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2009

The Prophetic Gift



**A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults**

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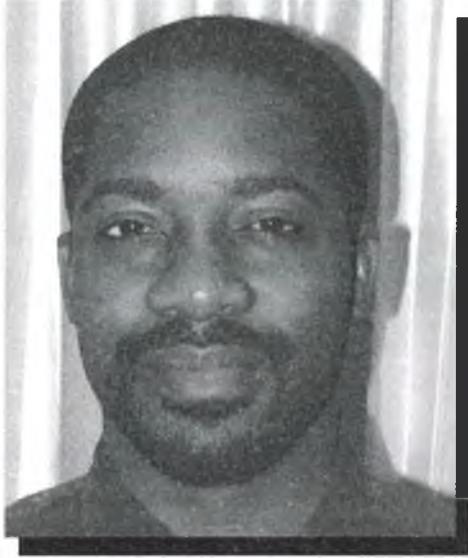


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This Quarter's Illustrator



Reginald L. Dixon is a multidimensional person. This award-winning artist, who has reached regional and national acclaim, has also produced an album, been published nationally in poetry, and has sung all over the United States. He is a realist and abstract painter of people, landscapes, and still lifes. Born in Niles, Michigan, U.S.A., he grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A., with his mother, father, and three brothers. At the age of 18, he graduated from high school and attended Oakwood College. Eventually he received his AA in Commercial Art. He then attended Park University, where he soon received his BA degree in Graphic Design. Even though Dixon is involved in various activities and employment, art and graphic design are two of his first loves. Currently Dixon is finishing his Doctor of Management in Leadership degree. Artistically, Dixon currently does freelance art and graphic design (including logo, corporate identities, and advertising) for various businesses and organizations, as well as fine art at home.

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.

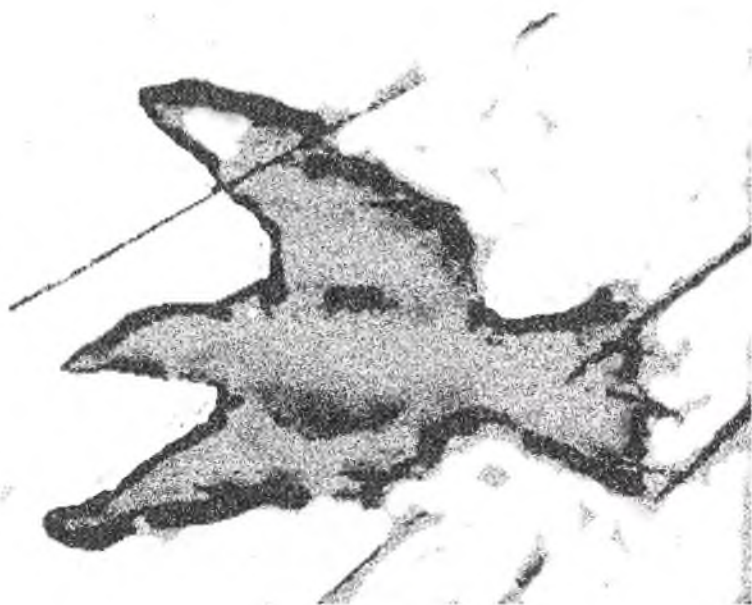
"Opinion" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

"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.

Heaven's Means of Communication



**“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds”
(Heb. 1:1, 2, NRSV).**

The Light From Above

INTRODUCTION

Rom. 1:20

Even before you think of moving from where you are to see what God has made, I'm sure that right where you are, there is evidence that speaks about His supernatural, divine nature. It's both amazing and fascinating to know that the explorers of the fifteenth century spent a great deal of time discovering the sources of this world's great lakes and rivers. With their intellect, they endeavored to discover some of the great wonders of earth.

Their discoveries continue to inform the world today. Furthermore, their efforts reveal more clearly that there is a divine mind behind the great features of the world. Their efforts also remind us to think of Him who has provided life for every individual on our planet.

In my native dialect, a story is told of an artist who specialized in modeling clay works. People would come from far places to see and to buy these works, and also to seek advice from the artist about his trade. Whenever they came, they found several finished products in his studio, each one featuring a certain splendor; and once there with the creator of these pieces, they knew for sure that he was the artist behind the excellent clay works they had only read about in books or heard about from other sources.

**The revelation of Christ as
our Savior comes to us as a
new drop of rain in a
desert.**

The point is, however, not the size of the created product, nor its complexity or simplicity. Rather, the point is the quality of the work done by the creator of that work. The really big question is, Who is the Creator behind the creation in which we actually live? Which message does this creation give about its Creator? How does it communicate to us about the power and ability of its inventor?

This week, we'll look at God's means of communication. After seeing Him in our own selves, it's important to learn about what nature does and does not tell us about Him. Finally, the revelation of Christ as our Savior comes to us as a new drop of rain in a desert. How does His revelation of God differ from God's other revelations?

The General and Special Means of God's Revelation

LOGOS

Gen. 18:1–15; 32:30; Exod. 4:10–17; Ps. 19:1–6; John 1:14; 3:16, 17; Col. 2:9

Through God's Prophets (Gen. 18:1–15; 32:30; Exod. 4:10–17)

God made humans the crowning glory of His creation. He gave us the ability to have a relationship with Him, thus making us the most beloved of His creation. This ability is seen to occur throughout history in many ways. The intervention that God makes in human life is evident from the time of the prophets to our day. In Genesis we learn that God could reveal Himself through angelic intervention (Gen. 18:1–15) or through a personal encounter with Him (Exod. 32:30). In both revelations, whether through angels or a face-to-face meeting, the point was to make known His intention regarding a specific issue or event involving selected individuals.

When God appeared to Abraham and Sarah through His holy angels (Gen. 18:1–5), He pronounced to the couple the good news concerning the birth of their

son Isaac. And to Moses, God gave instructions on how to end the suffering of the Israelites in the hands of the Egyptians (Exod. 4:10–17).

Likewise, Jacob, during a face-to-face encounter with God, was given a lesson which represented "the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming."

In all these circumstances, the intentions of God were to make His will known to the vast human population. Then, as now, we are still drawn to His heart of love, which is full of boundless grace toward sinful humans.

**" 'There are two things that
fill my soul with holy rever-
ence and ever-growing
wonder . . . ' "**

Through God's Creation (Ps. 19:1–6)

Psalms 19 "is perhaps the best known and most popular of the nature psalms. It is a grateful meditation on God's revelation of Himself in the world of nature and in His law. In the first six verses of the psalm David . . . speaks of God's glory as seen in His created works; in vs. 7–10 he speaks of God's glory as shown in the law; in vs. 11–13 he discusses the bearing of these truths on character and conduct; and in v. 14 he prays to be kept free from sin. One can almost see the author standing under the open sky at sunrise, praising Jehovah in the exalted strains of this psalm. The philosopher Kant may have been thinking of Ps. 19 when he wrote: 'There are

two things that fill my soul with holy reverence and ever-growing wonder—the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings, and the moral law which raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent agents.”²

Through God’s Own Son (John 1:14; 3:16, 17; Col. 2:9)

As much as we can see God through the records of the prophets and through nature, we can see Him most vividly through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ has always been with God, one with Him in purpose, will, and mission; and after the Fall of our first parents, Christ fulfilled His mission on the cross of Calvary so that we might have eternal life. On the cross—the pivotal point of our salvation—God’s love radiated through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Christ is presented to us as the eternal word of God, who “became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NRSV). In Christ, we see God and His love for us (John 3:16)—that special consideration for humans which we cannot fully comprehend solely through nature and the prophets.

Christ is the only way in which our redemption can be accomplished. Therefore, faith in Him is essential to the salvation process. In Christ’s death we see not only the weight of our sins but also the glorious love of God.

REACT

1. Why is Christ the only bridge linking us to God? Why can we not deal with God without involving Christ?

2. Think of the beauties of nature in the part of the world where you live. Which ones inspire you the most? What do they teach you about our loving God?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 201.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 675.

"God With Us"

TESTIMONY

John 14:8-11

"By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to man and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible."¹ And judging from what Christ has done in our lives to restore us to God, we can safely say that through His intervention in this sin-darkened world, He revealed the light of God's love. God reveals Himself to us through His created works and the written Word, and both have a strong blend of the power of His Son Christ.

"In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field."²

"Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see 'God with us.'"³

"For in every . . . divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see 'God with us.'"

But even after sin had marred God's perfect creation, God did not give Satan a foothold. "Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. . . . He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of his divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory."⁴

We can now see that although Christ came to the world in a different form from what people expected, His life and teaching demonstrated the will of God. He is the best revelation God has given of Himself.

REACT

1. Do you know Jesus?
2. How are you reflecting His love, so that the world will recognize Him?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.

Is There Any Revelation Beyond Christ?

EVIDENCE

Heb. 1:1, 2

Back in 1996, there was a controversial debate within our denomination concerning "progressive revelation," "new light"; and "present truth." These issues caused a heated debate among church members, some of whom argued outside the theological rationale which forms the bedrock of Seventh-day Adventism.

In practical terms, we refer to progressive revelation as God's continuous unfolding of truth, otherwise referred to as "new light"; and church founder Ellen White urged cofounders to look forward to discovering additional truth.

As in the Bible and during the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, God is still close to His people, and as Adventists, we should know that when He wishes to communicate new light, He will reveal it to His people.

God's special revelation, or the new light for this age, is Christ, the smitten Rock, upon whom our understanding of all forms of revelation must converge. He is the light and knowledge of the world, and in Him we have a true picture of God. By His special revelation, Christ "rises above humanity, throws off the guise of sin and shame, and stands revealed, the Honored of the angels, the Son of God, One with the Creator of the universe." All true revelation therefore points to Him who was sent to the world not to condemn it, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16, 17).

**God's revelation of Himself
through His only Son is the
most special of all other
revelations.**

God's revelation of Himself through His only Son is the most special of all other revelations. "Truth in Christ and through Christ is measureless. . . . Not in this life shall we comprehend the mystery of God's love in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."²

As we continue to study this week's lesson, we will learn that both the personality and the character of God are displayed in His Son, Christ.

REACT

1. What revelations exist that are not in harmony with the principles of Christ?
2. Why do you think Christ's revelations have more weight than these other revelations?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 128.

The Avenues of Revelation

HOW-TO

Heb. 13:8

Since the Fall, our Creator has desired that we learn how we can return to our original status at Creation. This promise of redemption is confirmed in the revelation given by the prophets, nature, the Bible, and the life of Jesus Christ.

1. *Nature.* "God is love," is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green,—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God. . . .

"God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us."¹

2. *The prophets.* From time immemorial, prophets have been God's chosen agents to foretell events. Our faith is strengthened by the fulfillment of prophecies. Prophets also instruct us regarding "righteousness, spirituality, and ethical conduct."²

**Christ is the key to our
understanding of the
character of God.**

3. *The Bible.* As a result of sin, our direct communication with God

was broken. However, He chose to provide a way of maintaining open communication with Him. The Bible is a revelation of how His plan for restoring communication between Himself and us is to be accomplished.

4. *Christ.* Christ is the key to our understanding of the character of God. In our effort to bring Christ before the churches and the world, we should remember that "the work of our Redeemer on this earth is and ever will be a subject that will put to the stretch our highest imagination."³

REACT

How has each of the above avenues of revelation helped you to understand God better?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 10.

2. *The SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 903.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 128, 129.

Finding God

OPINION

Col. 1:15, 16

I am well aware of the mystery of God displayed in nature. I am also aware of the work of the Holy Spirit—His influence and what He reveals about God's character. However, the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ appeals to me the most. Our identity as Seventh-day Adventists requires that we believe in a literal, personal God who is interested in our individual actions.

In my everyday life, my friends and I spend time together sharing stories of importance in our lives. These shared experiences serve as touchstones to help me understand my friends better. The revelation through Jesus Christ is a similar touchstone for understanding God better. This revelation brings us face-to-face with infinite love and unblemished righteousness. The gift of eternal life, which comes as a result of Christ's death, would be impossible to receive without Him. This is what makes this revelation so very special. By giving Christ to identify with the fallen human race, God intended for us to know Him in a more personal way, above what we can see in nature or even what we can read about in the Bible.

Trying to find God and establish His presence in our lives may be an uphill task for many of us, but as Adventist Christians, we should always try to maintain a link to our heritage of relating Bible principles to our modern world. The Bible,

which is the Word of God, is forward thinking. And Christ is always encouraging us to be ready for the future. It seems, therefore, that God intends to lead us forward, by giving us enough evidence through the right avenues of communication.

Such evidence through the prophets, the Bible, nature, and the person of Christ is enough for us to trust God with our future.

Trying to find God and establish His presence in our lives may be an uphill task for many of us.

REACT

What has been the most effective way for you to learn about God, and why is this way so appealing to you?

His Word, Our Light

EXPLORATION

Isa. 8:20

CONCLUDE

God's means of communication with His people are many and varied. In the Garden of Eden, He talked to them face-to-face. Later, He spoke through the prophets. And as psalmists and others point out, nature also has been a vehicle for the conveyance of the divine message. Eventually, God sent His Word into the world in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. Today, God speaks to you through the Bible and other means. Hopefully, He also speaks through you to others who need a word of hope, encouragement, or enlightenment from their Creator.

CONSIDER

- Preparing a chart, a drawing, a painting, or even a DVD about some of God's communication methods through the ages. Consider the way He communicated with Adam and Eve to the way He communicates with you today. Yes, draw yourself or include a photograph.
- Walking around your neighborhood or a nearby park, with a camera if possible, looking for examples of how God communicates through nature.
- Selecting a psalm that speaks about God talking to His people directly through His prophets or through nature. Read it for your class, family, or friends—or for your own enjoyment and enlightenment.
- Evaluating the teachings of three denominations or religions that you know fairly well. In each case, think of one teaching that does, and one that does not, meet the test of Isaiah 8:20.
- Writing and staging a skit about a biblical experience of divine communication. Examples may be found in the stories of Adam, Moses, Samuel, Jonah, Abraham, Saul (or Paul), the woman at the well, and others.
- Writing about the two sides of the debate concerning the value, as well as the limitation or even danger, of listening to the "still, small Voice" in order to discover God's will. How does Isaiah 8:20 help resolve the debate?

CONNECT

1 Kings 19 (especially verses 9–12).

Mind, Character, and Personality, chaps. 1–4; *The Great Controversy*, "God's Final Warning," pp. 603–612.

The Prophetic Gift



"And he said, 'Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams' " (Num. 12:6, NRSV).

Being Led by God

INTRODUCTION

Heb. 11:24–26

The world's concept of the prophetic gift differs from that of the Seventh-day Adventist concept. Today, many so-called prophets attempt to predict the future. But one might have 13 true predictions out of 600, while another might have 10 true predictions out of 1,000. Many will agree that the ability to predict accurately is a God-given gift.

If God is omnipotent, then do you really think that He has a track record of 10 in a 1,000? After all, if a person can really tell you what is to come, then it must be from a Higher Source.

True prophets of God are human, so they are not perfect. However, they will walk closely with God and try to imitate His love for all. Second, God will always give true and accurate readings of things to come. He would never leave us any room for doubt as long as we believe.

God's prophets . . . do not live as robots, trying to imitate what others did before them.

Hebrews 11:24–26 speaks of Moses and how his faith led him to suffer with the people of Israel. He decided to suffer persecution rather than to live with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses was not perfect, so yes, he did sin. But he also went to God for forgiveness and cleansing.

God showed this prophet the future of Israel, Egypt, and even of himself. Moses' predictions were never wrong and never selfish.

