test that source by the Word. Read Isaiah 8:20.

As we seek to find happiness in this sinful world, let us go back to the source of all happiness—God. Since His law of love is the foundation of His government, our happiness depends upon our perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness.

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 16.

Monday
June 4

True Happiness

LOGOS

Luke 21:36; John 8:32; 1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12, 13; 1 Pet. 3:15; 4:12-14

Vigilance and Reverence and Their Impact on Happiness (Luke 21:36; 1 Cor. 10:13)

Cases of high-profile Christians going out of their way to disobey God under the umbrella of happiness are not new. From Aaron's generation to our time, Satan has worked day and night, using every device possible as a counterfeit to acquire his share of the world. During Moses and Aaron's time, Satan used happiness as a means to divert the Israelites from the path God had set for them (Exod. 32:1).

Isaiah records a style of worship in Jerusalem that was devoid of God (Isa.

**Cases of high-profile
Christians going out of their
way to disobey God under
the umbrella of happiness
are not new.**

29:13). Such styles blind worshipers to true happiness. Luke's Gospel calls us to be vigilant and prayerful as opposed to eating and drinking and making merry. Paul also warns us to shun idolatry and to be careful not to fall prey to worldly types of happiness. God will give us the power to resist temptations to indulge in such happiness.

The Nature of True Happiness (John 8:32; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12, 13)

"All that glitters is not gold" is an old, well-known proverb. In this world of sin, there are many exciting sources of happiness. Christ Himself saw this alluring mix during His ministry on earth. To help His disciples work their way through this mix, He counseled them (and us) with these words: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, NKJV). Because He is the Truth (John 14:6), Christ meant that when we recognize Him in our lives as our Savior, He is able to restore us to an abundant life. This life starts on earth and extends to our life in the hereafter.

Paul concurs that we should refrain from selfish ambitions and from a cheap desire to boast. Rather, as we seek true sources of happiness, we must uphold Christian fellowship by developing a Christlike character. This cannot be achieved easily. It comes with persecution, hunger, strife, and rejection (Matt. 5:1-12). In the inspired words of Ellen G. White, we read that "the only power that can create

or perpetuate true peace [and happiness] is the grace of Christ. When this is implanted in the heart, it will cast out the evil passions that cause strife and dissension.”¹

Blueprints for Happiness (1 Pet. 3:15; 4:12–14; 1 John 1:4)

Christ serves as our example in all that we try to do. The reverence He had for His Father should be the foundation for our faith. As we strive to have life more abundantly, Peter cautions us to have complete reverence for Christ, and to be bold enough to explain to anyone the hope we have in Him. The suffering and rejection we may experience in our walk with Him qualifies us for the eternal happiness we shall receive during the judgment. Since He is the source of all happiness, when we return to Him in reverence and humility, we also shall experience the same fountain of happiness detailed in His Living Word. “As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Christ step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which he has led us. We can tell how we have tested his promise, and found the promise true.”² In conclusion, the Bible as the words of Jesus Christ, is clear on the issue of happiness. Unlike the thief, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, Christ is there for us, always ready to see that we have life, and have it more abundantly.

REACT

1. We all are an integral part of the world's population. However, Christ cautions us not to accept worldly domains of happiness. What does this teach us about Christian happiness?

2. How can one remain happy in God while experiencing pain and suffering?

3. What is the difference between the happiness heaven offers and the happiness the world offers?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Who Is Happy?

TESTIMONY

Matt. 5:8

"Those who are pure in their thinking are happy" (Matt 5:8, NCV). This statement leaves a lot to be desired for an inquiring mind. One may ask, "How can one acquire purity of heart, without which I am not happy?" To me, there is no way we can obtain purity of heart except by imitating Christ's life. The Spirit of Prophecy records that "as God is pure in His sphere, so man is to be pure in his. And he will be pure if Christ is formed within, the hope of glory; for he will imitate Christ's life and reflect His character."¹

"In order to . . . remain pure, Seventh-day Adventists must have the Holy Spirit in their hearts and in their homes."² True happiness, which is found in Christ alone, is what He talked about during His ministry. "The multitudes were amazed at this teaching, which was so at variance with the precept and example of the Pharisees. The people had come to think that happiness consisted in the possession of

"As God is pure in His sphere, so man is to be pure in his."

the things of this world, and that fame and the honor of men were much to be coveted."³

There is an overhaul we experience when we let Christ take control over our lives. Paul says we should shed the quagmire of the old person

and become a new being (2 Cor. 5:17). "As we work in connection with the Great Teacher, the mental faculties are developed. The conscience is under divine guidance. Christ takes the entire being under His control. . . . New, rich thoughts come to him [the individual]. Light is given to the intellect, determination to the will, sensitiveness to the conscience, purity to the imagination."⁴

With this blend of character, one is squarely set to experience an all-dimensional happiness that matches heavenly principles. Then we shall live always as in the presence of God.

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 336.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 164.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 303.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 476.

Making the Difference

HOW-TO

Prov. 14:21

Our life on earth can be compared to a journey on a dark trail in the bush. There are a lot of stumbling blocks to encounter and rivers of difficulty to cross. Even as Christians, our lives can become meaningless, dry, and joyless. However, God has a wonderful way to change all that, and to revitalize, renew, invigorate, and make our Christian life the most satisfying experience we can ever have. How can we find this type of happiness we all long for?

A sincere prayerful life. Asking God for what we need is one way to experience His actions on our behalf. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."* In addition, our prayers should always include praise and thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6).

Hats off to the Word. To experience true happiness, we cannot overlook the reliability of God's Word. It is the light of His Word that shines in our lives, giving us the sight we need to reach heaven without stumbling over trees or falling into rivers of difficulty (Ps. 119:105).

**"Prayer does not bring God
down to us. . . ."**

Depend on God and play your part. Our God is a jealous God (Exod. 20:5), and there is no way we can serve Him while we are still attached to other masters. If we are to experience the happiness that can come only from Him, He must have first place in our life (Matt. 6:24).

Make heaven on earth. As heaven-bound citizens, we cannot think that we will live a Christlike life in heaven while doing what we want to do on earth. Instead, with God's help, we need to start living a heavenly life on earth.

REACT

In a world filled with sorrow and tragedy, what cause do we have for rejoicing and happiness?

* *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

My Recipe for Happiness

OPINION

Deut. 30:11–20

As one of God's children, I have a feeling that He expects me to live a happy life in the land He has provided for me—heaven. I also feel that He expects me to be happy in this life. However, I have a choice, and He always respects my decision.

Since God is the source of my life, I cannot deny the practicality of His Word in my life. Therefore, I feel that the choices I make on how I apply God's Word to my life are important. The Spirit of Prophecy says I should not be like the ancient Jews who "misapplied the word of God. . . . Earthly ambitions absorbed them, and the offer of the spiritual kingdom came to them in vain."*

God, in His love for me, requires that I choose life instead of death. I can choose life only by obeying His commands. The consequences of my choices are quite plain. In my opinion, the only way I can obtain eternal life is by depending on the Bible and believing in God's Son whom He has sent (John 17:3).