God's prophets do not speak for or from themselves. Rather, they speak and live for God. They do not live as robots, trying to imitate what others did before them. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they live holy lives, because they have learned to listen to God. They have learned to be compassionate, to utilize morality, and to seek honor from God, not other humans. If you were to compare the prophets and prophetesses of the Bible, you would see many contrasts, but only one comparison. Each was his or her own person, but all of them stood out in Jesus. I pray that we all will learn to truly follow Him and that all of God's people will share Him with the world so that together we can reap a plentiful harvest.

Finding Waldo: True Prophets Amid Confusion

Sunday
January 4

EVIDENCE

Joel 2:28

From literature, movies, video games, and even news headlines, prophets and prophecies are continually thrust upon our minds. The main objective in the popular video game *Halo 3* is to defend humanity from the alien armies of a deluded prophet. One of the most famous human prophets is Nostradamus, whose vague prophetic quatrains are often distorted to fit notable events in attempts to prove his legitimacy. With this surge of fakes, we may become overwhelmed. Yet we are to take comfort in remembering that Jesus foretold the rise of false prophets when speaking to His disciples about the signs of the end times. Read Matthew 24:24, 25.

The Logos verses in Monday's lesson identify people whom we might not classify as prophets the way we think of Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah as prophets. Yet these people possessed the prophetic gift and played key roles in the drama that is salvation. Genesis 20:7 speaks of Abraham. Exodus 15:20 identifies Miriam; and Deuteronomy 18:15 foretells the first coming of Jesus, Matthew 11:9–11 declares John the Baptist to be the greatest of the prophets, while John 6:14 recounts the testimony of people regarding Jesus. Finally, Hebrews 11:24–26 discusses the faithful Moses. In examining these verses,

**With this surge of fakes, we
may become overwhelmed.**

we discover a few characteristics of the prophetic gift and ways in which prophets/prophetesses interact with God and His people. They lead people in praising God, and they reveal God's character. They also prepare people to receive God; and above all, they selflessly minister to people while treasuring the experience of sharing in the afflictions of Christ. Are these the characteristics of the prophets in the media, literature, and popular video games? Certainly not!

With all the confusion of false prophets, many denominations have concluded that the prophetic gift ended with the disciples. This is contrary to Joel 2:28, where God tells us that as we approach the close of earth's history, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (NIV). Like finding Waldo among the look-alikes, we must diligently watch so that we may discern God's true messengers amid the flood of impostors.

REACT

When Gabriel visited the prophet Daniel in Daniel 10:11, he addressed Daniel as "a man greatly beloved." What does it take to walk so closely with God that we may be referred to as "greatly beloved" by Him?

Daniel Pendleton, Auburn, Washington, U.S.A.

Prophets of the Word

LOGOS

Gen. 20:7; Exod. 15:20; Deut. 18:15; Matt. 11:11; John 6:14; Heb. 11:24–26

The Prophetic Office Among Males (Gen. 20:7)

Genesis 20:7 is the first time in the Bible we see the word *prophet*. In James 2:23, Abraham is called the “friend of God” (James 2:23, NKJV), a claim linked to his implicit obedience and willingness to sacrifice his long-awaited miracle child. However, when God calls Abraham a prophet in Genesis 20, it comes at a time when he doubts God’s protecting care and thereby lies about his wife being his sister. Even in the midst of such blatant sin, God demonstrates His graciousness in calling Abraham a prophet. Genesis 20:7 helps us understand that even when people of God make grave mistakes, He still considers them His workers, His prophets.

The Prophetic Office Among Females (Exod. 15:20)

Exodus 15:20 is the first time in Scripture that we read the word *prophetess*. The crossing of the Red Sea was an astonishing display of God’s power on behalf of His chosen people. Miriam subsequently led the Israelites to ascribe praise to God. In Exodus 15:20, God shows His willingness to bestow the gift of prophecy on females. The bestowal of the prophetic gift to

Jesus defines a true prophet’s work.

Miriam is another demonstration that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; 1 Pet. 1:17).

The Supreme Prophet (Deut. 18:15)

Deuteronomy 18:15 is a reference to the Prophet of prophets, namely Jesus Christ. Jesus is the flawless Prophet, unlike Abraham, whose sin brought on God’s displeasure; Miriam, who suffered leprosy for her sin (Num. 12:1–10); John the Baptist, who had doubts about the Messiah (Luke 7:18–23); and Moses, whose sin prevented him from entering the Promised Land (Num. 20:1–13). Jesus defines a true prophet’s work. We do ourselves mischief, and jeopardize our salvation, if we ignore what Jesus says. No prophet spoke more clearly and earnestly for God, about God, and to God, than did Jesus.

The Greatest Earthly Prophet (Matt. 11:11)

What is it that makes John the Baptist greater than others before him? What John the Baptist had was the “enviable” honor of being the immediate forerunner

of the Messiah. Other prophets talked about that Prophet, but John talked to that Prophet. Other prophets had visions of the Messiah, but John saw the Messiah. Other prophets heard the voice of that Prophet in visions and dreams, but John heard the voice of Jesus speak to him face-to-face, imploring him to baptize that Prophet (Matt. 3:15). No other prophet had the privilege of having the Son of God in his arms as he baptized Him. These things made John greater than others on earth, but Jesus said that if you make it to His Kingdom, you will be greater than this John. Let us strive to enter into God's kingdom (Luke 13:24).

From Prophet to King? (John 6:14)

Jesus had just completed a miracle by feeding more than 5,000 people from one small lunch possessed by a lad. When He was in the wilderness—weak, vulnerable, and starving—He didn't create even one loaf to satisfy His personal hunger. Now, however, in another "desert place" (Matt. 14:15), Jesus takes five barley loaves and two fish, and creates food for thousands. Little wonder that the people thought that the long-awaited Prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15 had arrived, and they wanted to make Him their King. It should be clear to us that if Jesus can provide for so many people at once, He can provide for us.

Wise Choices by the Prophet Moses (Heb. 11:24–26)

Moses' decisions paid off greatly for him, because at this moment He is in heaven with God. He could have had fame in Egypt and the surrounding nations, but Moses preferred the new name to be given by the King of heaven (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). He rejected the indulgence of sinful pleasure, choosing to suffer affliction with God's people in exchange for the purest pleasure found at God's right hand (Ps. 16:11). Moses might have reasoned like Paul that "our light and momentary troubles" are nothing compared to the eternal glory we will receive (2 Cor. 4:17, NIV), and that our suffering for Christ now cannot be favorably or remotely compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). Moses bypassed the riches of Egypt, such as those revealed by Tutankhamen's tomb, in favor of being a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

REACT

1. Today, some people believe that women should hold no major offices in the church. Yet God blessed women in the Bible to be prophetesses. How can this inform our decisions regarding the role of women in the church?

2. List three things in your life and three things in your church that, like Moses, we would do well to give up.

3. Why do you think God kept Abraham in his position even though he made serious mistakes? What does that teach us about responding to church members who commit "serious" sins today?

Prophetic Gift? Role or No Role

TESTIMONY

2 Tim. 3:16, 17

The prophetic gift was not given to replace or supersede the Bible. Ellen White speaks to the fact that messages from the prophets, including herself, are given to comfort, guide, instruct, and correct. She makes it clear that the Bible is the standard by which we are to test the teaching and word of anyone who professes to have the gift of prophecy.

In His Word, God committed to men and women the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

"Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings.

**"The Spirit was not given . . .
to supersede the Bible."**

And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the Word.

"The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, 'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' (1 John 4:1)."

Even though she was given the gift of the prophecy, Ellen G. White always directed her audience to the Bible. "If the *Testimonies* speak not according to the word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united. . . . Do not, by your lack of spiritual discernment, make of this agency of God a rock of offense whereby many shall be caused to stumble and fall, 'and be snared, and be taken.'"²

The gift of prophecy has an important role, but it will not and cannot replace God's Word.

REACT

1. Some people believe that Adventists place greater importance on Ellen White's writings than on the Bible. What scripture can you give to refute this argument?

2. Why did God use prophets to give messages to the people?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 691.

Test the Prophetic Gift

HOW-TO

Deut. 18:21, 22; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:16, 18–20; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 John 4:2, 3

How can we tell the difference between true prophets and false ones? Following are some biblical guidelines that can help us:

1. *Does the prophet's message agree with the Bible?* Isaiah 8:20 implies that the messages of any prophet ought to be in harmony with God's law and testimony. A later prophet must not contradict earlier prophets. The Holy Spirit never contradicts His previously given testimony, for God "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17, NIV).

2. *Do the prophet's predictions come true?* Read Deuteronomy 18:21, 22. Also see Jeremiah 28:9. Though predictions may comprise a comparatively small part of the prophetic message, their accuracy must be demonstrated.

3. *Does the prophet recognize Christ's incarnation?* See 1 John 4:2, 3. The test here demands more than a simple acknowledgment that Jesus Christ lived on earth. True prophets must confess the biblical teaching of Christ's incarnation.

4. *Does the prophet bear good or bad "fruit"?* Prophecy comes through "men and women moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21,

NRSV). We can discern false prophets by their fruit. Read Matthew 7:18–20. This counsel is crucial in evaluating a prophet's claim. It speaks first of the prophet's life. It does not mean that the prophet must be absolutely perfect. Scripture says that Elijah was a man of "like passions as we are" (James 5:17). But the prophet's life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, not by works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19–23).

This principle also refers to the influence of the prophet on others. What results accrue in the lives of those who accept the messages? Do the prophet's messages equip God's people for mission and unify them in their faith (Eph. 4:11–16)?

Any person claiming to have the prophetic gift should be subjected to these biblical tests.

The prophet's life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

The Gift of Prophecy

OPINION

Deut. 18:15; Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:24–26

The prophetic gift is often understood as belonging to those to whom God has revealed the future or what He wants His people to know. It is a gift that can come only from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, its restrictions and limits are imposed by God. This gift can be shown in many ways. Singing and dancing can be a way to show God's prophetic gift. This is how Miriam expressed it in Exodus 15:20.

According to 1 Corinthians 14:3 and Deuteronomy 18:15, the reason for giving the prophetic gift is to correct and comfort people, while uplifting God. John the Baptist was a prophet. His purpose was to prepare people for the coming Savior. He not only spoke about Jesus before his anointing, he spoke about Him afterward as well. Jesus Himself gave John the highest honor that God can give any person when He said that there was none greater than John (Matt. 11:11). John 6:14 speaks of how certain people accepted Jesus because they accepted the miracles He performed. Moses himself prophesied just by choosing to suffer with the people of God rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh (Heb. 11:24–26).

**The more we see God, the
more we want to please
Him.**

There is no limit to this beautiful gift or how it is shared. Romans 12:6 says, "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." True faith comes from unconditional trust and

striving fully for complete obedience through the help of the Holy Spirit.

The more we see God, the more we want to please Him. As we change, the Spirit strives with us more and more. He only is the Giver of gifts. We must trust God and rely on the Spirit. First Corinthians 13:2 says, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (NKJV). This love is love for our fellow human beings. It also refers to what Jesus spoke of in Luke 6:27, when He said love your enemy. Loving God and others is the sum of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 22:34–40). The prophetic gift, which is used to help others see God, can be obtained only by us first knowing the God of love (1 John 4:7–13).

REACT

1. How can our actions be a way of showing God to the world?
2. Is there anything that keeps you from showing God's work within you?

A Prophetic Purpose

EXPLORATION

Num. 12:6; Joel 2:28

CONCLUDE

God's purpose for humanity always has been communicated by His prophets. The men and women chosen to lead His people were innately human in their mistakes. That is an unavoidable fact from which we all must learn. However, by sending His Son, Jesus, to intercede for humanity, God provided a flawless, sinless Prophet—the ultimate Spiritual Leader who passed the test of faith and the test of time. God's leading of His people continues today in the cluttered, postmodern world of fortune-tellers and predictors of the future. That is why the Bible devised a spiritual test that all true prophets must pass, so that all of God's Scripture-following children may discern the truth in this unraveling world.

CONSIDER

- Watching the Weather Channel or collecting the weather page from the newspaper for a week and logging in the predictions, then cross-referencing these predictions with the actual weather. What do the results tell us about modern-day predictions, even when they're based on computer models?
- Listing all of the Bible's prophets and creating a checklist to see if they meet the four important requirements of being a true prophet.
- Predicting who will win the next great sports event in your country based on current statistics and recent history. List your choice, and see if you were correct.
- Writing a brief biography about Ellen G. White that includes all of her prophetic gifts.
- Watching a science fiction film about the future and comparing today's reality with the way the film's producers viewed the future.
- Journaling all of your dreams and interpreting them with God's purpose for you in mind.
- Talking to a much older person about the past and the way life was many years before you were born.

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, *Beginning of the End*.

Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple*.

Fabian Carballo, Colton, California, U.S.A.

Spiritual Gifts and Prophecy



“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (1 Cor. 12:4–6, NKJV).

Different Gifts but One God

INTRODUCTION

1 Cor. 12:1–11

I went to school with an intelligent, talented young woman who minored in theology at one of our Adventist colleges. I was out of the loop concerning what was going on in her life, because I was so busy with my own career and personal responsibilities. However, one day I did notice that I had not seen her much at the different religious programs held on campus and at church. This was unusual for her, because when she first came, she was quite enthusiastic and wanted to be actively involved in the spiritual development of other students.

When I finally caught up with other friends who knew her, I was told that she had left the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Apparently, she believed that she had the gift of tongues and wanted to incorporate this gift into the worship service of her new church. Needless to say, her desire was not well received. In fact, she started to attend a church of another denomination, likely because they valued her gift and because she felt accepted there.

This week's lesson is about spiritual gifts and prophecy. During the next six days, we will explore the biblical basis of spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. In addition, we will discuss practical ways to tap into these gifts with which God has endowed His church. At the end of the week, come back to this introduction and try to think of what you would have said to this young woman who left because she thought she had the gift of tongues. What could her church have done to encourage her to develop her talents for God? Finally, what lessons can we learn about how we deal with church members who might misuse their God-given gifts?

**Needless to say, her desire
was not well received.**

Editor's note: For an interesting treatment on the gift of tongues from the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, see Harry Lowe, "Speaking in Tongues" at <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/speaking%20in%20tongues.pdf>.

Unique Gifts? Genuine Quality

LOGOS

Acts 2:1-18; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 13:8-12; Eph. 4:10-13;
2 Thess. 2:9, 10

Counterfeit Miracles (2 Thess. 2:9, 10)

The difference between genuine and counterfeit is usually in the quality of the product and the established track record of the original designer. Although two handbags may appear to be made by the same designer, you may discover that one is made by YSL (Yves Saint Laurent) with genuine leather, while the other is made by VSL (an unknown name) from a product called "sleather." Everything produced by God is of the highest quality and backed with a 100 percent guarantee. Conversely, everything produced by the hand of the enemy is of the worst quality and has no guarantee of lasting success.

From the beginning, it has been Satan's strategy to confuse God's children by producing a counterfeit product that closely resembles God's original. God's gifts

are designed to produce genuine miracles in our lives. Such miracles uplift us and enlighten our understanding regarding the Holy Spirit's power. This is threatening to Satan's existence and power. Therefore, it is only logical for him to manufacture counterfeits in an effort to deceive

God's gifts are designed to produce genuine miracles in our lives.

us. It challenges us to become well acquainted with the truth about spiritual gifts so that we will not be easily deceived.