So I already know what I need to do to receive the type of happiness which does not end when my body is wrapped in a coffin. For this reason, I must avoid the world with its short-lived pockets of happiness.

The consequences of my choices are quite plain.

My heavenly Father loves me. He gave me life and made me a steward over it. He provides me with all I need to live a successful, happy life—the Scriptures, their guiding principles to steer me from dangers; and the Holy Spirit to guide my understanding of them.

REACT

How do being wise, being ready to learn, thinking right, and making intelligent choices lead us to a happy life? Back up your reasoning with Bible texts.

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 235.

Happy in Jesus Christ

Friday
June 8

EXPLORATION

Jer. 29:11; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 22:37–39

CONCLUDE

It is God's intention for His children to be happy. But too often we follow our own plans instead of God's. At the beginning of time, He gave us all we needed to be truly happy, but we wanted the knowledge of evil in addition to the knowledge of good He Himself imparted to us. In His love, however, God has restored to us through Jesus Christ the way to perfect happiness, if we will only follow His will.

CONSIDER

- Taking a walk in a park and imagining what happiness must have been like in Eden before the Fall. Commune with God, as Adam and Eve did in Eden.
- Remembering things others have done for you that have made you happy and “paying it forward” by doing something nice for someone else.
- Interviewing seniors about what comprises happiness and how their current understanding is the same or different from when they were young.
- Discussing with a friend the idea of happiness versus joy and the role of each in the Christian life, using Scripture to defend your points.
- Making a collage of what makes you happy and what makes God happy. Compare how similar or different the two are.
- Developing and performing a skit illustrating happiness as God intends as opposed to how the world views happiness.
- Listening to or singing “I Can Only Imagine” by MercyMe and imagining what you will do in heaven and the happiness you will experience there.

CONNECT

Sarah Pullman, “To Be Happy in Jesus: Are Evangelical Christians Really Happier Than Their Neighbors?” *Christianity Today*, March 6, 2006, <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/110/32.0.html>>; Charles Spurgeon, “Joy: A Duty,” <<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/2405.htm>>.

Daily Wisdom



“From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15, NIV).

"Grow, Grow, Grow"

INTRODUCTION

John 1:1

"Read your Bible, pray every day, and you grow, grow, grow." This song is very sentimental for me because my mother taught it to me when I was quite young. Actually, I don't even recall how young I was when I started singing it with action. All I know is, we could not afford to miss performing it during family worship with my brothers and sisters. Worship was a daily habit, but also a fun time for me back then. Now as an adult and more mature in my faith, my nights seem incomplete without the usual family gathering, especially when I'm away for work. But reading the Bible when I am away chases away that incompleteness.

School is one more example of a state wherein I have found the relevancy of this very important Book. I usually review my lessons at night, starting with reading the Bible, followed by a prayer. If I do not do this, I cannot seem to concentrate on my studies. Truly, the Lord is accurate with His promise when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

The Bible is a magnificent book!

Beyond any doubt, the Bible is a magnificent book! Not only does it soothe us when we're homesick, it also serves as a guide—especially when we make our choices. How essential the Bible is when we face the days of our lives, when we are challenged with choices—from simple daily perks to the complex tidbits of our work, dealings, wealth, and responsibilities.

This week, we will delve into the Bible's power to transform a life that is ordinary into a life that is meaningful and worthy in the sight of God. This concept of transformation may have been introduced to us when we were infants. However, how we always make the Bible our guide for the rest of our lives must be made sure. This is important, because we live in a sinful world. Temptations are always there, ready to eat us up; and if we are not cautious, our God-given life may be ruined.

A blessed week is ahead of us to discern our heavenly Father's inclination for our lives through His Holy Scriptures. He knows what is necessary for our lives. So won't you completely submit your all to Him?

Looking for Happiness in All the Right Places

LOGOS

Pss. 19:7–14; 119:98–105; Prov. 3:13–16; 30:8, 9; Matt. 13:22; 16:26; Rom. 12:17, 18; 13:1–4

The founders of the United States put together some grand concepts of freedom in establishing the new republic. One of the more well known is the statement in the Bill of Rights that states the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The very idea that a secular government might be the source of public happiness was rather new. The state was typically expected to provide security, and its vassals were under obligation to it. You had to keep the king happy. He, however, was not duty bound to be so concerned about your happiness.

It is in God’s Word that we find the recurring theme of individual happiness and fulfillment. The promise is sure that all who seek the wisdom that comes from above will find happiness and contentment.

Of course, that happiness is not some free-floating state of mind that comes

and goes. Bible writers consistently hold that happiness comes from acquiring wisdom, or a knowledge of God and His ways. David—a king with a God-centered vision of statecraft—saw the law of God as giving wisdom (Ps. 19:7). But in context, it is clear he is talking about far more than the Decalogue, or even “the

It is in God’s Word that we find the recurring theme of individual happiness and fulfillment.

statutes” (verse 8) of God. And when he extols the “judgments” (verse 9) of God, it is no negative condemnation, but the applied wisdom of the Deity that the warrior king is applauding. The entire revelation of God, therefore, was to David, “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (verse 10, NKJV).

In case you might think that expression misapplied, David uses it again in Psalm 119:103, NIV: “How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” This is the expression of joy in service. The psalmist is made “wise” (verse 98) by his relationship with God, singing that it is “through [His] precepts I get understanding” (verse 104).

The book of Proverbs continues the theme of wisdom and happiness in knowing God. “Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding” (Prov. 3:13, NRSV). Solomon personifies wisdom as a desirable woman with all the winning qualities that make for a fulfilling relationship. Of course, those qualities are fulfilled in ways that are decidedly different from the secular pursuit of happiness.

The wisdom books of the Bible are consistent in their elevation of wisdom and the rewards that follow as a divine practicum. So there is no disagreement with the rewards of Lady Wisdom when the wise man prays for two things before he dies. The two are hard to isolate numerically, but the intent is clear when he says, "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you" (Prov. 30:8, 9, NRSV). I cannot help but think of the *panis angelicus* given to the Israelites in the wilderness. A sure source of nourishment—never to be hoarded, but always available in the right quantity to sustain—and always sweet, with a taste like honey.

In the Faust legend, a pious scholar named Dr. Faustus is seduced from the path of godliness by "the spirit that opposes," through promises of greater wisdom and earthly power. The inexorable point of that morality play is that apart from God, that sort of a search is doomed. Faust becomes jaded by power and a knowledge of more evil than he can bear. At the end, even believing himself lost to heaven, he cries out to the heavenly vision that it is the loveliness he desires. Jesus spoke to this all-too-human search for "happiness" when He asked, "And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul" (Matt. 15:26, NLT). Alexander the Great is said to have wept that there were no more worlds to conquer some time before he died young in a feverish drunkenness. The wise and the happy know that fulfillment comes from seeking to know God and the eternal realities.

When I was younger, I remember being rather taken with Rod McKuen's reading of *Desiderata*. Like a lot of the songs and enthusiasm of youth, it seems superficial now, and full of a saccharin artificiality. Even at the time it seemed a bit too cute to "have been found in an old churchyard somewhere." In reality, applying a little editorial perception, I think it was not found, but largely borrowed. Paul's words in Romans 12:17, 18 were probably the genesis of the hit piece. "Repay no one evil for evil," Paul wrote. "Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (NKJV).

Good advice. A truly contented person can more easily carry out that prescription than someone caught up in a worldly pursuit of happiness. The wisdom that comes from above will lead naturally to happiness. "The pursuit of happiness" is a very reasonable secular offering, but only the wisdom from above guarantees the attainment of a blessed, happy state.

REACT

How does the modern world define happiness? How is it any different from the biblical view? Why is happiness not related to security and assurance?

TESTIMONY

Ps. 119:98–105

“As an educating power the Bible is without a rival. In the word of God the mind finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God’s word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God.”¹

“The gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life’s problems.”

“The teaching of the Bible has a vital bearing upon man’s prosperity in all the relations of this life. It unfolds the principles that are the cornerstone of a nation’s prosperity—principles with which is bound up the well-being of society, and

which are the safeguard of the family—principles without which no man can attain usefulness, happiness, and honor in this life, or can hope to secure the future, immortal life.”²

“The gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life’s problems. Its instruction, heeded, would make plain many a perplexity and save us from many an error. It teaches us to estimate things at their true value and to give the most effort to the things of greatest worth—the things that will endure.”³

REACT

1. When do the words of God become of most use to you?
2. How have you tried to share with others what His words have taught you?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 596.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 599.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 363.

The Biblia, the Canon

EVIDENCE

2 Tim. 3:16

The word *Bible* is the title of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. It comes from the Greek word *biblia*, which, in turn, comes from the word *biblio*. *Biblio* refers to the inner bark of the papyrus plant and literally means "little books." It does not appear as the title for the Christian Scriptures before the fifth century.

"During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years, from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel."*

God made provision to preserve His Word for all future generations (Num. 33:2; Isa. 30:8; Jer. 30:2). The ancient scribes ensured the written Word from further errors by counting the numbers of verses and letters in the various books.

The word *canon* is applied to the books of *Biblia*. This word refers to a rod, a rule, a standard, an authority. As such, it indicates that the Bible is of divine origin.

In the Bible, we find the words of God needed for our salvation. These words reveal the standard of character we are to develop and the truths we are to believe—all given to us "by inspiration of God" and "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16, KJV).

The Bible is the love of God that through the work of the Holy Spirit can transform the heart. A million steps away from God is the step Christ took to come to us. He came with the power to re-create in us the lost image of God. Reclaiming this image is what the Bible is all about.

The Bible is the Love of
God. . . .

REACT

1. How do the Scriptures help a person develop godliness?
2. What part do we play in gaining salvation?

* *The Great Controversy*, p. v.

HOW-TO

Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 7:1

Any newspaper or news magazine attests to the fact that the world is filthy and needs cleansing.

Today, before a surgical operation begins, standard techniques for sterility are strictly implemented. Such measures have resulted in decreased cases of infection and death.

Evil is always such a filthy dilemma. Here are some principles on how to attain cleanliness in God's sight.

1. *Strict hand washing.* Thorough cleansing in a physical sense rids the body of many germs. The Bible shows us how to cleanse ourselves from the germs of sin. Second Corinthians 7:1 states, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God" (RSV).

2. *Daily wisdom.* Manuals for our computers and the programs we use with them help us with our daily work.

Evil is always such a filthy dilemma.

The Lord also gives us His own words to guide us in our daily activities. His love letters serve as a basis for our daily living, for "the law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7, NIV).

3. *Communication.* While operating on a patient, good doctors will communicate with each other during the procedure to ensure quality care. Prayer is our form of communication with the greatest Physician of all. Even a simple prayer can save us from committing errors. "The Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him" (Deut. 4:7, NIV).

4. *Sacrifice.* When we know what God wants us to be and to do, we need to sacrifice our time for Him just as He sacrificed His life for us. He wants us to devote ourselves to Him. One way we can do this is to memorize one Bible verse a week. We can also share that verse with our friends.

We need to learn and accept how Christ enters our lives. Even if we have made a mess of our lives, God can transform us (Rom. 12:2). Act now. Do not delay. If we are faithful to Him, He will be faithful to us.

Everyday Revelation

OPINION

James 1:5

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5, NIV).

OK, God—what next?

Sometimes God's guidance is so clear. Of course I should eat more vegetables. It only makes sense not to worship idols. You'll read a little biblical something and a light bulb (or perhaps a flaming sword or pillar of fire) pops up over your head: This is the way to go.

But most questions are harder. Should I go to the seminary or culinary school? Of course smoking isn't healthy for me—but quitting sure isn't easy. Is Jared really the one? Should I pay my tithe this week—or save it so I don't have to pay late charges on that insane electric bill? The Bible isn't an eight-ball or horoscope dish-ing out instant answers. You'll find inside it far more descriptions than prescriptions.

In His mountaintop sermon (Matthew 5–7), Jesus addressed a crowd who knew their Bible inside and out, but who had lost the Bible's principles in the details. Jesus reminded them that adultery includes thoughts, not just deeds; murder is both anger and daggers; swearing isn't just a few select words, but our motives every time we open our mouths. Treasures in heaven—turn the other cheek—blessed are the peacemakers—do your good deeds in secret. This advice isn't as clear-cut as "Don't eat road kill" or "Don't clip off the edges of your beard." This wisdom requires prayer and the Holy Spirit to live out, moment by moment, risk-taking moment.

Bible study is more experiential than reading an instruction manual. Find yourself in God's Word. Are you falsely humble like Moses, begging off speaking up for God because of handicaps real or imagined? Are you like Eve and Adam, tempted to think there's a shortcut to godliness? Are you frustrated like Sarah and Abraham, holding on to promises that seem as distant as the stars?

Are you hiding your heritage like Esther, getting by on merely material blessings while God bids you to step out in seemingly reckless faith? Are you prideful and prejudiced like Miriam, on the run like David, or presumptuous like Peter? Is your life falling apart like Job? Dig into the stories and poetry, prophecy, and romance. Let it seep into your system and shape your outlook. Such open-hearted, prayerful study will truly be a "lamp to [your] feet" (Ps. 119:105).

**Find yourself in God's
Word.**

Wisdom From the Word

EXPLORATION

James 1:5

CONCLUDE

The Bible doesn't necessarily give simple answers to complex questions. We can't plug in a life dilemma and automatically retrieve a one-sentence Bible answer that will tell us exactly how to act and what to choose in a twenty-first century situation. Instead, the Bible offers timeless principles that must be understood in the context of its entire message and in the context of its cultural background. Most importantly, we must study the wisdom we receive from God's Word in the context of our relationship with the Living Word—Jesus Christ.