Colored Arches (Rom. 12:6-8)

Like the colors of the rainbow, our gifts may be different, but each colored arc is needed to complete a beautiful rainbow. Our gifts belong to the church body and are to be used for God's glory in blessing our fellow church members.¹ Anyone desiring to function as an independent arc, highlighting his or her own color and giving glory to self, may be demonstrating signs of possessing a counterfeit gift. Romans 12: 6-8 encourages us to (1) realize that all gifts and abilities come from God, (2) understand that not everyone has the same gifts, (3) know who we are and what we do best, (4) dedicate our gifts to God's service, and (5) be willing to use our gifts wholeheartedly.²

Confusing Gift (Mark 16:15–17)

According to Mark 16:15–17, the gift of tongues is a legitimate gift given to believers; but it is also the most misunderstood gift. Entire denominations have centered their faith around this gift, claiming that unless a person speaks in tongues he or she does not have the full indwelling of the Spirit. However, no one passage should be read in isolation. First Corinthians 12:4–7, 11 indicates that we do not all possess the same gifts, but that the Spirit distributes them according to His will. Therefore, possessing the gift of tongues is not the only indication that you are a true believer.

What is the gift of tongues? Is it an “unknown utterance” accompanied with physical manipulations of the body? Let’s allow the Bible to explain.

In Mark 16:17, the Greek word for “tongues” is *glōssai*, meaning a foreign language which one has not yet learned but is able to speak as a result of the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit.³ This was dramatically demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples were assembled in the upper room and a mighty wind swept through and filled the room. Read Acts 2:1–18.

“The ability to speak foreign languages was a gift given to the disciples for the special purpose of carrying the gospel message into all the world. Pilgrims from the four corners of the earth . . . were assembled in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. . . . For their sakes, and for those who would receive the message through them, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim the gospel fluently in the pilgrims’ home languages. This was a major miracle and fulfilled one of the Lord’s last promises” in Mark 16:17.⁴

First Corinthians 14 emphasizes the importance of edification, exhortation, and consolation in all that is said and done in the church or worship setting. Whether the gift of a “tongue” or a “prophecy” is utilized, this passage seems to indicate that no one should be speaking in the presence of fellow believers without being *understood*. The message of salvation and God’s love are too important not to be communicated clearly. Spoken with power, the listeners could be convicted of sin, convinced of the saving grace of God, and committed to making the appropriate changes in their lives according to God’s will and purpose.

REACT

1. What is your special gift?
2. How can you decide whether or not a gift is genuine?
3. Is the gift of “tongues” as described above, a relevant gift today?

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.

2. *Application Study Bible*, p. 1902.

3. *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, Lexical Aids, p. 1817.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary* vol. 6, pp. 137, 138.

The Channel

TESTIMONY

1 Corinthians 12:12–31; 13; 14:1–4

"The teaching is very clear, that to the church has been given assurance that the spiritual gifts, which are so greatly needed, are to remain as long as the church is in the world. Moreover, the gift of prophecy is specifically mentioned as the gift to be desired and cherished above all others."¹

Why is the gift of prophecy "to be desired . . . above all others"? Can it not be implied from 1 Corinthians 12:12–31, which describes the church as a unified, yet diverse body, that each member of the body (church) is equally important? Also, does the Bible not clearly state in 1 Corinthians 13 that the greatest of all spiritual gifts is love? As we examine 1 Corinthians 14:1–4, Paul begins to reveal some answers.

The gift of love is important, because without it, all other spiritual gifts are ineffective (1 Cor. 13:1–3). The tongue spoken about in 1 Corinthians 14 refers to an unknown language, which explains why it is not understood by those who hear it.

**Why is the gift of prophecy
"to be desired . . . above all
others"?**

However, those who prophesy are in fact edifying those who are willing to listen. The word *edify* means "to instruct and improve especially in moral and religious knowledge."²

Arthur Daniells states that "the remnant church will place special emphasis upon three fundamental doctrines of the gospel,—the law of God, the faith of Jesus, and the spirit of prophecy. The law of God is the changeless standard of the righteousness which God requires of all responsible beings. The faith of Jesus is the means provided whereby man may receive power to keep that law. The spirit of prophecy is the channel through which the Lord will give instruction, warning, and guidance to the remnant church for the work assigned, and for the preparation required at the second coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."³

REACT

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen White had the gift of prophecy. What is your favorite book written by her? If her writings have been abused by others in an effort to "make you believe," try reading two of her best books—*Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages*.

1. Arthur Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, p. 168.

2. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/edify>. Retrieved November 6, 2007.

3. Daniells, pp. 168, 169.

God's Remedy for the Laodicean Church

Tuesday
January 13

EVIDENCE

Rom. 12:6–8

It is worth noting that while Paul provides multiple references to gifts in his letters to the early churches, the letter to the congregations in Rome is the only one where the gift of giving is specifically mentioned. An examination of the first-century Christian church in Rome provides some context to Paul's exclusiveness.

Biblical scholars believe the book of Romans was written around A.D. 57 at which time Rome was quite similar to many of our large cities today. In this urban environment, there were both upper- and middle-class individuals among the ranks of church membership. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul reveals this to be so by conveying greetings from church members in the highest levels of the Roman government (Phil. 4:22).

Read Revelation 3:17, 18. In these verses, God provides counsel to a last-day church also blessed with an abundance of wealth and, correspondingly, the gift of giving. These verses present a dilemma. How can we buy gold from God when He has described our condition as one of utter poverty? How is this accomplished? In Matthew 19:21, Jesus reveals the nature of this transaction. Here He instructs a young man who is seeking eternal life to sell what he has and to give to the poor. That way, he will have treasure in heaven.

**God's appeal in Revelation
3:17, 18 has never been
more relevant.**

Today's Christian church is composed of more individuals with a greater ability to give than at any other time in its history. God's appeal in Revelation 3:17, 18 has never been more relevant. As the last-day church, God counsels us to work as Christ worked, devoting our possessions and energies to alleviating the sufferings of our fellow human beings, thereby fulfilling our commission to reveal to the world the character of our heavenly Father. This is the heaven-ordained method for building the church, the purpose for which every gift is given.

REACT

What gifts could be considered especially relevant to the Laodicean church described in Revelation 3:14–19?

The Pursuit of the Spirit

HOW-TO

Luke 24:53; 1 Cor. 12:12

As children of God, we've all been called to do a special work for Him. He did not call us to do this work without supplying us with the tools to be effective. Our spiritual gifts are tailor-made for the purpose to which He has called us.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12. How awesome it is to know that each of us is as important to God's work as every body part is to the whole body. Our spiritual gift is our contribution to that life-sustaining flow that furthers the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the "sanguis," the blood or fuel that is essential to make the gift come alive.

How do we have access to the Holy Spirit?

Luke 24:53 tells us that before receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (NIV). We must die to self and open our hearts to God to receive the Holy Spirit. Then God's will will be expressed through us by our spiritual gifts.

Ellen G. White says of the Holy Spirit, "Talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it; for the Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than parents are to give good gifts to their children."*

**"Talk of it, pray for it, preach
concerning it."**

1. *Talk of it.* Read Ephesians 4:29.

Our minds should be set on things above. God want us to be always

focused on Him so that we will always be ready for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Pray for it.* "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31, NIV). Prayer is powerful. Through it, we have access to the throne of the Most High. God will no doubt fill us with the Spirit if we petition the throne.

3. *Preach concerning it.* God tells us in His Word, "'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'" (Mark 16:15, NIV). When we allow ourselves to be used for the furtherance of God's work, the Holy Spirit will guide us each step of the way and will imbue us with the tools (gifts) we need to minister for Christ.

REACT

1. In your own life, how can you daily seek the Holy Spirit?
2. What are your spiritual gifts?
3. How can you use those gifts for the good of others?

*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Nov. 15, 1892.

The Unopened Gift

OPINION

1 Tim. 4:14

During my childhood in the Dominican Republic, my parents did not have a lot of money for gifts. Therefore, any little gift was precious to us. I remember when I received my first doll. It was a nurse doll with wide brown eyes and curly hair. I loved this doll so much that I didn't open the box for months. Inside her box, the doll was safely tucked away from dust and me. I remember sitting in front of the box, simply admiring the doll for hours while my sister played with her doll. One day, curiosity got the best of me. I wanted to feel the doll's curls. It was not until I opened that box that I had truly accepted the gift.

You see, a gift is not a gift if it isn't tapped into. Once used, the gift radiates joy in the lives of the giver and the receiver. So it is with God's gifts to His children. He "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare [His] people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11, 12, NIV). God's gifts have purpose, mission, and a reason to be. We will never truly enjoy His gifts until we open them and fulfill their purpose for the benefit of others and ourselves.

Looking from a distance at the talents God has given us will never make our spiritual gifts a reality. God wants you to discover and use His gifts! They are uniquely designed for you. God has called you for a special purpose, a higher calling. You "are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV).

Have you opened your gift yet? It's time to make your joy complete!

**Have you opened your
gift yet?**

REACT

1. Are natural talents the same as spiritual gifts?
2. What do you think happens to unused spiritual gifts?
3. Do you think God has stopped giving spiritual gifts to His church?
4. Based on what you have learned this week, how would you answer the questions at the end of this week's Introduction article?

EXPLORATION

1 Cor. 12:4–6

CONCLUDE

At times, I feel overwhelmed by the “task” of being a Christian. While the simplicity of the Gospels and the stories of the Bible are awesome, there are many competing voices and ideas that surround faith and the challenges of being a church member and a Christian in today’s world. But at such times, I must remind myself that I don’t have to do it by myself. God gives different and complementary gifts to His people to be used in the community we call church. Through His power and gifting, none of us has to do it all or know it all ourselves.

CONSIDER

- Giving a gift that you believe will be useful to someone you care about. How does the gift giving fit with your relationship with that person? How does watching them use your gift make you feel?
- Reflecting on what spiritual gifts you might have. List what you enjoy doing and what others say you are good at doing.
- Choosing one of your gifts from the list above and finding a practical way to use it or put it into practice this week.
- Practicing something (as in “getting better at”) that you enjoy doing and can use to help others. Is there a training program in your church, school, or community that might help you develop that gift?
- Identifying the spiritual gifts of members of your family, church, or group of friends. What do they do well, enjoy doing, and use to contribute to the church or God’s work? Write each person a note, thanking them for using their gift and affirming their giftedness.
- Making an appointment to talk with a representative of a church that practices speaking in tongues. Prepare a list of questions and listen to their explanation. Do this as part of a group and with a pastor or spiritually experienced, mature friend. Include time to debrief with your group and pastor or mentor after the meeting.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, pp. viii–ix.

Seth Pierce, *Pride and Seek: An Unexpected Spiritual Journey*.

The Gift of Prophecy and God's Remnant Church



“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, NKJV).

Remnants, Quilts, and the Master Quilter

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 12; 14:1–12

The quilt lies on the bed, a reminder of a generation of women who sewed them to keep their families warm in the winter. My grandmother patiently pieced the small triangles of fabric together one by one. They were cut from remnants of material, mostly from old clothing, which was being recycled long before that was the environmentally acceptable thing to do.

As those remnant pieces were cut, positioned properly, and then sewn together, a new item emerged—a quilt that I could snuggle under on cold winter nights. The remnants were taken from something that needed to be transformed and made into a new creation.

Throughout earth's history, God has been preparing a remnant people. Just like those small triangles so lovingly cut out by my grandmother, God has been shaping a people with characters that reflect Him. From the large group of those who claim to follow Him will come the remnant. These followers will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

**My grandmother patiently
pieced the small triangles
of fabric together one
by one.**

He works on cutting out the things in our lives that don't belong there if we claim to be His followers. He adjusts our attitudes and our

desires as we allow Him. As the Master Quilter pieces together His remnant, a new fabric will emerge that will befit the bride of Christ.

How can we speak of being in the remnant without sounding exclusive? What really are the signs of a remnant people? What are specific biblical examples of the remnant and their telling the story of Jesus?

During this week, we will examine these questions. As we do, it will be necessary to ask how we as a church fill the role of the remnant. Do we look much like a remnant people now? Did our early church leaders seem to have more of the remnant mind-set than we have today? What changes should we be making in our personal lives to be more like the remnant in heart and actions?

As you ponder the question of the remnant and what role prophecy has both in the past and the future, ask yourself the hard questions: Is being part of the remnant important to me? If it is, how am I portraying that to the world I live in today?

"Get Out Now!"

EVIDENCE

Rev. 18:1-4

Examining the historical record of earth's history, it becomes apparent that God always has had a remnant people who have sought to follow His leading.

Noah was the leader of just eight people who were a remnant. In the face of ridicule, he taught for 120 years that change needed to occur in people's lives. When all was said and done, only his family accompanied him into the ark.

Abraham was called out of Ur. The majority of the world was busy living selfishly. From Abraham's faithfulness, a remnant and a nation were born.

Moses led a remnant out of Egypt, despite a Pharaoh who was resistant and a murmuring mixed multitude who didn't always want to be led. Out of the original group of adults who left Egypt, only three were allowed to see the Promised Land. Moses had to view it from the mountaintop. Joshua and Caleb experienced its fullness by living there for a season.

Israel faced captivity in Babylon because of its choices. Ezra and Nehemiah were called to bring back a remnant to rebuild Jerusalem and the people's understanding of God.

**The majority of the world
was busy living selfishly.**

After Christ's resurrection, a remnant of Christians was persecuted. Eleven of the disciples, along with a small group of believers, followed Christ's call to take the gospel to the world. During the next three hundred years, the church faced persecution and death, but a remnant continued to be faithful to their understanding of God's laws and to the testimony of Jesus.

The Middle Ages saw a remnant of people who often sacrificed their lives rather than deny the truth. Men and women like John Hus, Jerome, and Joan of Arc chose the wrath of humans rather than disobey God's call.

Today, God is seeking a remnant which will remain faithful to the end. This remnant will come from all faiths, as evidenced by Revelation 18:4.

REACT

1. What are your thoughts about being part of a remnant in the last days?
2. What do you think the warning in Revelation 18:4 means? How does it apply to us today?

"The Remnant Redeemed"

LOGOS

Revelation 12; 14:1–12

Prophetic Assurance (Rev. 12:7–9)

In Revelation 12, John records a synopsis of the great controversy. Replete with symbols and literary quotations, he offers imagery rich enough to document a war, and at the same time convey the essence of the eternal gospel. In two juxtaposed renderings, the conflict of the ages is documented in a way that is nearly self-interpreting.

The record begins with war breaking out in heaven. The dragon, identified as Satan, takes the role of antagonist together with a third of the angels. They are all cast down to the earth, where the dragon seeks his vengeance on the woman, the betrothed of his opponent. The bride is sheltered in the remote regions of earth through one of the great prophetic time periods, the 1,260 days during which the dragon wields authority. The multitudes disgorged to eliminate the bride are dissipated and rendered ineffective by the wilderness where she is sheltered.

Through the blood of the
Lamb, a new song is born.

From exile, John writes to those already experiencing the initial pursuit of the dragon. Persecution and death are meted out to the growing band of believers. This prophecy communicates hope that

God is still in control. His will is still being worked out, and though the devil has come down to the earth with great wrath, his time is short.

The Remnant (Rev. 12:17)

Twice angered by failure, the dragon pursues the woman's children. Those that remain, the remnant, are marked by particular characteristics. These attributes serve to distinguish them from the impostors sent by the dragon to drown out their voices. The first of these characteristics is faithfulness in keeping the commandments of God. Where the dragon seeks to dilute and wash away knowledge of God's law, the remnant seek to preserve those truths.

The second characteristic of the remnant is the testimony of Jesus. On the surface this could be interpreted as holding the teachings or utterances of Jesus. However, Revelation 19:10 equates the "testimony of Jesus" with the "spirit of prophecy." Hence in John's record, the lineage of the remnant will reach its ultimate destiny in a group that both keeps the commandments and holds the Spirit of prophecy.