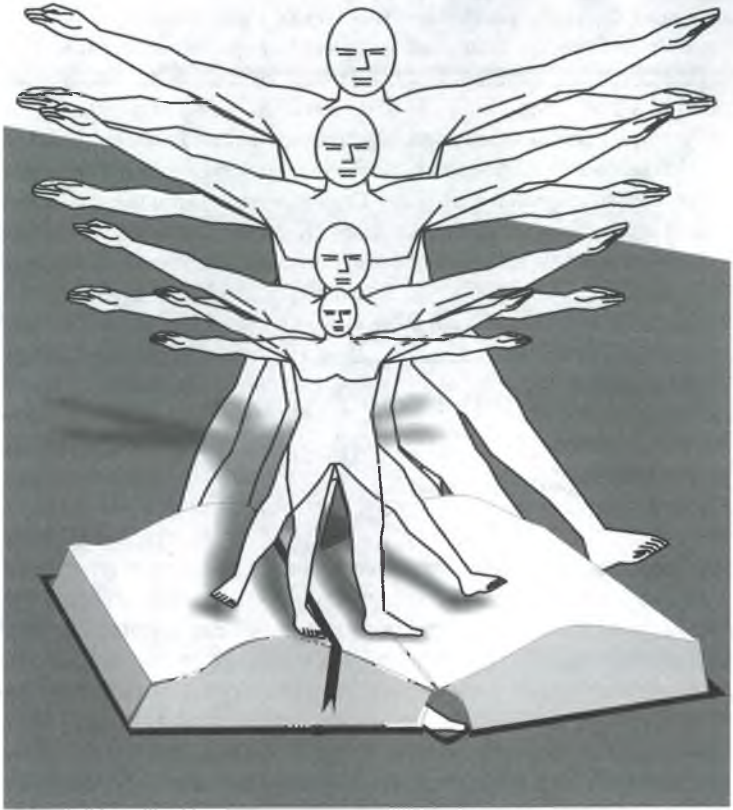
CONSIDER

- Planning a Bible study with a friend or small group in which you choose a topic of current concern and systematically study all Bible passages which might be relevant to the topic. What principles can you glean from your study that will help you to deal with this concern?
- Baking a loaf of bread and giving it to a friend, neighbor, or co-worker. How is our daily bread (food) similar to the daily bread of Christ's Word?
- Keeping a journal in which you reflect on daily Bible readings and how they might shed light on the challenges and situations you are currently facing.
- Choosing a favorite proverb from the book of Proverbs to illustrate in a painting, drawing, cartoon, etc.
- Singing the words of a psalm set to music—either an existing setting or one you compose yourself.
- Memorizing portions of Psalm 119 as you reflect on how God's Word provides wisdom for your daily life.

CONNECT

Education, p. 123; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 43; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, "How Shall We Search the Scriptures?" pp. 105–111; "Dig Deeper," p. 119; "Practical Instruction in Labor," pp. 309–318.

Growing Through the Word



“We will no longer be infants . . . we will in all things grow
up into him who is the
Head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4:14, 15, NIV).

Growing in God Requires Solid Food

INTRODUCTION

Heb. 5:12–14

I'll admit it. For years I continued to be the proverbial thumb sucker when it came to religious things. I accepted all as truth simply because my parents or my teachers taught it to me. I became an expert at games like "Egypt to Canaan," "Life of Christ," and the really hard one: "The Life of Paul." I had memorized many answers by rote from the Bible, but rarely dug deeper when it came to understanding the principles the Bible taught—I never felt the need. I had always been the "good girl" who followed the rules and didn't think often of questioning authority. So it was that I continued to crawl along when it came to my faith.

Then I had a deeply religious experience in high school that led me to discover that prayer was an essential part of my Christian walk. But it wasn't until college that I realized the Bible would need to play an essential role as well. Thankfully, God accepts our infantile approach to most things spiritual, because my interest in the Bible was not solely based on beginning a deeper religious experience. Instead, I was drawn to a particular Bible study on campus because of my interest

Can you imagine if we continued to drink infant formula throughout our lifetime?

in a member of the opposite sex. Despite losing out on a relationship with him, I found a true connection to my Creator through the study of His Word.

As Christians, we believe the Bible contains spiritual truths that cannot be found in other books. We

believe the Bible is God-inspired and therefore acts as a catalyst in growing more like Him. Growing is the key to any relationship. We can continue to stay in an immature relationship with God; but if we do, we will never feel fulfilled. Can you imagine if we continued to drink infant formula throughout our lifetime? Not only would we be undernourished, we would miss out on those solid foods that bring us such enjoyment and satisfy our real hunger.

It's impossible to form a solid, loving relationship with God by memorizing facts from the Bible, or simply by accepting as truth what our parents or teachers tell us without ever looking deeper on our own. Trivia can help us in Bible games; and our parents and teachers can introduce a thirst for God; but until we take the first steps toward Him by reading the Bible for ourselves, we will remain immature in our relationship with Him.

Are You Growing or Stagnating?

EVIDENCE

Eph. 4:14, 15; Heb. 5:12–14

The Adventist Church founders understood that to grow in a personal relationship with God, it is necessary for us to dig deeper into the Scriptures. This follows the instruction in Ephesians 4:14, 15 and Hebrews 5:12–14. In addition to daily Bible study, though, these same pioneers recognized that growing in a faith relationship also includes sharing the story of Jesus with others.

During the formation of the Adventist Church, individual congregations did not have a pastor on a daily or weekly basis. The members did the work of sharing the gospel. This model was based upon the early church described in the book of Acts.

Following the official organization of the Adventist Church in 1863, the rate of membership growth went as high as 620 percent in a decade. Pastors were busy planting new churches; and members were working in the churches that had already been organized. In the early 1900s, churches in North America began clamoring for their own pastors.

Ellen White counseled against this idea; but following her death, the idea of settled pastors became a reality. Since that time, church growth in North America has steadily declined unlike other parts of the world where churches have continued to follow the model in the book of Acts.

Ellen White warned of the dangers of individuals failing to share their faith. . . .

Ellen White warned of the dangers of individuals failing to share their faith: “So long as church members make no effort to give to others the help given them, great spiritual feebleness must result.

“The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers. Let them learn to work as Christ worked. Let them join His army of workers and do faithful service for Him.”*

REACT

1. Why is it necessary to disciple others in order for your faith to grow?
2. What hurdles do you feel you are facing in discipling others?
3. How can you tell someone the story of Jesus this week?

**Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 18, 19.

A Natural Process of Growth

LOGOS

Matt. 22:37, 38; Gal. 2:20; 5:14; Eph. 4:14, 15; Heb. 4:2; 5:12–14

Enhancing Our Understanding of God (Matt. 22:37, 38)

The Bible shares the teachings of Jesus Christ on the fundamental issue of God's love. He makes clear in Matthew 22:37, 38 that the essence of the Ten Commandments is for us to love God first and foremost. By doing so, we will reprioritize all aspects of our lives in order to put Him at the center. The Bible helps us grow in our understanding of Christ's mission to the world—He came to save us and to heal humankind's separation from God brought about by sin. This, more than anything, is a demonstration to the universe of God's eternal character and inherent nature—pure, outrageous love. Read Romans 8:38, 39.

We see our gratitude and awe toward God growing as we study the Word and learn more about His love for us.

**Jesus loves us more than
life itself.**

Developing Christlike Characteristics (Gal. 2:20; 5:14)

People are transformed into a whole new existence when they devote themselves to Christ (Rom. 6:4). And in that process of Christian growth, the Bible teaches us the complementary aspect of the commandment to love God—love other people. Read 1 John 4:19–21.

Jesus loves us more than life itself. He died to prove that love and to save us from our sins. As we grow in Christian maturity, His love for others also will grow within us. The Bible is a major tool for demonstrating to us how that process works.

Maturing in Christ's Image (Eph. 4:14, 15)

If we are to grow and mature in Christ's image, we should follow His example in all things. We know from the Bible that it was the custom of Jesus to study the writings available at the time and read them in the synagogue (Luke 4:16, 17). From the Old Testament, we learn more about the role of the Messiah, who He is, and how to recognize His coming. We see how God works in the lives of His people throughout the course of history. These are people just like us, with human failings, shortcomings, and sins. Yet God uses many of them to accomplish His work. This message is one of hope for all of us who want to serve the Lord.

From the New Testament, we learn about how Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah, the Savior, in the Old Testament (see, for example, the book of Isaiah). And we see Him at work in the four Gospels as He healed, preached, taught, prayed, lived, and died. Finally, the Bible shows us how to become more like Christ and how to build our faith on a daily basis.

“The word of God is the foundation of our faith, and therefore it is by the Word of God that we may obtain evidence of our standing before God. We are not to make our feelings a test by which to discern whether we are in or out of favor with God, whether they be what we consider encouraging or not.”¹

Strengthening Our Faith Through the Word (Heb. 4:2; 5:12–14)

Faith is expressed in a life that reveals a commitment to Jesus Christ. Read Romans 10:9, 10. If someone is lacking in faith, they cannot benefit from Scripture to the same extent others do. Some people sit in church week after week, year after year, and do not seem to have adopted those truths from sermons or individual Bible study into their personal lives. Even though they are seemingly mature Christians in terms of the years they have spent attending church, they have yet to incorporate deeper spiritual truths into their daily actions. This lack of spiritual growth is frustrating, both for the struggling believer as well as for those who are trying to impart biblical truth to a body of Christians. It is through daily, careful study of the Scriptures and prayer that we can learn more about the Lord, His plans for us, and ultimately for all of humankind.

“In the Scriptures Christ is presented as the One by whom God made the worlds. He is the light of the world, and, as the seeker for light studies the word, he finds heavenly illumination. Christ, the all-absorbing theme, is revealed to his soul, and he sees the requirements of God to be of a Christlike character. He studies the conditions on which redemption may be his, sees the divinity of his Saviour, the value of his atonement, the efficacy of the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; and Christ becomes all and in all to his soul. He sees in the Scriptures that which the casual reader does not see, a significance and value beyond computation.”²

REACT

1. Do you think regular Bible study can improve your relationship with the Lord? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Have you ever faced a problem or challenge in life and turned to the Bible for advice or comfort? If so, how did that experience enhance your faith in Jesus?
3. In addition to regular Bible study, how else can we in Christ grow as a Christian?

1. *The Signs of the Times*, “God’s Word Our Assurance,” December 3, 1894.

2. *Ibid.*

Doing Versus Being

TESTIMONY

Isa. 33:6; Phil. 4:8

"Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous. . . ."¹

Dr. Glen Schultz, a Christian educator, says, "At the foundation of a person's life, we find his beliefs. These beliefs shape his values, and his values drive his actions."² The key to living a life that reflects Christ's values and principles isn't in forcefully willing ourselves to do all the right things and say all the right words. Any changes made this way will only be superficial. Instead, it's looking deep into our core values and allowing the change to begin there.

We all desire a consistently vibrant and intensely passionate relationship with God. A frequently asked question is, How can we maintain that level of intimacy with Christ? The answer is simply to ensure that our minds are fixated on whatever is

When it comes to things that are "pure and lovely and admirable," nothing surpasses God's Word.

"pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Phil. 4:8, NLT). Our job is simply to keep our minds clean, and let God be God; let Him do His all-powerful work of changing lives, starting from the inside until it overflows to our outward behaviors.

And when it comes to things that are "pure and lovely and admirable," nothing surpasses God's Word, the Bible. "In every generation and in every land the true foundation and pattern for character building have been the same. The divine law, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; . . . and thy neighbor as thyself' (Luke 10:27), the great principle made manifest in the character and life of our Saviour, is the only secure foundation and the only sure guide.

" 'The stability of thy times and the strength of thy happiness shall be wisdom and knowledge' (Isaiah 33:6, Leeser's translation)—that wisdom and knowledge which God's word alone can impart."³

1. *Education*, p. 225.

2. Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), p. 39.

3. *Education*, pp. 228, 229.

Unity in Diversity

HOW-TO

Ps. 119:105

The Bible, which has been in existence for over 4,500 years, was written within a period of over 1,500 years by about 40 different authors from different geographical areas and backgrounds, born at different times, and with different personalities. The Bible is indeed unity in diversity! Each book between its covers points to God and His message of salvation.

The first recorded instance of God's word being written down was when the Lord Himself wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets He delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

It is amazing how the authors of the Bible, like Moses who wrote the book of Genesis, could narrate some stories that are so intimate, yet they were not present at the time the action took place (Genesis 38; 37:14). God Himself is the omniscient Narrator, who inspired His human authors.

The entire Bible is unique in the sense that it is for reference, correction, instruction, and spiritual nurture (2 Tim. 3:16). How can you use the Bible for any one of these four areas? Here are some suggestions:

Each book between its covers points to God and His message of salvation.

1. Choose two of your favorite parables from the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. As you read them, ask yourself how you can use them for reference, correction, instruction, and spiritual nurture.

2. Choose one of the following topics (or another one that you've been interested in): money, speech, greed, family relationships. Using a concordance, read some of the verses that deal with the topic you chose. How can these verses help you grow in regard to the topic you chose to study?

3. Study one of the following well-known Bible passages: 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5; Matthew 5-7; Psalm 23. How can that passage help you to grow in any given area of your life?

REACT

1. How does the Bible deal better with human experiences and desires than any other book?

2. God is the Author of creativity. What are the unique and ordinary ways God uses to present the message of salvation?

Christianity: To Be Continued

OPINION

John 15:5

I've started running. Again. As I braced myself for another grueling trek through the woods, I thought back to the days when running was much easier for me. I was running five days a week then; but that was ten years ago. I know that beginning again, even after all this time, is definitely a good move. *But why did I ever stop?* I wondered, as I struggled to crest a small hill. And what kind of runner would I be today if I had just continued in the first place?