The remnant is the prophetic offspring of the woman, the bride of Christ. That prophetic bride is the church in its extended form. The bride is not a specific denomination. Her remnant seed have an obligation not only to preserve but to spread the essential truths they hold. In proclaiming the three angels' messages, the remnant lays claim to the Spirit of prophecy that John records.

The Redeemed (Rev. 12:11)

The characteristic traits of the remnant are only identifying marks, not the instruments of salvation. John is quite clear on this point. " 'They have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony' " (Rev. 12:11, NRSV). The parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22 suggests that righteousness offered through the blood of the Lamb is conditioned on our willingness to put it on, to confess it through the word of our testimony.

The Spirit of prophecy provides a foundation for confidence that today's setbacks will have at most a temporary effect. For the remnant, prophecy has long provided the reassurance that enables them to rise above the fear of death. They have confidence in the outcome, because credibility has been earned through the observed truth of the prophetic testimony.

Through the blood of the Lamb, a new song is born, sung only by those who have experienced its redeeming power. It is the culmination of the eternal gospel:

It's the song of the redeemed
Rising from the African plain
It's the song of the forgiven
Drowning out the Amazon rain
The song of Asian believers
Filled with God's holy fire
It's every tribe, every tongue, every nation
A love song born of a grateful choir.

It's all God's children singing
Glory, glory, hallelujah
He reigns.*

Read Revelation 14:12.

REACT

1. What aspects of your personal faith acknowledge the Creator God of the first angel's message?

2. In your understanding of prophetic end times, is the dragon's persecution more, or less, significant than the blood of the Lamb?

*Peter Furler and Steve Taylor, "He Reigns," *Adoration: The Worship Album* (Ariose Music/Soylent Tunes, 2003).

"A Little Flock"

TESTIMONY

Isa. 49:16; Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 15:55

"Of special value to God's church on earth to-day . . . are the messages of counsel and admonition given through the prophets who have made plain His eternal purpose in behalf of mankind. In the teachings of the prophets, His love for the lost race, and His plan for their salvation, are clearly revealed. The story of Israel's call, of their successes and failures, of their restoration to divine favor, of their rejection of the Master of the vineyard, and of the carrying out of the plan of the ages by a goodly remnant to whom are to be fulfilled all the covenant promises,—this has been the theme of God's messengers to His church throughout the centuries that have passed."¹

"In comparison with the millions of the world, God's people will be, as they have ever been, a little flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His word, God will be their refuge. They stand under the broad shield of Omnipotence. God is always a majority. When the sound of the last trump shall penetrate the prison-

house of the dead, and the righteous shall come forth with triumph, exclaiming, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy

"God is always a majority."

victory?' (1 Corinthians 15:55)—standing then with God, with Christ, with the angels, and with the loyal and true of all ages, the children of God will be far in the majority."²

"The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy. All these, He says, 'I have graven . . . upon the palms of my hands' (Isa. 49:16). They are held in everlasting, imperishable remembrance. We want faith now, living faith. We want to have a living testimony that shall cut to the heart of the sinner."³

"God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments."⁴

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 22.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 590.

3. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 380.

4. *The Upward Look*, p. 315.

Being the Remnant

HOW-TO

Rev. 12:17; 14:12

Is it possible to be in the remnant church yet not to be remnant in heart? In the book of Revelation, God revealed the closing events of the great controversy along with its outcome. He highlighted those who will be victorious, those who are the remnant. God gives several characteristics of His last-day people. By understanding their uniqueness, we may understand not only how to be in the remnant but how to be remnant in heart.

1. *Proclaiming the message.* God's remnant church will be proclaiming the everlasting gospel to the whole world in the context of the three angels' messages, which prepare a people to meet their Savior at His second coming. To be part of the remnant, we must be part of a movement proclaiming the Second Coming.

2. *Keep the commandments.* God's last-day people teach that God's law hasn't changed or been done away with, but that it is the eternal transcript of His character and the standard by which we are judged (1 Pet. 1:15). The commandments are God's tool to show us our sin and our need of a Savior (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). The remnant not only teaches the commandments but keeps them as well. To be the remnant is to be in a loving relationship with Jesus, a love that yields obedience (John 14:15).

To be the remnant is to be in a loving relationship with Jesus, a love that yields obedience.

3. *Believe His prophets.* The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). God's last-day people will possess the Spirit of prophecy like Israel of old. God has given us a map (the Bible) for our exodus (the Second Coming). He has also given us a Pilot (the Spirit of prophecy as given to Ellen White and the biblical prophets) to guide us through the perils and ever-changing circumstances of the latter days. As His remnant people, we will believe His prophets and obey His counsel so that we may prosper, even unto the end (2 Chron. 20:20).

God is calling us in these last days not only to accept His name but to reveal His character through our lives. This is the great need of the hour.

REACT

1. What did God intend for the nation of Israel? For His last-day remnant?
2. What place should proclaiming the three angels' messages have in your life?

Thursday
January 22

The Remnant: Reflecting the Image of Christ

OPINION

John 17:3, 6–26

Our first parents were made by the hand of the Creator in His image. They were blessed to walk in the fully revealed presence of God in a perfect world. There was no need of a remnant movement. However, because of sin, humans could no longer behold the person of God and live. What was God to do but draw up a blueprint of Himself so that humankind could come to trust Him and allow His character to be reflected in them.

Why is it necessary for God's image to be reflected in us? Here are a few reasons:

1. To provide evidence of a loving God to the darkened world
2. To reveal to the world the true character of God
3. To prepare a people to dwell once again in the presence of their Creator

In the midst of the great controversy, while God's image was being denigrated through false teachings, God gave the fullness of Himself in the expressed image of Christ. Christ was not only the image of the Deity, He was the Deity clothed in flesh. Through our Redeemer's ministry, we are able to witness the lived out blueprint that the remnant is to follow. Christ preached the three angels' mes-

**Christ preached the three
angels' messages during His
time on earth.**

sages during His time on earth. He called the multitude to the correct worship of God; He called them out of the confusion of tradition; and He reminded His followers to remain faithful, even though the majority of the world refused to believe Him.

Christ not only preached the message, He lived it because He was the Word (John 1:1–3, 14). Now that we are approaching the second coming of Christ, tremendous light has been given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have the message, but how well are we living the message, thus reflecting the loving nature of our Lord? Not only is the remnant to preach the message to the world, but the message must be revealed through their loving deeds and words. Before sin entered this world, God's image was reflected through the first couple—Adam and Eve. At the end of the great controversy, God's image will be reflected through the last couple—Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

REACT

In what way is the Lord trying to reflect His character through you as His remnant child?

Charles Rietman, Wyoming, Michigan, U.S.A.

A Good Reflection

EXPLORATION

2 Cor. 3:18

CONCLUDE

Throughout history, God has saved a remnant people who reflected His light in a sin-darkened world. Sometimes the light has been brilliant, as in the days of the early Christian church; other times it has seemed a lonely candle, as in the days of the cave-dwelling Waldensians. We have the opportunity to be part of that historical, light-reflecting community of believers. As time winds down, the world needs vital, unique, *brilliant* people who will clearly reflect Christ in the growing darkness.

CONSIDER

- Creating something new from old remnants. Pick the medium of your choice—metal or fabric scraps, old computer parts, or even leftovers in the refrigerator.
- Constructing a mobile from bits of glass, metal, or old CDs. Hang the mobile in a sunny window or over a lighted candle and study the way it magnifies the light source. Why does a fixture made from multiple pieces of glass reflect light more strongly than one made from a single piece of glass?
- Drawing a time line of your own life. What are the high points or events that have caused you to change course? How does your time line fit in with the battle depicted in Revelation 12?
- Looking up the word *remnant* in the dictionary. In what ways does the definition describe God's remnant people? Does the dictionary term connote a positive or negative context?
- Choosing a symbol to reflect your relationship with Christ and wearing it prominently for one day. How comfortable were you wearing such an obvious mark of your connection with Christ? What marks consistently show us as Christians to the world around us?
- Coming up with contemporary substitutes for the characters and symbols in Revelation 12 and 14. What term or character would you choose instead of "remnant" to describe God's faithful?

CONNECT

John Duckworth, *Joan 'n' the Whale*, chap. 17.

Luan Miller, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.

The Inspiration of the Prophets



"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Journey of Ink

INTRODUCTION

2 Tim. 3:16

During our missionary communication workshop seminar, we were to interview people in the mall and give them some pamphlets. I asked one person what she thought about Jesus and the Bible. "Jesus is just a prophet, and the Bible is just an ordinary book like novels, and I believe it was written by people who just want to sell books."

"If men would but study the word of God with earnest prayer that they might understand its teachings, they would not be left in darkness to receive false doctrines."¹

God bestowed different gifts to every Christian—talents and intelligence to be used in His vineyard. Read 1 Corinthians 12:7, 8, 10, 11. Having been given the gift of prophecy, the writings of Ellen G. White continue to promote courage and faith and to spread God's love to the world. Her books, first written with ink and a quill feather pen, have been printed in many languages and have led many people out of darkness. While visiting her home in Napa Valley, California, United States, I felt joined to each bit of her work.

**Suffering nations are begging
for the peace of yesteryear.**

The apostle Paul, John the Baptist, and other prophets awakened God's people during Bible times. Who is doing so now? Suffering nations are begging for the peace of yesteryear. People are comparing religions to find out what suits them best. Some depend on the Scriptures, while others look at the bad way some Christians behave, causing them to discount God's truth. It's amazing that, occasionally, some Seventh-day Adventists still doubt the writings of Mrs. White and other prophets appointed by God. This doubt sometimes leads unbelievers to wrong ideas about the Scriptures.

"The vitality of the Scriptures is due to the life breathed into them by God Himself. The endurance of their charm and their adequacy to satisfy every need of man testifies to their divine authorship."²

Learn how to cruise the storms of these last days by studying this week's lesson about the inspiration of prophets, and be able to say as a result, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12, NIV).

1. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 347.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 344.

The Prophecy and the Gifts of Prophets

LOGOS

Jer. 28:9; 36:1–4; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:10–15; 2 Pet. 1:1–4, 20, 21

The prophetic work of Ellen G. White was more a work of giving instruction and guidance than of prediction. Yet throughout her writings one finds striking predictions that have been or are being fulfilled. For example, chapter 36 (“The Impending Conflict”) in the book *The Great Controversy* contains remarkable predictions concerning events that are to happen just before the end of time. These events center around two of Satan’s greatest deceptions—Sunday sacredness and the immortality of the soul.

Following are examples of other interesting predictions Ellen White has made and the years in which she made them:

1894—“The Lord is removing His restrictions from the earth, and soon there will be death and destruction. . . . Those who are without God’s protection will find no safety in any place or position.”¹

“The prophetic gift was indispensable to the founding of the church in NT times, and is the appointed guide of the remnant church.”

1903—“A storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth, and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.”²

1904—“Soon great troubles will arise among the nations. Trouble that will not cease until Jesus comes.”³

1909—“In the visions of the night a very impressive scene passed before me. I saw an immense ball of fire fall among some beautiful mansions, causing their instant destruction.”⁴

One cannot but be sobered by words such as these. How good it is to know that “He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amid the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. . . . When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands.”⁵

The Purpose of the Gift of Prophecy (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7–14)

The main purpose of spiritual gifts is to make possible through the church the continuation of Jesus’ earthly ministry in every land (Acts 3:1–10, 5:12–16; 6:8; 8:5–7).

All of the gifts are in perfect accord with Paul's statement of the threefold purpose of the gifts in Ephesians 4:7–14:

1. For the perfecting of the saints
2. For the work of the ministry
3. For the instruction of the body of Christ

"Prophets were expounders and explainers of the will of God that had been made known to them by supernatural means. They are mentioned along with apostles in Eph. 2:20; 3:5. The idea of foretelling is not essential to the meaning of the word, nor is the predictive element found in all prophetic utterances (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor. 14:3). The prophetic gift was indispensable to the founding of the church in NT times, and is the appointed guide of the remnant church (Rev. 19:10)."⁶

"It is God's will and plan that His church shall be empowered by gifts till the end of time (Eph. 4:8, 11–13; AA 54, 55). The gifts are all from God; therefore there can be no possible ground for the human agent to boast over his fellows because he has been favored of Heaven as an instrument for the manifestation of the power of God in a special way for the benefit of the church as a whole (see 1 Cor. 12:11)."⁷

REACT

1. List the spiritual gifts that appear in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1–16.
2. Which of these gifts do you see as being particularly active in your local church and in our denomination at large?
3. Which of these gifts have made the most positive difference in your life and in your local church? How would you explain that difference to someone who is not a Christian?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 50.

2. *Education*, pp. 179, 180.

3. *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 28.

5. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 121.

6. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1023.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 768.

The Divine Gift

TESTIMONY

2 Pet. 1:20, 21

“In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue.”¹

Our physical being is under the supervision of God. We are not robots to be set in motion by some other power. “In God we live and move and have our being. Each heartbeat, each breath, is the inspiration of Him who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life—the inspiration of the ever-present God, the great I AM.”²

Today people think varying thoughts about the Bible due to all their varying backgrounds. They read Scripture according to what they desire it to say and according to any preconceived ideas about it that they might have. However, Scripture was not written by people who were inspired by their own thought and ideas. “The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit.”³

The Lord is the True Author of the Bible. Let Him take care of His own Book, as He has done for ages. There always will be people who strive to be original and famous, but often their knowledge is foolishness. “Brethren, let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible. It is a work that Satan delights to have any of you do, but it is not a work the Lord has pointed out for you to do.”⁴

REACT

Read a famous passage of Scripture such as Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 13, or Luke 2:1–20. As you read, think about the fact that the human authors of these words were inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. How does this fact help you to view these familiar words?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 661.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 294, 295.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

"Arise, Nehemiahs of Today"

Tuesday
January 27

EVIDENCE

Nehemiah 2; 4-6; 1 Thess. 2:13

The prophet Nehemiah is a good example of how a person becomes an inspirational prophet. Enthusiastically working in cooperation with God, he was used of God to bring about the seemingly impossible within a short time.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, delayed by the indifference of the people as much as by the opposition of enemies, apparently would never be finished. Then Nehemiah, by inspiration, appeared on the scene with firm and eager purpose. "His holy purpose, his high hope, his cheerful consecration to the work, were contagious. The people caught the enthusiasm of their leader, and in his sphere each man became a Nehemiah, and helped to make stronger the hand and heart of his neighbor."¹

"Nehemiah did not wait long before going into action. The day after his night survey of the walls, a representative body of the village and town elders assembled to hear his report. In his address he reminded them of the disgraceful state of affairs existing in the nation, recounted the divine help he had experienced in dealing with the king, and set forth the extent of his authority. His speech had the desired effect, and resulted in an enthusiastic and apparently unanimous resolution to 'rise up and build.'"²

**"Nehemiah did not wait long
before going into action."**

"There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today."³ They should arise and inspire thousands. They should teach that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can finish our task on earth.

God saw the need to give special guidance to His church amid the confusion of these last days. He chose Ellen White to help Him give this guidance. From the beginning of our denomination, Seventh-day Adventists have believed that the testimony of Jesus is another name for the biblical Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10), which God gives to men and women to guide His children on earth.

1. *Conflict and Courage*, p. 264.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 398.

3. Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1137.

Our Inspirations

HOW-TO

Pss. 12:6; 119:105; Matt. 6:33; 1 Thess. 2:13

Anyone who likes to do something finds time to do it. A computer analyst thinks deeper before installing a new program. A writer does research to gather ideas before composing a meaningful story or article, and a musician needs inspiration before composing a sweet song.