Begin again. On a spiritual level, the concept conjures up images of exhausted runaways finding their way back into the arms of a loving Father and abandoned outcasts upgrading their status from orphans to heirs. Long ago, Jesus stretched out His arms in an open invitation for anyone desiring shelter from the darkness and cold of sin. Through His death on the cross, Jesus invited us to make our

The call to continue is a call to venture beyond the anteroom and explore every room in the house.

home in Him, where light and warmth abound. Accepting this gift is like stepping into the anteroom of an extravagant mansion, whose very foundations, walls, windows, and doors are Christ Himself. It's spacious, warm, and dry in the anteroom. And the terrors of darkness can't penetrate this place. But we

were never meant to live in this room alone. There is so much more to the house.

Begin again is the invitation to the stranger—to the one who is still far off. But to the one who has encountered Christ, to the one who has found and been found by Him, Jesus offers another invitation: *Remain. Continue.*

The call to continue is a call to venture beyond the anteroom and explore every room in the house. It's an invitation to move in and set down roots. *Remain. Continue.* Because it is in continuing that deeper spiritual truths are revealed. It is in continuing that our faith is tested, refined, and strengthened. It is in continuing that we come to know beyond a shadow of doubt that a loving God pursues and leads us. And it is in continuing that we see increasing evidence of a God who faithfully works through all things for our good.

REACT

How far would you get as an athlete if you kept "beginning again" and never "continued" in your sport? What spiritual principles about growing in Christ can you extract from physical training and discipline?

"Eat" to Live

EXPLORATION

Matt. 4:4; John 6:57, 58

CONCLUDE

In order for a plant to grow, it needs certain elements, such as water, sunlight, and soil. Without these, it will wither and die. A baby must be fed milk in order to develop, but as it gets older, it needs more nourishment in the form of solid food. Where do we get the nourishment we need to grow up into Christ as mature Christians? From God's Word. In the Word, we become acquainted with God and His immense love for us. In His Word, we discover that God expects us to share our knowledge and to disciple others. And in the Word, we witness the wonderful example of Christ living out these principles in His own life. Failing to study God's Word and to apply its principles to our lives stunts our spiritual growth.

CONSIDER

- Starting a Bible study group in your home. Invite your neighbors who don't know Jesus.
- Doing a topical study of God's Word on subjects of interest to you.
- Choosing a Bible text every day to commit to memory and apply to your life.
- Writing in a journal on the topic "What the Bible means to me."
- Creating a play based on your favorite Bible story. Get together with friends at church and perform it for a youth group or vespers program.
- Undertake a study of biblical archeology through books and magazines and by collecting photos and artifacts. Share your findings through a seminar at church.
- Signing up (yourself and a friend) for a Bible correspondence course, such as Discover Bible lessons, or taking online Bible studies through Amazing Facts.

CONNECT

Education, pp. 123–192; *Bible Readings for the Home*.

Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*.

The Word of God Endures



“For ‘all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ That word is the good news that was announced to you” (1 Pet. 1:24, 25, NRSV).

"In the Beginning Was the Word . . ." (John 1:1)

Sabbath
June 23

INTRODUCTION

1 Pet. 1:24, 25

And the Word spoke and a world was born. Then the Word spoke again, and there was light, life, water, air, trees, flowers, sun, moon, birds, fish, and animals. And the Word spoke yet again, and there was rest, love, joy, and praise.

And the Word wanted to give the world a Gift—a Gift that would go on giving. A Word that could and would speak to everyone for all time to come.

A Gift that would bring Hope where there was Darkness.

Grace where there was Despair.

Life where there was Death.

Guidance where there was Uncertainty.

Peace where there was Conflict.

Clarity where there was Confusion.

Wisdom where there was Ignorance.

Creativity where there was Chaos.

Strength where there was Weakness.

Love where there was Loneliness.

A Gift that would offer stories from the past to inform the stories of the future. And the Word became words that dwelt among us in scrolls and memories. And the words were handed down carefully through Time.

**And the Word on Earth
passed carefully through
Time.**

And the Word became flesh and dwelt with fleshly people. And the fleshly Word spoke more words, words shaped by Love in Love's infinite dimensions. Words captured in the memories of His friends. Spoken and respoken. Written and rewritten. Collected together. Treasured. And the Word on Earth passed carefully through Time. Through openness and secrecy. Protected by the Word in heaven.

And the Word in heaven looked down on the Word on earth and saw that the gift of His Word, wrapped in His Spirit, would go on giving to everyone, everywhere. And He saw that it was good. For it was a gift that would never die.

All This and Heaven, Too

LOGOS

Mic. 6:8; John 3:14–17; 10:10; Rom. 4:20, 21; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 4:6, 7; 2 Pet. 3:9

Justice, Mercy, and Peace (Mic. 6:8; Phil. 4:6, 7)

Justice was promised in God's conversation with our ancestors immediately after they sinned. Once Adam and Eve had confessed to eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:12, 13), God turned to the serpent and told him that one day he would be dealt a death blow by one of Adam and Eve's descendants (Gen. 3:16). The knowledge that wrong would eventually be righted sustained God's people throughout Old Testament times right up until the time the promise was fulfilled in Christ.

But everyday justice was still hard to come by, which is why God's writers put so much emphasis on it in the Bible. Micah sums up God's principles for a stable society in just one sentence. Read Micah 6:8. Although phrased as something God "requires" of His people, the truth is that these three principles were designed to benefit us rather than God.

Micah sums up God's principles for a stable society in just one sentence.

Today, God's government principles still make sense and give us a universal formula for lasting peace among all peoples of the world.

An Abundant Life (John 10:10)

Jesus' arrival on planet Earth, in the heart of Jewish society, was a major culture shock for a deeply religious people who believed they already had discovered God's perfect will for their lives. Many of Jesus' teachings turned traditional teachings on their heads; and it was impossible for some Pharisees and other educated people to accept these teachings as coming from God. For them, pleasing God meant following a strict set of rules and enduring hardships. Jesus, however, preferred to emphasize relationships and the fullness of life that a relationship with God can give here and now (John 14:15; 1 John 3; 2 John).

Jesus and His followers were actually accused of enjoying life too much (Luke 6:1, 2; 7:33, 34; 15:1); but, in fact, Jesus was simply demonstrating the kind of life He wanted all of God's children to have. Read John 10:10.

A Certain Future (Rom. 4:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:9)

If people were to follow God's principles of justice and mercy, there would indeed be more peace in our world. If more people were to follow Jesus' teachings,

life would be a richer and broader experience for all. But our sinful nature causes even the best of us to struggle when it comes to living out the life God would have us live (Rom. 7:18, NIV).

Despite this seemingly impossible situation, God, in His love for the world, has provided us with hope. Following on from the promise given to Adam and Eve that the devil would ultimately be defeated, God's messengers delivered a constant stream of promises giving further assurance and detail of what He had in store for them. One of the most famous of these promises is God's revelation of the future to King Nebuchadnezzar, which was interpreted by Daniel (Dan. 2:1–45).

In the New Testament, Jesus regularly spoke to His followers about the future, both short term and long term. He explained to them well in advance that He would have to die, but that He would come back to life again (Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22). He listed many different signs that would indicate when the end was approaching (Matthew 25; Mark 13:1–31; Luke 21:5–36).

The steady fulfillment of God's promises throughout history serve to strengthen His people's faith in His ability to carry out what He said He would do and in His overall control of the world's future. Trust and security are valuable commodities. Sought throughout history, they are perhaps more desirable now than ever as our rapidly changing world faces such uncertainties as climate change, terrorism, and political and economic instability.

Eternal Life (John 3:14–17)

Justice, mercy, peace, a fulfilling life, trust, and security are all highly desirable. But even if one could enjoy each of these to the full, they all suffer from one major drawback: They only last a lifetime. When life ends, so does everything else. As the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom" (Eccles. 9:10, NIV).

The beauty of God's plan for us is that we can transcend the grave. We can have the things we long for most deeply while we live out our normal lives, but we also can continue the process throughout eternity. Jesus came so "everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:15, NIV). This is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise given to Adam and Eve and of every other promise God has made to His people.

REACT

1. Which is more important to you—the abundant life now or eternal life in the future? Explain your answer.
2. As a Christian, are you really comfortable with enjoying life? Why or why not?
3. Why is it that, despite being offered a win-win deal, people still reject it?

God Lives, and His Word Reigns!

TESTIMONY

1 Pet. 1:24, 25

Ellen White suggests that the enduring nature of the Word of God has many practical consequences.

1. *The Word of God demonstrates the approach needed for witnessing, as well as the message we need to share with those we are leading to God.* "The word of God alone endures forever. Its influence alone leads upward to God, and the professed heralds of the cross of Christ must present the lessons of Christ. They must learn from the word of God how to present these lessons to the people in the very way in which Christ presented them, bringing to bear upon human hearts eternal realities, and warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold of eternal life. . . . The truth of God is not changeable, uncertain, and powerless. It is truth presented in its purity that alone can convict and convert the sinner, and turn him from the error of his ways. The word of God is the only fixed, changeless thing that

the world knows. Like its Author in character, it is 'the same yesterday, today, and forever.' It not only causes men to discern what is truth, but it unmask the soul, and presents men to themselves as perishing sinners, and calls upon them to repent

"The Word of God is the only fixed, changeless thing that the world knows."

and to be converted, that their sins may be blotted out, and stand no longer against them."

2. *God's Word provides the only enduring foundation for life.* "'The word of God shall stand for ever.' 'All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.' Isa. 40:8; Ps. 111:7, 8. Whatever is built upon the authority of man will be overthrown; but that which is founded upon the rock of God's immutable Word shall stand forever."²

3. *God's Word connects humans to God's eternal nature.* "Man's word fails; and he who takes the assertions of man as his dependence may well tremble; for he will one day be a shipwrecked vessel. But God's word is infallible, and endures forever. Christ declares, 'Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' God's word will endure through the ceaseless ages of eternity. God lives and reigns."³

1. "Bible Echo," May 28, 1894.

2. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 15.

3. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 6, 1900.

Eternal Words for Eternal Needs

Tuesday
June 26

EVIDENCE

Mic. 6:8; John 10:10

It has become quite a cliché to say that “the world is going to the dogs.” For centuries now, sociologists have been trying to disentangle the factors of modern life that cause people to feel unfulfilled and discontented. Weber called this fragmented state *disenchantment*. Marx named it *alienation*, and Durkheim used the French *anomie*. But it all amounts to the same thing—as humans, we are in a shaky state. All three of these “founding fathers” of sociology came to similar conclusions about the cause of this problem—society suffers because there is a lack of knowledge concerning boundaries; there is a lack of community spirit; and there is a division of beliefs.

Nietzsche, the anti-theist philosopher, told a story of a madman who ran through the daytime streets wielding a lit lantern. “‘Where has God gone?’ he cried. ‘I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. We are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not perpetually falling?’”^{*} A key part of this idea is the nihilistic concept that there is nothing left in which to believe: no morality, no religion, no ultimate purpose.

“ ‘Where has God gone?’ he
cried.”

This philosophy of pointlessness existed long before nineteenth century philosophy. Read Ecclesiastes 9:3.

However, there is more to the story than this. When we hear people express emptiness, we can turn to the Bible for the antidote. Read John 10:10. When friends express a lack of direction, we can guide them toward Micah 6:8, where we read that what the Lord requires of us is “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8, NIV). Our psychological needs for acceptance, community, and purpose have never diminished. Therefore, neither does the power that saturates God’s Word.

REACT

What other guidelines does the Bible include for living a fulfilled life in contemporary society?

^{*}Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, sec. 125.

How to Really Use the Bible

HOW-TO

Pss. 32:8; 119:105; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 20:30, 31; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17

I asked an agnostic friend what she thought of the Bible. She said, "I think it may well be one of the most effective ways in helping people to focus on doing 'good' as we know it, and bringing them away from selfishness so they pay more attention to the world around them." God didn't give us the Bible so we could just have an interesting storybook. Rather, He wants the Bible to be a catalyst for transforming our lives. By following the instructions below, we can open our lives to God's powerful influence.

Get to know God. Think of the Bible as God's biography. By studying the Bible and God's interactions with different people, we discover His character. The Bible tells us that God never changes (Heb. 13:8), so we can be assured that God relates to us in the same way He related to the people mentioned in the Bible—

with unselfish love, with a desire to do His best for all of us, and with a great sense of humor!

**It is not enough merely to
read the Bible. . . .**

Pay attention to the world around you. Since we are influenced by those we spend time with, we will

become more like God as we spend time getting to know Him better. The more we recognize and appreciate God's love for us, the greater our love will be for His other creations. When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He did not ask God to take them out of the world; He sent them into the world (John 17:15, 18). If we choose to be Jesus' disciples, we also must go into the world. We neglect our responsibilities if we spend our lives hiding in an "Adventist bubble."

Do good. It is not enough merely to read the Bible, learn what God is like, and observe the world we live in. We have to act! Jesus "mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed his sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence."* The Bible is packed with examples of God and Jesus ministering to people's needs. We can emulate Their example. God also gave us wise and practical advice for daily living, especially through Solomon and Paul.

So read what the Bible really says, discover what God is really like, and let it transform your life.

*The Ministry of Healing, p. 143.

Dancing, Praising, and Making Tents

Thursday
June 28

OPINION

Pss. 56:4; 107:20

Having been raised in South India by parents of South Indian and Finnish heritage, my early life was exciting to say the least. My heritage has given me the capacity to experience extreme depths and heights. My eloquent sister, Joanna, defines these poles as “fire and ice;” and when fire and ice mix, you get steam!

Greater than our heritage is the presence, glory, and power of God as manifested in His Word. His Word commands influence, power, and authority; but the element that fascinates me the most is its deeply personal, life-transforming nature. Like a trusted best friend, the Bible is always there. It always has a smile for us, but will rebuke us when we need it. It is gentle, peaceful, wise, and patient.