Prophets are inspired by God in many different ways so they can deliver God's messages. As Christians, we also need to be inspired while doing His work and while waiting for His second coming. For us to overcome trials and accept the messages God sends through His prophets, we need to trust Him. Here's how:

T—Take time with Jesus. We will not be at a loss if we take a few minutes of our day to pray. Through prayer, we build faith and trust in God during every moment of our life (Matt. 6:33).

For us to overcome trials and accept the messages God send through His prophets, we need to trust Him.

R—Remember that we are living in prophetic time. We need to realize that signs are coming to pass. God inspired the prophets to warn us and to guide us in the Christian life. Reading the Bible and meditating upon it will help us to walk with Him each day and to

prepare for His return.

U—Understand that God's words are pure. We need to understand that God is the author of our lives. His promises are true. Though failures, worries, and pains may at times cause us to doubt, we need to understand that His words are pure (Ps. 12:6).

S—Seek God. Life without God is miserable and empty. Seeking God in everyday life inspires us to live happily through many times of trouble. We need to focus on God's leading to live our lives to the fullest (Ps. 119:105).

T—Thank God for lessons to be learned. Thank Him for the trials you experience. They help you learn how to grow closer to Him.

"Believe It!"

OPINION

1 Thess. 1:2-7

"The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding, we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts, man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to Him." Sooner or later each mind will question prophetic inspiration, because the Holy Spirit that convinces the heart is no longer present.

Studying deeply with an open mind is important. You cannot believe the words of God through the prophets if you are not convinced; and you will never be convinced if you don't have faith and are not constantly searching for the truth. Our attitudes and beliefs regarding the inspiration of the prophets determine in part what type of Christians we will be. Consistent Bible study convinces us that the prophecies are indeed God-inspired.

"We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. Some portions of Scripture are indeed too plain to be misunderstood; but there are others whose meaning does not lie on the surface, to be seen at a glance. Scripture must be compared with scripture. There must be careful research and prayerful reflection. And such study will be richly repaid. As the miner discovers veins of precious metal concealed beneath the surface of the earth, so will he who perseveringly searches the word of God as for hid treasure, find truths of the greatest value, which are concealed from the view of the careless seeker. The words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the fountain of life.

Studying deeply with an open mind is important.

"Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given."²

REACT

1. Why do you think believers and unbelievers question the inspiration of the prophets?
2. What do you think are the motives of people who are questioning?
3. How will you determine or evaluate the prophecies, signs, and everything else that is written under inspiration?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 459.

2. *Steps to Christ*, pp. 90, 91.

Inspired to Action

EXPLORATION

2 Tim. 1:6, 7

CONCLUDE

When individuals were chosen by God to be prophets, they were not limited to foretelling the future. Most of their work was focused on directing people's hearts and minds back to God. The same Spirit that inspired them to action is guiding us today as we study the Scriptures to know God and His will for our lives. He also empowers us to use our spiritual gifts so that the church can be strengthened to finish its final work of preparing the world for judgment and Jesus' soon return.

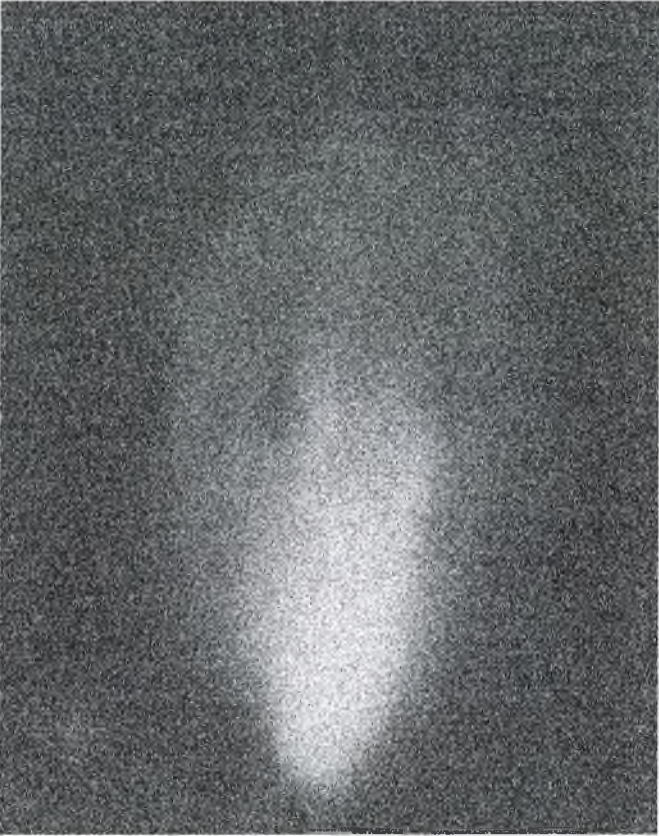
CONSIDER

- Making a collage of pictures and/or headlines from newspapers and magazines that point to the nearness of Jesus' second coming. Include the title, "Spiritual Gifts—For Such a Time as This," or another title of your own choosing.
- Taking a spiritual gifts inventory to discover where God has gifted you. An inventory found at <http://www.churchgrowth.org/analysis/intro.php> evaluates your strengths and explains in detail.
- Learning more about the life of Ellen G. White, God's prophet for the last days. Some books you may want to read include, *Messenger of the Lord, His Messenger*, *Ellen White: Woman of Vision*, and *Ellen White: Trailblazer for God*. (All books are available at the Adventist Book Center.)
- Singing all three verses of the song "Open My Eyes That I May See," number 326 in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, and asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the special work He has given you to do.
- Interviewing a number of church members to find out their favorite method of studying the Bible and sharing the results with your Sabbath School class.

CONNECT

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, "Departing From the Word," pp. 101–194; George W. Reid, editor, *Understanding Scripture*.

Testing the Prophets



“Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:20, 21, NKJV).

The God Who Speaks

INTRODUCTION

Isa. 8:20; Amos 3:7

In his poem "The Hound of Heaven," Francis Thompson wrote of God's irrepressible and unquenchable love, which follows us all of our lives. Sinners attempt to hide from God and to look for fulfillment apart from Him. But God pursues them. Then comes the moment of encounter, when God catches up with a sinner, who then asks a question. Also note below God's answer.

Halts by me that footfall?
Is my gloom after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
Ah, foundest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou drawest love from thee, who dravest me.*

**We believe the last word rests
with Jesus.**

In the prophets of the Bible, we hear the voice of God speaking. While God speaks to nations, kings, rulers, and society, He also speaks to us individually. It is when

we hear God's voice speaking to us personally that Scripture comes alive. It is then that our faith expands and deepens.

Seventh-day Adventists are a people of prophecy. It was the understanding of prophetic time that brought our church into existence. It is the word of prophecy that directs our lives in the present and the future. We believe the last word rests with Jesus—not death, the grave, the demonic, or earthly powers.

Jesus' promise to return is the goal to which our lives are directed. The prophetic word in this regard is positive and optimistic. Prophecy foretells a better world—a world of God's designing, a world into which all are invited (Rev. 22:17).

For Seventh-day Adventists, the writings of Ellen White are important. While not meant to replace Scripture, they are similar to Scripture in that they speak to all of life. The reading of *The Desire of Ages*, which is possibly the best book Ellen White wrote, brings one near to Jesus. It is a book that after repeated readings retains its freshness and makes Jesus more and more precious. In reading her writings in the light of Scripture we can prove her writings for ourselves.

Our study this week is an opportunity to once again examine the foundation and trustworthiness of the prophetic word in both Scripture and Ellen White.

**The Poems of Francis Thompson* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1947), p. 106.

Majesty in the Moments of Humankind

Sunday
February 1

EVIDENCE

Jer. 18:6–10

We live in a symphony of space and time, of human free choice and divine foreknowledge, of action and reaction. Marie Beyon Ray writes, "We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand . . . and melting like a snowflake."* This is our lot. Yet our eternal God lives in active relation to our finite, time-restricted condition. He seems content to deal with us in our moments, and to respond to our choices and actions. As such, prophecy does not live in a vacuum but depends upon the God who gives it, delivered by humans to humans in full possession of free choice who dwell in space and time. Some prophecies are unconditional, such as the great messianic prophecies fulfilled in the person of Christ and the promise of His second coming. But at the same time, there are some conditional prophecies that depend on human reactions to God's communication. An example would be the story of Jonah, where God seems to change His mind in response to the repentance of the city of Nineveh. This doesn't make Jonah a false prophet. He fulfils God's command to preach God's message to Nineveh.

In our text above, God tells the prophet Jeremiah to go to the potter's workshop in order to hear

We are left with a choice. . . .

God's message. Once there, he sees a potter at work. The pot being shaped has a flaw. In response, the potter remakes the pot as he likes it. God then equates the potter to Himself and the clay to Israel. He tells Israel they need to change their mind about their present condition. However, Israel no longer sees how change is possible, indicating that they have completely lost sight of their Potter.

We are sometimes like Israel. We despair about our condition, our seeming inability to change. But in focusing on our flaws, we lose sight of God's majestic hands, hands that have the ability to reshape us into a pleasing, useful design. God is qualified and ready to shape us thusly. We are left with a choice: will we allow God's majesty into the moments of our lives?

REACT

1. Is Jeremiah's prophecy conditional or unconditional, and why?
2. How does Israel's attitude to God's message shape the outcome?

* Michael Moncur, The Quotations Page. "Marie Beyon Ray Quotes,"

http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Marie_Beyon_Ray/. Retrieved November 18, 2007.

The God Who Speaks in Jesus

LOGOS

Isa. 8:20; Jer. 18:6–10; Jonah 3; 4; Matt. 7:15–20; Gal. 2:11–14

A boy was looking at a photograph of his father, who was a soldier in a distant country. He said, "I wish my dad could step out of the photograph and be with me." That is what Jesus did in the Incarnation. He stepped out of eternity into time. In Jesus, God became man, one with us. In Jesus, God spoke the fullest, richest, clearest, most convincing and compelling message of His love for humanity. It is a message delivered personally by Jesus—the human manifestation of God.

The Incarnation (1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 11:3)

It is important to understand that the truth of the Incarnation is a *revealed* truth. It is God revealing to us His will and purpose through the prophets and apostles (Amos 3:7). There are truths we cannot know apart from God revealing them to us: Creation, the origin of sin, the Second Coming, the Trinity. Such truths are supernaturally made known to us by divine revelation. Accepting them by faith, we come to the place of understanding (Heb. 11:3).

**Truth is progressive and
expanding.**

God Speaks in the Logos

(John 1:1–3, 5, 18)

John 1:18 tells us that Jesus the Logos explains who God is. John 1:1, 2 tells us that Jesus the Logos is divine, eternal, and that what God is, the Logos is. John 1:3 tells us that Jesus the Logos is the Creator of all things. John 1:4 tells us that Jesus the Logos is the Source of life. John 1:5 tells us there is a conflict between light and darkness and that the Light is inextinguishable.

John makes several vital points that amplify and confirm the Incarnation of Jesus:

1. The Incarnation is attested by prophecy. John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. Read Isaiah 40:3, 5.
2. It is a historical fact. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NIV). "At the heart of the Christian message was a new fact: God had acted—and let us remember that the original meaning of 'fact' is the Latin *factum*, 'Something done.' God had acted in a way that, if believed, must henceforth determine all our ways of thinking."*

Our study this week not only tests the prophetic word, but brings us face-to-face

with what it reveals to us of the nature, character, love, will, and purposes of God.

The Logos Speaks (John 1:12–14, 16)

Scripture and prophecy are not simply information transfer agents. Though prophecy reveals God's will and purpose, its primary aim is salvation—to show how weak sinful humans can be united to a holy God.

In Jesus the Logos, we receive power to become God's children (John 1: 12, 13). In Jesus the Logos, we receive grace and truth in their fullness and blessing heaped upon blessing (John 1:14, 16).

The use of the term *Logos*, which means "Word," is intended to convey the most positive and optimistic message possible. Jesus is the Living Word of God. It was God's *spoken* word that brought the earth into existence. "God said" . . . and it happened (Gen. 1:3). By the Word of God were the heavens made (Ps. 33:6).

In God's written Word, there is the same divine power to re-create sinful people and make them new creatures (James 1:18). He chose to give us birth through the word of truth (1 Pet. 1:23).

Our study of the prophets is designed to bring us into a growing and developing experience with Jesus, who is the object of prophecy (1 Pet. 1:10–12). When we test the prophecies of Scripture, we find anchors for our faith; but more than this, we enter into a deep and fulfilling fellowship with Jesus.

Peter makes the point when he calls us to pay attention to the prophetic word as a light shining in a dark place. He says to keep on studying until Jesus returns. Truth is progressive and expanding. Our continued study will not exhaust its meaning or its benefits (2 Pet. 1:19).

REACT

1. John 1:10, 11 tells us that when Jesus came to earth He was not recognized by His chosen people. How could ignorance of the Old Testament prophecies be a reason for His rejection?

2. What application does Hebrews 2:1–3 have for us today?

3. What danger is there in believing in Bible prophecy without testing it?

4. How can we know we are not substituting knowledge for experience?

5. When we prove prophecy to be reliable, what is the next step?

* Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence* (London: S.P.C.K. 1995), p. 5.

"For the Comfort of His People"

TESTIMONY

Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:17, 22-25

From the time of the early church, people have needed guidance. Ellen White uses Peter's experience to give us clear guidance about how we should use her writings: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that word we are to be judged. God has, in that word, promised to give visions in the 'LAST DAYS'; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth. Thus God dealt with Peter when He was about to send him to preach to the Gentiles."¹

White explains her role as follows: "My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. 'Your work,' He instructed me, 'is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the Word actions that are not right. Exhort from the Word. I will make My Word open to you. It shall not be as

" 'Give the light I shall give
you.' "

a strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you.

" 'Be not afraid of man, for My shield shall protect you. It is not you that speaketh: it is the Lord that giveth the messages of warning and reproof. Never deviate from the truth under any circumstances. Give the light I shall give you. The messages for these last days shall be written in books, and shall stand immortalized, to testify against those who have once rejoiced in the light, but who have been led to give it up because of the seductive influences of evil.' "²

REACT

1. How should we react when someone confronts us when we have done something wrong?

2. Ellen White's messages to the church are to help us stand against "the seductive influences of evil." How can we make sure that we receive the maximum benefit from these messages?

3. How would you explain Ellen White's role and significance to a non-Seventh-day Adventist?

1. *Early Writings*, p. 78.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 32.

Ellen White and Prophecy—How to Test Her Writings

Wednesday
February 4

HOW-TO

1 Thess. 5:19–21

God is against ignorance. Truth is against ignorance. Christians must be against ignorance especially as it relates to faith and salvation. It is often ignorance that makes unwarranted assumptions concerning the Bible and the Christian faith. A clear example is the book by Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, which has sold millions of copies. While Dawkins writes well and rightly denounces religious superstition, his prejudice gets in the way of facts. Attacks on the Bible are as old as the Bible itself. What is frustrating is how these claims are often uncritically accepted without being tested.

Christians are required to know the basis of their faith and to be able to challenge criticisms of it. Paul says, “Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything” (1 Thess. 5:20, 21, NIV).

Criticisms of Christian faith are not wrong. We can hold ideas that are erroneous and need correction. Truth does not fear investigation. The more deeply we study the truth of Scripture and test it, the brighter it shines.

Note Ellen White's counsel. “It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God.”*

**Truth does not fear
investigation.**

Know what you believe. Paul's counsel to Timothy to study God's Word so that he will not be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15) has equal relevance to what Seventh-day Adventist believe about Ellen White. The acid test is to read her books. A superficial understanding will crumble in a time of stress. As you read her writings, ask the following questions: (1) Is Ellen White subject to the Scriptures? (2) Does she support the divinity of Jesus? (3) Does she affirm Jesus as our Savior? (4) Does she uphold God's law?

There is no alternative for personal study to test her writings in the light of Scripture.

* *The Great Controversy*, p. 598.

True Prophets Point Us to God

OPINION

Jonah 3:4

Near where I grew up is a steep hill. My mother knew how my brother and I loved to run down it, and every time she would tell us to be careful not to trip. This time was no different. We took off at a fast pace. But my legs couldn't keep up with my speed, and I found myself hurtling headfirst toward the pavement. My face felt the full brunt of the impact and looked as if I had tussled with a cheese grater. Typically, I wished I had listened to my mother!

God told the prophet Jonah to preach a message to Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). Often we interpret this verse to mean that God intended to destroy the city, and it certainly seems as if the Ninevites took it that way. Yet the Hebrew word for "overturned" comes from the root word *haphak*, which can also be translated as "changed," "turned around," or "repented."* God wanted to turn the city of Nineveh around. He desperately wanted to show them a better way to be human.

This was what Jonah feared most, because being a Hebrew, he was prejudiced against Israel's enemies. In Jonah

4:1–3, we discover just how displeased he became because of God's grace. But despite Jonah's wanting the worst for the city, his preaching pointed them toward

**I found myself hurtling head-
first toward the pavement.**

God. This is one of the ways we can test prophets. If they point us toward God and His way, their message is from God.

It's like my hillside story. My mother wanted me to enjoy myself. She gave me good advice. She reminded me to be careful, and she was there to pick me up and cuddle me when I fell. God also wants the best for us. He wants us to have fun. He also wants us to be safe. Sometimes He sends people our way to give us advice. Sometimes those people are prophets. How can we tell whom to listen to, or whom to ignore? The ones who point us toward God are the true prophets of our lives.

REACT

Take time to think about your life. What advice has come your way? Is that advice pointing you toward God?

*James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), s. v. H2015.

Authenticity

EXPLORATION

Amos 3:7

CONCLUDE

As archaeology lends its weight to prove the authenticity of the Bible, Bible prophecy identifies and gives authenticity to Jesus' birth and purpose on earth. It stamps His identity as the Creator and Redeemer of humankind. Prophecy sheds light on God's will for us and for His world. It prepares us for what is coming upon the earth by outlining for us what has happened in the past. All prophecy should be tested carefully for its authenticity and truth—that it points to Jesus, the one and only Savior of this world.

CONSIDER

- Making a timeline of the 2,300-day prophecy according to Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. How does this prophecy prove that Jesus came, lived, and died on time?
- Perusing an archaeological Bible for “digs” that prove various Bible prophecies.
- Inviting a friend or neighbor to watch a DVD about one of the Bible prophets.
- Reading portions from *Early Writings* or from one of the biographies of Ellen White. Meditate and pray about what you read. Does she or does she not point to the Bible and Jesus above all else?
- Asking your children's Sabbath School department if they have a set of Ellen White felts. If so, offer to tell one of the stories to the children (or church) about some part of her life that you feel is relevant to her position in the church.
- Comparing Ellen White's predictions, Bible prophecy concerning the end of time, and current “prophets.” What are significant factors that prove one true and another false?
- Perusing the Adventist hymnal section titled “Second Advent.” Play or sing some of the hymns that tell about Jesus' return. How do they collaborate with Bible prophecy about His coming?

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*.

Norma J. Collins, *Heartwarming Stories of Adventist Pioneers*; Henry T. and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day by Day*.

Barbara Manspeaker, Luray, Virginia, U.S.A.

The Work of the Prophets



**“By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt,
and by a prophet he was preserved”
(Hos. 12:13, NKJV).**

Where There Is Vision

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 1; 6:1–8; 58:6–14; John 13:20

Imagine a time long past, when Judah was caught in the middle of crossfire between religious immorality and hope for new life. The area, which was highly populated, resourceful, and full of life, could be compared to one of the best cities of the world today. With its superb technological innovations, life improved greatly. However, apostasy was deeply entrenched, and under the umbrella of worship, people were satisfying their personal needs. In this state of disobedience to God and lack of trust in Him, people were crushed in exile and hopelessness; and as the economy progressively became more distorted, the gap between the rich and the poor continued to widen.

God, however, looked with pity upon His children. He revealed His will to them. A plan was devised that showed His concern for His suffering children. It was a good plan that would affirm righteousness, justice, and Sabbath observance. Prayer and faithfulness would transform the lives of the suffering inhabitants of Judah. This plan was a light beyond the darkest hour for the victims of oppression.

How did God give the message of goodwill to the suffering people of Judah? He chose Isaiah to deliver the message of hope and new life. At first, it seemed quite an impossible task for the prophet. How does one tell people to their faces that they need to leave their sins in order to change for the better? But God anointed Isaiah long before for this specific task. Amid great odds, Isaiah persevered to fulfill his appointment with the Lord. And, like many of his counterparts, Isaiah's life as a prophet was never easy. He endured the many assaults that Satan always inflicts on God's chosen people. But all in all, the deliverance of the people of Judah came as a result of God's intervention through one chosen person.

This week we are looking at the life of Ellen White as another one of God's messengers, and how her work has paralleled that of biblical prophets such as Isaiah.

At first, it seemed quite an impossible task for the prophet.

A Prophet's Duties

LOGOS

Gen. 22:1–14; Isaiah 53; Matt. 3:7–10; Revelation 13

A Call for Change (Matt. 3:7–10)

Often, for a person to develop successfully, a change of attitude is called for. I remember how difficult it was for me to help people change when they believed their way of life was the best. In the spiritual sphere, the same problem is encountered. John the Baptist was one prophet who urged people to change in preparation for the Lord Jesus Christ. As he fulfilled his duty, he experienced many problems and walked long distances in order to call people to repent and to be baptized. In some instances, people were not positive in their responses, and others were not ready to leave their old way of life.

Ellen White was no exception in the struggle to champion change for Christ's cause. She wrote, "As the spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make

known to others that which has thus been revealed—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future."

John the Baptist was one prophet who urged people to change.

In shedding light on God's Word, prophets (God's messengers) depended on the Bible itself. In facing challenges, they received their power from heaven. Read the story of Stephen in Acts 6:8–7:60.

Undaunted in Faith and Courage (Gen. 22:1–14)

The Word of God is consistent throughout, and history can reveal from the time of the prophets that when we rely on the Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts, we can discern the greatest truths in God's Holy Book. One may ask, after being childless for so long, what could possibly prompt Abraham to take his only son as a sacrifice to the Lord?

We would all find it impossible to offer a dear child as a sacrifice to our Savior. But Abraham committed his way to the Lord, believing the Lord Himself would provide a lamb. In order to commit our plans and ways to the Lord, we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit to give us faith (John 14:26). Faith such as this is needed

in the world today—faith that will lay hold on the promises of God's Word and refuse to let go until Heaven hears us. Faith such as this connects us with God and strengthens us for coping with the powers of darkness. Through faith, God's children have "conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; . . . shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword" (Heb. 11:33, 34, NIV). Just as in the case of Abraham or one of our church's founders, Ellen White, we are called to wait on the Lord to provide ways to sustain His cause. The work of the Lord's messengers is tested by the amount of faith they have to withstand the fiery tests, which are part and parcel of the process of salvation.

Church-State Handshake (Revelation 13)

Any union between church and state will eventually obfuscate God's Word. The Bible warns us about this in Revelation 13. Ellen White wrote, "Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the steps of Rome by forming alliance with worldly powers, have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience."²

As Seventh-day Adventists waiting for the second coming of Christ, we should be ever mindful of seemingly harmless entities, even those from other churches who want to link hands with politicians in their efforts to persuade governments to enact specific laws. Again from the pen of Ellen White, we read the following: "Apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast.

"The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, there will exist a state of religious declension similar to that in the first centuries."³

As we move closer to the end of time, it is important for us to heed God's messages given to us through His many prophets, including Ellen White.

REACT

1. Consider some of the arguments people are using in favor of a church-state union. How would you respectfully debate against them?

2. Consider your life over the past year. How has the Word of God, as spoken through His prophets, guided you?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. xi.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 444.

Question and Answer

TESTIMONY

Isa. 6:8

Born in 1827, Ellen White married early and experienced the problems of rearing a family, traveling extensively, preaching, and writing. Despite these circumstances, she stood out as one of the best female authors the world has ever produced.

"The rare insight of Ellen G. White and the persuasive manner in which she presented her subject matter have led many to the conclusion that her mind was especially guided by the Spirit of God."¹

"Ellen White lived in a time of great ignorance of physiology, hygiene, and nutrition. She took the lead in calling for reforms, most of which, now generally accepted, have yielded better health and longer life to mankind. The sound philosophy she set forth by pen and voice has now crystallized into a worldwide system of medical institutions, known for the highest standards of medical practice. . . . Her publications in education have been acclaimed by outstanding educators to be 'fifty years ahead of their times.'"²

Because of her writings and her willingness to share the messages God gave

her, Ellen White is regarded as one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She wrote, "Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communication with his Maker; but since

**"Her mind was especially
guided by the Spirit of God."**

man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants."³

All of God's prophets are in perfect harmony with His Word. To show that she fully depended on God's yardstick to convey her messages, she wrote, "The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language; yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth."⁴

1. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Coldwater, Mich.: Remnant Publications, 1988), p. 10.

2. Ibid.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. v.

4. *Lift Him Up*, p. 118.

The Importance of the Prophets

EVIDENCE

Amos 3:7

In appointing the prophets their work, God shows us that He values human beings enough to choose from among them messengers to represent Him. This in itself is enough evidence to show that we cannot dispense with the prophetic gift to help us understand Scripture and the plan of salvation. Ellen White wrote, "God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write."¹

We can bank our hopes on the works of the great pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who advocated for religious reformation and rang a bell for the second coming of Christ. As one of these reformers, Ellen White wrote, "From age to age the warnings which God has sent to the world by His servants have been received with like incredulity and unbelief. . . .

"Christ declares that there will exist similar unbelief concerning His second coming. As the people of Noah's day 'knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so,' in the words of our Saviour, 'shall also the coming of the Son of man be.' [Matthew 24:39.]"²

"God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies."

Concerning the dangerous union between church and state, she wrote, "When the professed people of God are uniting with the world, living as they live, and joining with them in forbidden pleasure; when the luxury of the world becomes the luxury of the church; when the marriage bells are chiming, and all are looking forward to many years of worldly prosperity,—then, suddenly as the lightning flashes from the heavens, will come the end of their bright visions and delusive hopes."³

During our day, the prophetic gift of Ellen White speaks to the dangers of apostasy in the church. We see this fulfilled before our own eyes as many Protestant churches opt for a reconciliation with the Catholic Church on a number of issues. As present-day Adventists, we should remain firm, both as individuals and as a church, concerning what all of God's prophets said regarding such topics.

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. vi, vii.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 337, 338.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 338, 339.

Prophecy Test

HOW-TO

2 Pet. 1:21

On a hot afternoon, a gentleman was speaking to a large crowd at Homa Bay Municipal Stadium. His speech, titled "Thief Number Two," was quite captivating. In one hand, he held a microphone. In the other hand, he held a black book, which was the center of his focus. However, I observed that people were more interested in him than in his message. He was handsome, and his oratory skills were perfect.

Such scenes are quite common these days. People flock to see a celebrity preacher and to contribute money to that preacher's ministry. But do they really understand what is being preached?

Even some Adventists put Ellen White on a pedestal and quote her without really understanding what she is all about. Because of this, many people feel that Adventists believe in her before they believe in the Bible. Some people have refused to join our church because of this or have left the church because of it. But as with any other prophet of God, we are to test her writings according to the following guidelines:

Even some Adventists put Ellen White on a pedestal.

1. *Consistency with the Word of God.* No prophetic message can match God's standards if it's not consistent with His Word. "The Holy Scriptures are to be accept-

ed as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience."

2. *The amount of truth in the message.* "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1, NIV). The difference between false and true prophets is told by the amount of truth in the content of their messages.

3. *A three-dimensional view of time.* True prophecy must embrace time in three dimensions: the past, the present, and the future. Ellen White wrote, "As the spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed."²

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. xi.

Faith in the Prophets

OPINION

Matt. 25:1–13; Luke 16:31

This week, we concentrated on the prophets, especially Ellen White and the difference her work makes in our lives as Seventh-day Adventists. In my own life, the work of the prophets is very important.

The Spirit of prophecy calls to our attention that like “Korah and his companions, many, even of the professed followers of Christ, are thinking, planning, and working so eagerly for self-exaltation, that in order to gain the sympathy and support of the people, they are ready to pervert the truth, falsifying and misrepresenting the Lord’s servants.”*

That is why we are called to be in the camp of the saints who had faith in God and His messengers. Our actions should reflect our belief and faith in the work of the prophets. However, do we really believe in their writings? The only way we can answer this question is to act according to the instructions of Christ. “‘If you love Me, keep My commandments’” (John 14:15, NKJV). Once we get out of this mindset, we miss the point: “‘But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do the things which I say?’” (Luke 6:46, NKJV).

**In all our communication with
God, one thing is clear. . . .**

In all our communication with God, one thing is clear: either we believe in what He says through the prophets, or we do not. If we believe that the work of reformers is a revelation from God, we will tend to do what God has revealed through them. But when we fail to heed the instructions of the prophets, we lose sight of all the important things God has revealed through them. This lost sight will be revealed in our behavior.

To conclude, our faith in the prophets should be strong enough to keep us from being like the five foolish virgins with no oil in their lamps at the midnight grand reception of the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13).

REACT

1. How have your actions in the past week reflected faith in the prophets?
2. How can we as Adventists convince our friends and the unchurched community about the importance of the prophets?

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 404.

End-Time Prophet for Us

EXPLORATION

Deut. 18:18

CONCLUDE

There should be no question for those who consider themselves Adventists that we are blessed to have the inspired writings of Ellen G. White to further extend godly light on subject matter that pertains to us in these last days. It is very important for us to remember, as Mrs. White counsels, that she is the lesser light pointing to the greater light of the Bible. It would be wise for us to read and to pay heed to the light of guidance that the Lord has raised up for us in these last days as we prepare for His return.

CONSIDER

- Listening to Ellen G. White's writings that have been made available in audio form.
- Singing or playing the hymns that our pioneers sang to give them hope and encouragement, such as "When Peace Like a River."
- Memorizing passages of the Spirit of Prophecy to strengthen your daily devotional life.
- Taking a tour through one of the Adventist historical sites and reminiscing about those pioneer days and the struggles the pioneers encountered.
- Sharing some of the things you have learned through reading the Spirit of Prophecy, such as counsels on health, with a nonbeliever.
- Charting the changes in lifestyle, technology, and events that have taken place from the time of Ellen White to our present time in light of the facts found in Matthew 24.

CONNECT

Pathways to the Pioneers, audio CD series from adventsource.org.
Roger Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*.

The Authority of the Prophets



“Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:20, 21, NKJV).

Sometimes You Need a Prophet

INTRODUCTION

2 Chron. 20:20; Prov. 14:12; 29:18; 1 Thess. 5:20, 21; Rev. 12:17

We live in a world where there are many individuals who purport to tell the future and make predictions, some of which come to pass, some of which are abysmal failures. Some of these individuals are sought out by persons in “high places,” because they want to be sure that the decisions they make will turn out in their favor. There are even people who refuse to get out of their beds until they have read their horoscope or contacted an astrologer.