Over two decades ago, God chose me and set my feet upon a rock. He took me by the hand and started me on a journey through the Bible. The little I knew then seems cringe-worthy now, but just as no one mocks a toddler taking her first steps, God has not mocked me.

Immersion in the Word of God is better than any detergent known to humankind! Its power-shower washes you, scrubs you clean, and purifies the innermost parts—and you come up fresh, smiling, and joyful. God is faithful, graceful, and merciful. He only consumes the ugly bits to reveal your true beauty. There were times when I’ve felt like I was in a boil-wash. But I always came out alive and changed.

I have found treasure! It is exciting, thrilling, rejuvenating. I have found something that lasts forever. I want to dance with King David, sing praises with Miriam, and make tents with Paul. I want to meet and be superwoman from Proverbs 31!

In Christ, I am free from condemnation, guilt, and the curse of death. “He sends forth His word and heals them and rescues them from the pit and destruction” (Ps. 107:20, AMP). And so, my heart is filled with gratitude.

**Immersion in the Word of
God is better than any
detergent known to
humankind!**

REACT

1. In what ways has your heritage shaped you in either accepting or rejecting the authority of the Word of God?

2. How do you see your daily Word of God personal study time—as a three-course meal, or a snack on the run?

Susanna Mariam Matthan, Billingham, Lincolnshire, England

The Flower Fades . . .

EXPLORATION

Rev. 22:18, 19

CONCLUDE

The Bible is God's message to humans. Alongside the book of nature and the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word takes a role in providing human beings with what they need to know about God and His character. The Word contains an unchanging and indestructible message: God is eternally existent and completely loving and just and good, and He has provided a means of rescue for His human creations, who are trapped on a planet of sin, misery, and death.

CONSIDER

- Compiling a list of the songs you know that draw lyrics directly from the Bible. Consult your songbooks and CD covers. Write the song titles on one side of the list and the Scripture references on the other side.
- Using Bible software with search and concordance capability to draw up a list of references to the Word. Create a top ten list of claims the Bible makes about itself, along with the Scripture references.
- Drawing a picture that, helps you understand how Jesus is the Word.
- Starting a short-term weekly small group in your dorm room or home with the purpose of creating a philosophy and method of personal Bible study. Consider the goals first, and then come up with practical ways to meet those goals.
- Gathering a basket or box of fresh food items, each piece of which corresponds to some way the Word of God feeds our souls. Bring it to class, explain the connections, and then give away the produce to classmates.
- Researching the story of how we got the Bible we have today. Consult professors, book sources, and Bible software, and gather a brief history. Write it up to share with others.

CONNECT

Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . (General Conference Ministerial Association, 2005 edition); *The SDA Bible Commentary* CD-ROM, 2005. Hugh Dunton, *Bible Versions: A Consumer's Guide to the Bible*, <<http://www.biblegateway.com>>; <<http://en.bibleinfo.com>>.

Tim Lale, born in Watford, England

Next Quarter's Lessons

For Better or for Worse: Lessons From Old Testament Couples

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 2007, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: Adam and Eve: The Intended Ideal

Logos: Gen. 1:26; 2:18–3:16.

Memory Text: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24, NIV).

Key Thought: The story of Adam and Eve has a beautiful beginning but a sad ending. God had provided for them everything good. They were a handsome groom and a pretty bride, untainted with any blemish in their characters or body. They lived in a beautiful garden home with no need to worry about anything. To top it all, God even gave them the prospect of everlasting life. The beginning of their marriage was better than that of any fairy tale.

However, the ending was as far as possible from the fairy-tale ending of “living happily ever after.” The story ends with Adam and Eve losing it all—for themselves and for all other couples and individuals to follow. It’s a powerful example of the cost of sin. We should learn well from this story about what deviation from the will of God brings.

The Week at a Glance: Adam and Eve, as originally created, bore the express image of their Maker. What does that mean? Even more so, what happened when that image was defiled by sin? What can we learn from the sad story of their fall?

Summary: The relationship of equality, mutual love, and respect between Adam and Eve was intended as the ideal for all couples. However, the ideal was marred by sin, and today conflicts plague marriages. We should strive to allow the Holy Spirit to re-create in us the original image of God.

Lesson 2: Abraham and Sarah: Faith Tested and Tried

Logos: Gen. 12:2; 16:1–5; 22; James 2:20–26.

Memory Text: “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise” (Heb. 11:11, NIV).

Key Thought: By delaying the fulfillment of their promised child, God tested

Abraham and Sarah's faith. Many New Testament authors point to Abraham as the prime example of faith (Romans 4 and Hebrews 11). Later in Hebrews 11 Abraham is commended for his faith in offering Isaac as a sacrifice. The author depicts Abraham as an example of both faith and works working together (James 2:23, 24).

Genesis presents Abraham as a God-fearing man, hospitable to guests, magnanimous to relatives and servants, and respected by kings and other peoples. Sarah, however, remains mostly in the background. In the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac, where Abraham's faith is tested, Sarah is not even mentioned. The only times Sarah appears to take the initiative is first in offering Hagar to Abraham and next in insisting that the maidservant and her son Ishmael be sent away.

What can we learn from this faithful but flawed couple?

The Week at a Glance: Though praised for faith, Abraham and Sarah were time and again examples of those who actually seemed to lack faith in God.

Summary: Abraham's and Sarah's deficiency in faith is highlighted by the duplication of their errors in offering substitute heirs, lying, and laughing. They were not perfect humans, but they loved God and followed His commands. Ultimately, they are examples of great faith.

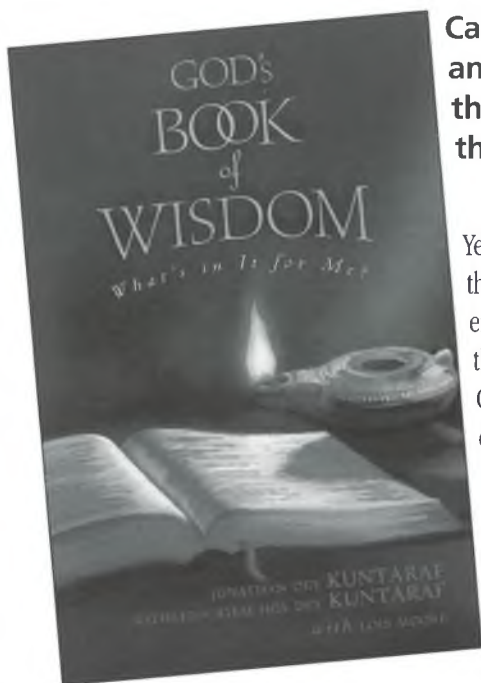
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Today I visited Nile Union Academy, and met students from all over Egypt. They're here to learn English, to prepare for the future, but they'll leave with so much more. It moved me, seeing their smiles, hearing their stories of meeting Christ at this school. There's nothing like falling in love with Jesus.

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