In biblical times, God used His prophets as His spokespersons to let His people know what needed to be done and what the outcome would be if the prophecies were not heeded. Yet some people disregarded the prophets’ words, and there were dire consequences as a result (Genesis 7, 8). Still others, who should have known better, went to witches (1 Samuel 28) to find God’s will.

In recent times, there has been an increase in natural disasters, such as storms, floods, tsunamis, famines, and earthquakes. This increase brings forcefully to mind the Bible prophecies that speak of wars and rumors of wars, along with pestilences and calamities such as we have never seen before.

**The order was mandatory—
pack your necessities and
leave.**

I moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, two weeks before Hurricane Katrina smashed into Louisiana and Mississippi. I remember when the warnings for evacuation came over the airwaves. They went something like this: “The system is big and will cause devastation and loss of life if you do not leave; it seems as though it is going to be a category 5 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale—winds of more than 150 miles per hour, pelting rain, and storm surges of more than 30 feet.” The order was mandatory—pack your necessities and leave. Batten down, take no chances, leave town, find some place to go! Some people scoffed and said it couldn’t be as bad as it sounded. It’s been a few years since the “prophets” warned of the devastation—some didn’t move, and the symbols on the dwellings tell the story. In some instances, there is nothing and nobody left to tell the tale.

What is your reaction to prophecy? Do you think it’s not meant for you? Do you think it won’t happen in your lifetime? Do you examine your situation and put your house in order, or do you make an appointment with “the witch of Endor” to tell you what is really going to happen?

Is God Concerned?

EVIDENCE

Mark 1:21–27; Acts 16:25–34

Archaeological digs continually unearth scrolls, cuneiform tablets, ruins of ancient cities, and more that verify the writings of the prophets of old. But who gave these prophets the authority, wisdom, and words to share these predictions, these warnings, so that we could make a conscious, informed decision about our eternal future? We are reminded in Revelation 19:10 that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Genesis reminds us that the serpent, Satan, would bruise Christ’s heel, but that Christ would deal a deathblow to Satan’s head. This was fulfilled in Christ’s death and resurrection.

Noah was told to warn the country while building the ark of refuge. The animals obeyed, but most people did not, thus perishing in the Flood. Jonah warned the people of Nineveh about their rebellion. They confessed and turned from their evil deeds, and God saved them. Lot was told to leave his hometown because God abhorred its wickedness. He obeyed, while fire and brimstone destroyed those who remained behind.

Moses was given a job to do but was reluctant because he thought he could not rightly represent God by his speech; but the prophecies of Moses are evidenced by his prediction of the plagues of Egypt, which were largely disregarded by Pharaoh, who questioned God’s veracity and asked, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (Exod. 5:2, NKJV). He believed, but only after his firstborn lay dead.

**He believed, but only after his
firstborn lay dead.**

Jehoiakim read the prophecies of Jeremiah and thought that by burning the scroll the prophecies of destruction would disappear. Young King Josiah learned of the misdeeds of his people and acknowledged their collective sins and inquired of the prophet what he should do. His obedience led to the saving of an entire nation. The destruction of Jerusalem was foretold, and those who believed fled and were saved. Sometimes we understand after the fulfillment. Let this not be the case with Christ’s second coming.

REACT

What of predictions and “new” light in the religious world? Can they be regarded as prophecy?

"Thus Saith the Lord"

LOGOS

Exod. 4:10–16; 2 Chron. 20:14–20; Hos. 12:13; 2 Pet. 1:21

Divine Power-Sharing (Exod. 4:10–16)

There are several Greek "power" words that are often used in the New Testament. Two of these words are *exousia* and *dunamis*. *Exousia* is translated "authority," while *dunamis* is translated "might," "power," "strength," etc. The source of ultimate authority is God, who delegates authority to His human agents, including governments. Read Romans 13:1.

Prophets of God are divinely appointed human agents who work and speak on behalf of Him. They are sometimes also given supernatural power to do miracles. When they speak God's words, those who hear can usually discern the divine authority that accentuates their utterances. When God gives authority to the prophet, He also gives the prophet courage to carry out the assignment.

When Moses was commissioned by God to go to Egypt, the shepherd of Midian was fearful. However, the Lord assured him of His presence (Exod. 4:12). The former shepherd, now prophet, went boldly into the presence of Pharaoh and demanded that he let

Success in any line is guaranteed when we obey the word of prophecy.

God's people go (Exod. 5:1).

The authority and fearlessness manifested by Moses after he was imbued with the Spirit of prophecy shocked the king and his government officials.

Speaking Authoritatively (2 Chron. 20:14–20)

God's prophets bring messages of warning, counsel, doctrine, admonition, correction, and instruction regarding God's ways for the benefit of His people and the furtherance of His cause. Success in any line is guaranteed when we obey the word of prophecy. In times of distress and confusion, in periods of uncertainty, the Spirit of God speaks through the prophets to assure people of His presence and power to deliver them.

When Judah was surrounded by the Ammonites and Moabites, the prophet Jahaziel spoke saying, "Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's'" (2 Chron. 20:15, NKJV). The voice of God was heard through the words of the prophet and

the king responded. Read that response in 2 Chronicles 20:20.

The Source of Prophetic Authority (2 Pet. 1:21)

The Bible reveals that prophets usually refer to God as the authority for the message they deliver. Statements like “thus saith the Lord” and “the word of the Lord came to me” are evidence that the prophets did not take upon themselves the responsibility to speak what they thought God wanted the people to hear. The apostle Peter, himself a prophet, states, “No prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke” (2 Pet. 1:21, NRSV).

The psalmist David acknowledged the Lord’s authority in giving prophetic messages through human instruments when he said, “‘The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, / And His word was on my tongue’” (2 Sam. 23:2, NKJV).

Israel’s history reveals that as long as the people remained faithful to God and followed the directives of the prophets, they received God’s blessings and protection. Disobedience to the messages of the prophets was disobedience to God.

The authority of the prophets is really God’s power working through imperfect humans, who sometimes didn’t understand some of the things they spoke about, and who could only do unusual things through the power of the indwelling Christ (Amos 3:7).

How God Used the Prophets (Hos. 12:13)

Many of God’s prophets were His servants in many other areas. The prophet Haggai was a counselor and motivator to Zerubbabel, the chief builder of the temple after the return from Babylonian exile. Daniel was a statesman under several kings and was instrumental in governing the affairs of Babylon and of Media and Persia. David was king, builder, musician, army commander, and one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had.

Prophets were teachers, kings, politicians, military personnel, judges, etc. Thus, the authority bestowed on them was multifaceted. Read Hosea 12:13. The preservation of a nation by a prophet suggests that the prophet was given authority by God to operate in many areas other than only speaking God’s word.

A study of the history of the Adventist Church will reveal a similar manner of the operation of the prophetic gift in Ellen White. As such, her writings also carry divine authority, for they, too, were given through divine inspiration.

REACT

1. How would you respond to individuals today who claim to be prophets?
2. How do you regard someone who speaks authoritatively from the Bible? Does that person have prophetic authority?
3. How would you expect a modern-day prophet to manifest his or her authority?

Why Believe the Prophets?

TESTIMONY

1 Thess. 5:20, 21

"Prophecy has been fulfilling, line upon line. . . The more fully we accept the light presented by the Holy Spirit through the consecrated servants of God, the deeper and surer, even as the eternal throne, will appear the truths of ancient prophecy; we shall be assured that men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost . . . These messages were given, not for those that uttered the prophecies, but for us who are living amid the scenes of their fulfillment."¹

"God chose prophets whom He commissioned to call the people to repentance, and to warn them of the evils that their course would surely bring upon them. 'The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place' (2 Chron. 36:15)."²

"To the end of time, men will arise to create confusion and rebellion among those who claim to be representatives of the true God. Those who prophesy lies will encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When the terrible results of

their evil deeds are made manifest, they will seek, if possible, to make the one who has faithfully warned them, responsible for their difficulties, even as the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes. But as surely as the

"Those who prophesy lies will encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing."

words of Jehovah through His prophet were vindicated anciently, so surely will the certainty of His messages be established today."³

"The world has never been left without witnesses to the mighty power of God to save from sin. And in the closing scenes of this earth's history, when iniquity will have reached a height never before attained, it will still be possible to say of the remnant people who have remained true to God, 'Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.'"⁴

1. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 114.

2. *Christian Experience and Teachings*, p. 239.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 442.

4. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 102.

Validating a Prophet

HOW-TO

Isa. 8:20; Jer. 28:9; Matt. 7:20; 1 John 4:1-3

God's plan for reaching the minds of men and women through the messages of His prophets has been counterfeited by Satan in the form of false prophets. Persons claiming to be prophets make their predictions to governments and the general public, advising them regarding the outcomes of various situations. Scenarios include prophecies concerning national events, who will be married to whom, and what natural disasters will take place. How can we measure the authenticity of such prophets?

Test 1: Read Isaiah 8:20. The "law and testimony" are clearly references to the divinely inspired instructions given through the prophets. If any teaching or action deviates from the pattern prescribed in the revealed standard of truth, it is to be recognized as coming from the realm of darkness.¹

Test 2: Read Matthew 7:20. Here, Jesus presents another test to be applied to prophets. Does the so-called prophet bear the fruit of the Spirit? What influence does the prophet's teaching have on others?²

Test 3: Read 1 John 4:2. This test is broader than simply claiming to believe that Jesus Christ lived. It is the recognition that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.³

How can we measure the authenticity of such prophets?

Test 4: Read Jeremiah 28:9. Prediction is not the major work of the prophet, but in many instances the prophet claimed that by divine inspiration he or she had been given insight into the future. Part of the testing of a prophet is observing whether or not predictions are fulfilled.

The Bible says that in the end times, many false prophets will emerge. This end is fast approaching, and many are claiming the gift of prophecy. As Christians, we must follow the standards of the Bible and allow God's words to direct us.

REACT

Contrast prophets/prophecy from the Bible with more modern prophets/prophecy (for example, Nostradamus). How authentic are today's prophets?

1. T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, pp. 100, 101.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 105.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

OPINION

Isa. 44:24–26; Rev. 22:18, 19

A prophecy is not just a good guess. Who hasn't heard of Nostradamus, one of the world's famous publisher of prophecies? In biblical times, soothsayers often claimed to be from God, bringing predictions of the future. In modern times, we often access the opinions of those claiming to have signs of the future without realizing the seriousness of doing so.

Chinese fortune cookies seemingly have a unique message for the reader, but these are actually random messages put in for entertainment. The recipients of the cookies are the ones who put the importance and accuracy to its content. The same goes for horoscopes, including yearly Chinese astrology charts. Many of these "predictions" go to press at least six weeks before the magazine hits the stands, but still attract quite a following. Some persons compare predictions in monthly magazines with others in the daily or weekly newspapers, giving credence

to individuals who claim to be predictors of the future.

**It's not 85 to 90 percent sure.
It's fully assured!**

According to the Bible, God is the only one who knows the future, and when He sees fit, He appoints a prophet to speak to His people.

Isaiah 44:24–26 points out that when He gives a message, it will come true. It's not 85 to 90 percent sure. It's fully assured! Read Isaiah 44:25.

At times, certain individuals have "predicted" a particular happening, and from all appearances it came true. This oftentimes encourages further research into all predictions made by this individual in an attempt to give credence to that person.

God, the designer and teller of the future, promised, not predicted, the first coming of Jesus. He allowed His prophets to pinpoint the time and revealed His will to the wise men for them to see His promise fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. All of this was to help us have a glimpse of His undying love for us. He also has promised that Christ will return to claim His own. Hold on to His promise (John 13:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:16–18).

REACT

1. What importance should be given to the prophecies outlined in the Bible?
2. How should we relate to those who claim to be all-knowing?
3. What are the characteristics of a true prophet?

In the Spirit of Prophecy

EXPLORATION

Rev. 19:10

CONCLUDE

Fortune-telling is comprised of human predictions and is demon-inspired and unreliable. But God's prophecies, foretold through chosen human agents, have been fulfilled, or are happening before our very eyes. The Bible speaks volumes about the prophetic gift. It shows how God uses His prophets in different ways, and how He gives them authority and even supernatural powers. In advising us to "test the spirits," Scripture tells us that it is our duty and privilege to study for ourselves to determine which prophecies meet the requirements of God.

CONSIDER

- Reading or rereading a book, chapter, or article by Ellen G. White. Also read one about her or about the Spirit of Prophecy, written by someone else in the church. (See publications listed below.)
- Reflecting on and praying about your personal attitude toward prophecy, including whether you find yourself doubting or even despising it.
- Writing an essay, poem, or song about Ellen White's last public appearance and its importance to the youth of the church. (See C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World*, page 204.)
- Drawing or painting some aspect of the scene on Mount Carmel involving Elijah and the false prophets (1 Kings 18:17–46).
- Writing a letter to an imaginary Christian friend who says he or she does not want to do one of the "lesser" ministries (like singing or helping with fellowship dinners) because he or she prefers to be a prophet.
- Listing the signs of prophecy being fulfilled in your lifetime, arranging them from the most to the least dramatic.

CONNECT

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 873, 876, 877. (See note on Revelation 9:10 and "Additional Note on Chapter 19.")

C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists*, "Inspired to Save Souls," especially chap. 25; F. D. Nichols, *E. G. White and Her Critics*.

The Integrity of the Prophetic Gift



" 'As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak' " (2 Chron. 18:13, NKJV).

The Cost of Future Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

1 John 4:1, 2

The Bible is full of prophecies, many of which have come to pass and many of which are unfulfilled. The prophecies in the Bible that have been fulfilled indicate that the Bible is God's infallible Word. He gives us these prophecies not as a way to see the future in our individual lives, but as a way to see into our spiritual future by pointing to our Savior.

There are many other prophecies in the world today in addition to the ones predicted in the Bible. Of these prophecies, which ones can we believe? Prophecy is big business. We see this while going about our everyday routines. Prophecies are predicted in the tabloids located at the supermarket checkout stands, and there are places in neighborhoods where so-called prophets or psychics will tell you your future for a fee. We can even make a phone call from the comfort of our own home to get someone's prediction. Of course, we need to have a credit card to get that information. People want to know the future and are willing to spend their money for a glimpse of it. That is why there are so many prophecies today.

Prophecy is big business.

There are also people in churches who claim to have the gift of prophecy. How do we know if these people are actually foretelling something that will happen in the future or if their predictions are false? There is only one way to know for sure which prophecies are true, and that is by studying the Bible. First John 4:1, 2 states, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (NIV).

The Bible is the only source we should use when deciding which prophecies to believe. Only God is omniscient. Therefore He is the only one who can actually see into the future. If we test prophecies by His Word, then we can know which ones will be fulfilled and which ones are counterfeit. The Bible gives definite ways to test all the prophecies.

God wants us to know some of what will happen in the future, so we will be prepared for them. We must always remember that it is God's will that is being fulfilled when we read these prophecies.

What He Said . . . Not What I Said

LOGOS

2 Sam. 7:1–7; 1 Kings 22:10–34; Dan. 8:27

Getting It Right the Second Time (2 Sam. 7:1–7)

When David sought permission to build the Lord a temple, the prophet Nathan said, “Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you” (2 Sam. 7:3, NIV). Later Nathan returned to David to tell him the Lord did not approve the plan. He was, in essence, saying, “I was wrong, forget what I said. God Himself told me what He really wants.”

There are times when a prophet’s humanity is evident, but that does not erase the fact that he is, indeed, God’s messenger. Nathan, with the grace that only a man of God could have, turned himself around and went back to David. A prophet doesn’t have the luxury of putting his or her own thoughts and opinions into a “Thus saith the Lord” moment. However, it’s comforting to know that when that does happen, God works to keep His message pure, even telling His prophets that they got it wrong.

Prophets are not offered the option of choosing whether they want to hear the good news or the bad news first.

Not What You Want Me to Say (1 Kings 22:10–34)

The prophet Micaiah was told to prophesy a great victory for King Ahab of Israel. The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah told him to prophesy in agreement with the other four hundred or so prophets who had assembled before the king. Micaiah followed this instruction and also predicted an overwhelming victory for the king. Ahab, however, was convinced that Micaiah was not speaking the words of God and asked him for the real message. Micaiah then delivered the news that, if they went into battle, Ahab would die. For this prophecy, Micaiah was turned over to the ruler of the city and put in prison until Ahab returned.

For some reason, unspecified in the biblical narrative, Ahab does not believe Micaiah is telling the truth when a victory is predicted. Ahab believes Micaiah’s prophecy of defeat and death but continues out into battle, during which even his disguise does not prevent him from being fatally wounded.

Not What They Said (1 Kings 22:10–18)

With about four hundred “prophets” of God prophesying victory for Israel, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, still felt a need to inquire of a prophet of the Lord. As

Micaiah was brought to the king, the messenger informed him of the prophecy of victory, telling Micaiah to agree with the other four hundred men and to speak favorably to Ahab. Micaiah's reply is, "I can tell him only what the Lord tells me." Apparently, Jehoshaphat was not the only person to doubt the prophetic skills of the four hundred men. The messenger sent to summon Micaiah felt it was necessary to tell this prophet of God the answer to King Ahab's question.

Micaiah understood that it doesn't matter what four hundred men are saying. What matters is what the one and only God is saying. And sometimes clinging to the words of God has you going against popular consensus. But Micaiah's thoughts were not about being different from everyone else. Rather, his thoughts were about being on the same side as God.

A Look Behind the Scenes (Dan. 8:27)

Daniel narrates the extent of the exhaustion he felt after seeing a particularly appalling vision. He was so drained of strength that he lay ill for several days before he was finally able to return to work. This exhaustion that Daniel feels comes right after the vision, when he is alone, even before he has had the time to tell anybody or even to write it down. When given a vision, prophets are not offered the option of choosing whether they want to hear the good news or the bad news first. The message is just delivered, and then, if necessary, explained in further detail.

"It was beyond understanding" (Dan. 8:27, NIV). If you have ever traveled to another country and plugged a 110-volt electrical appliance into a 220-volt socket, you have a partial understanding of how it must feel for a fallen human mind to be plugged into God's divine knowledge and wisdom. And yet, there is very little that God's true prophets have not been willing to endure.

Conclusion

A prophet's integrity must be questioned in order to find a true prophet of God. This questioning of authority does not hinder the prophet's message, but rather enhances it. The good news for the prophet, at least, is that it does not take a good person to recognize one of God's prophets. And the good news for the rest of us is, once we have found a true prophet of God, we can be certain that God is working through him or her and that He is actively monitoring the delivery of His messages to us.

REACT

1. If it's so tough being a prophet, why be one?
2. What might be some factors that keep prophets motivated?
3. What advantages are there to being a true prophet of God?
4. Why does God need to use prophets?
5. How can prophets and their messages motivate us to strengthen our relationship with God?

A Priceless Gift Yet Worthy

TESTIMONY

1 Cor. 14:29, 37

"The gift of prophecy was used to prepare the way for Christ's first advent. 'Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' Hebrews 2:17. To work out the plan of salvation it was essential that God become man, partake fully of his nature, live among men, be tempted in all points as other men are, and in human flesh gain complete victory over sin. To bring man's thinking and living back into harmony with God's, a revelation had to be given through a life. Choosing men to work for other men and to pass on to them special messages from God is obviously the most effective general method that could have been chosen. Thus, through prophets the Creator accomplished the preparation needed before Jesus came to earth.

"Prophets stood before the people as representatives of the Lord. Their very presence showed the people that God was sufficiently interested in them and

close enough to them to choose men from among them to represent Him. They were men 'subject to like passions' as their neighbors; not visitors from another world, but men among men. While the plan was subject to dangers because of the weakness of

**"Through prophets the
Creator accomplished the
preparation needed before
Jesus came to earth."**

humanity in the persons selected, yet it possessed inherent possibilities for success not present in any other method."¹

"Prophets kept men constantly aware of God's instruction to them. They must never entertain the idea that they had no access to divine counsel."²

The prophetic gift is still used today to prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ. If we look at the prophets before Christ's first advent, we see they said what God told them to say. They never gave polished, wordy speeches. They were upright and honest. They used their gift as they were moved by the Spirit. When Nathan came to David, he said what God told him to say. He did not add or deduct anything. David also heard God's message loud and clear, because he heard God through His messenger (2 Sam. 12:1-16).

1. *A Prophet Among You*, p. 24.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Old, but Still Valid

EVIDENCE

Jer. 29:11; 1 Thess. 5:19–22

The gift of prophecy not only helps us to focus on the future but reminds us now and again to remember how God has led His people in the past and that He has a plan for us here and now (Jer. 29:11).

An important requirement of effective leadership is to earn the trust of other people, for without trust, no one will consent to follow. Trust is the conviction that leaders mean what they say. It is a belief in something that in these days seems to be rather old-fashioned—integrity, which is only given from above.¹ The solution is not to reject or betray all prophecy, but rather to test all prophecy (1 Thess. 5:19–22).

Prophets must humbly accept the truth that they see only through a glass dimly and that they know only in part (1 Cor. 13:12). Mature prophets urge everyone to whom they prophesy to judge, test, and compare with Scripture everything they say or write. They are not offended when people are careful.

“Prophecy will confirm and broaden the vision; it cannot create one if nothing is there. Vision is created through prayer. . . . If these things are absent; we need to be restoring people to God, not creating vision for empty hearts.”²

People become fearless when
there is no integrity.

People become fearless when there is no integrity. This truth is written in the history of humankind. The fact that there is little integrity can be partially attributed to an escapist mentality that has encouraged many sincere Christians to be passive and pessimistic about their role on earth.

The prophet Micaiah would have asked the people of his time, “Does our past really embarrass us? No. Our past is old, but still valid.”

REACT

1. How do you behave when the history of the Christian church is brought before you?
2. Does your past embarrass you in the light of the gift of prophecy? If so, what can you do about it?

1. Graham Cooke, *Developing Your Prophetic Gifting* (Elle, U.K.: Sovereign World, 1994), p. 80.

2. Arthur Patrick, “Does Our Past Embarrass Us?” *Ministry: International Journal for Clergy* (April 1991), p. 7.

Believing in the Prophetic Gift

HOW-TO

Joel 2:28–31; 2 Pet. 1:21

Even though sin ended face-to-face communication between God and humans, He did not end His intimacy with humanity. Instead, He developed other ways of communicating with us. He sent His messages of love, encouragement, and warning through the prophets, of whom Ellen G. White was one.

How does one believe in the integrity of the prophetic gift? The Bible gives us specific guidelines by which we can distinguish and test the integrity of a prophet.

1. *Agreement with the Bible.* “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20, NKJV). This means that the message of a prophet of integrity should agree with the Bible.

2. *Fulfillment of predictions.* The accuracy of a prophet’s predictions must be demonstrated.

3. *The incarnation of Christ.* “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ

**Our problem is that we doubt
a lot.**

has come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:2, 3, NKJV). After all, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10, NKJV).

4. *A prophet’s “fruit.”* A prophet of integrity bears good fruit. (See Matthew 7:20.) This doesn’t mean that prophets must be absolutely perfect. But it does mean that they should be developing the fruit of the Spirit in their walk with Christ.

The writings of Ellen White are not a substitute for Scripture. Ellen White herself believed and taught that the Bible was the ultimate norm for the church. She wrote, “The holy scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of his will. They are the standards of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”* She saw her work as that of leading people back to the Bible, helping them to understand and to apply biblical principles to their lives.

Our problem is that we doubt a lot. Why? Because we lack faith. I pray that our hearts will be ever open to accept this gift and not only the gift, but the Giver of the gift as well.

REACT

If we believe in the Creator God who loves us so much that He gave His life for us, why is it so hard to accept that He would give us prophets?

**God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 198.

What to Do With Ellen White

OPINION

Rev. 12:17; 19:10

Early in my high school years, I developed an appreciation for the writings of Ellen White. Before that I had known who she was but hadn't read any of her books. Her writings showed me Christ's love and made it more tangible to me. At other times, when my busy life left nothing but a few minutes for spiritual things, I'd notice my spiritual strength and appetite waning. In my busyness, I'd stop reading the Bible regularly. For me, reading *Steps to Christ* would reignite that hunger for a connection with God and for the Bible again. It always helped me to return to an enjoyable daily walk with God.

I believe Mrs. White's writings are also important to the church as a whole. In reading through the Bible, we see that God has provided guidance and instruction through individuals from the very beginning of sin. Moses was used to help lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Noah built a boat and tried to get the world in it. John the Baptist readied everyone for the King of the universe to walk among us. So wouldn't God also use individuals to share the final proclamation of the world's closure? Seeing how He's worked in the past, we can be certain He'd be just as involved in the future. Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 let us know that this final campaign will be accompanied by the gift of prophecy given by the Spirit of God. I believe Ellen White was given this gift.

Each of us has to decide what to do with Ellen White.

Each of us has to decide what to do with Ellen White. If her writings are from God, though, shouldn't we treat them as such? God would have sent the messages for a reason, right? And for those who aren't sure if she's legit, shouldn't they find out? If she's really God's messenger, we'll need and want to learn what He sent her to say, right? He's God whether He's spoken to us directly or through the gift of prophecy, so we always need to be ready and willing to accept His message.

REACT

What would be the risk in not recognizing or acknowledging a messenger from God, especially in these last days?

A Perfect Message of Hope

EXPLORATION

2 Chron. 18:13

CONCLUDE

In order to reach all of His children, God often chooses regular individuals to act as His prophets and carriers of His message. Many prophets were imperfect, their shortcomings obvious. However, God's message was, and continues to be, perfect. Because His message is perfect, any individual He chooses He will enable to share the message. Due to the inevitable human characteristics inherent in prophets, hearers of their message must question their authority and authenticity. There are biblical criteria to accomplish this. When the criteria are met, the prophets' integrity is emboldened, rather than diminished, by the scrutiny. Ellen G. White is a prophetess who met the strict biblical criteria designed for prophets. Her strict adherence to the Word of God separates her from modern-day fortune-tellers and visionary quacks.

CONSIDER

- Writing a list of characteristics for a prophet based on the Bible and seeing if any modern-day prophets and/or televangelists live up to the scrutiny.
- Drawing a picture of a biblical disaster that was prophesied.
- Researching on the Internet to see how many religions or sects have a prophet or prophetess and finding out if they meet the biblical requirements.
- Reading a book such as *1984*, *Brave New World*, or *Fahrenheit 451* and summarizing whether the future scenarios these authors imagined are occurring in our time.
- Asking a doctor about what equipment and methods are used to predict a baby's gender and how reliable they are.
- Tossing a coin in the air ten times, predicting the probability of how many times it will land with a particular side up, and then calculating the percentage of times you were right.
- Praying with a friend or neighbor regarding an imposing problem and following up with them later on to see how the situation turned out.

CONNECT

Marvin Moore, *The Crisis of the End Time*; Steve Wohlberg, *End Time Delusions*.

The Message of the Prophets



“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16, NKJV).

One Who Speaks Forth God's Message

INTRODUCTION

Deut. 18:18

"Deuteronomy 18 presents a prophecy that was completely fulfilled only in the ministry of Jesus. It serves as a basic passage to help in understanding the work of the prophet. The heart of the matter is expressed in these words: 'I . . . will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' Deuteronomy 18:18. The 'prophet' referred to in the verse is a *nabi*—a man who speaks forth God's message."¹

"The Greek word translated 'prophet' is *prophetes*, which means 'one who speaks forth.' . . . *Prophetes* is used as the equivalent of *nabi*; both words infer a recognition of the prophet as a speaker for God."²

God revealed His will to His prophets through visions or dreams or by speaking directly to them. They were instructed to deliver the message orally, in writing, or through enactment.

Are we listening to and obeying the messages given to us through His prophets?

There were prophets who wrote portions of Holy Scriptures, prophets who wrote none of Scripture, and prophets who only gave oral testimony. Hosea received an oral message from God to marry an adulterous

woman in order to send a message and warning to Israel. Moses was given oral instruction to go down to Egypt and give Pharaoh a message. Daniel and John faithfully delivered God's messages. God also used the prophetesses Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah to communicate His will to His people.

Ellen G. White, also a prophetess, received messages from God for His end-time church. She was instructed to speak and to write what God revealed to her through visions. From Genesis to Revelation, God has used the prophets to speak to the people for Him and to make known His will. The prophet to God's remnant church speaks the same messages to us today.

Since the prophets are God's spokespersons, we must ask, Are we listening to and obeying the messages given to us through His prophets?

1. T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, pp. 52, 53.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The Test of a True Prophet

EVIDENCE

1 John 4:1, 2

Throughout history prophets have been used to deliver a specific message to God's people. Usually when His people strayed from His commands, He sent a message of warning through one of His messengers.

There were many false prophets with messages of deception. First John 4:2 states that those prophets who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and has come from heaven, are of God.

In 1 Kings 22, we find Micaiah, God's messenger, at odds with four hundred other prophets who were not of God. True prophets will deliver their message even though they may be vastly outnumbered and carry an unpopular message. Some believe that there has been no need for a prophet since the last of the Bible was written. However, the Bible predicts the need for and the coming of the Spirit of prophecy in the end time.

We have a specific message: He's coming back to claim His own. We must be ready when He comes! But the odds are against us: the Advent message is not necessarily a popular one, but we deliver it anyway.

We must only deliver what God has told us. Our message is not charismatic or cult based. It does not lead in some new direction or to a new philosophy. It does not lead us away from the Scripture but directly back to the Scripture!

But the odds are against us.

The prophet, Ellen G. White, has been under fire from forces both outside and inside the church. To listen to someone else from either the pro or the con side without doing your own testing leaves you vulnerable to the forces of evil.

Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth" (NRSV). We are urged to study! How can we test Ellen White if we haven't studied the Word?

Remember, God's prophets can only deliver what He has told them. He does not contradict Himself.

REACT

1. Why is so much of Ellen White's material under attack from inside the church?
2. How would you characterize your impression of the Spirit of prophecy as it relates to our church?

Kevin D. Mosby, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

LOGOS

Exod. 20:1–17; Leviticus 16; Matt. 24:24–36; Rom. 3:21; Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:23

Ancient Imperial Walls Versus God's Plan (Exod. 20:1–17; Leviticus 16)

Centuries ago, the Chinese constructed a massive wall to keep the barbarians from overrunning the Middle Kingdom. Centuries ago Emperor Hadrian decreed a wall across most of the width of England to keep back the savage Picts and Scots. Today, both walls are crumbling tourist curiosities, and the peoples have long since merged into other entities.

Centuries ago, a Christian church erected an array of edicts and traditions to protect its growing secular power. In so doing, it created the doctrinal equivalent of those ancient imperial walls. Old and New Testaments seemed irreconcilable. It took a Martin Luther to rediscover the fact that "the just shall live by faith."

**He is moved by compassion
by our plight.**

But biblical tourism, like its secular equivalent, tends to rebuild the walls for the curious uninformed. Even Adventists are not immune to the idea that the "ancient regime" of the Old Testament was swept

away by "grace." This puts us into the pagan model of sacrifice for its own end, and ignores the bigger picture of Heaven's plan to reclaim God's entire creation.

The Bigger Picture (Hebrews 12)

On the mount of blessing, Jesus outlined the moral landscape of God's kingdom. As with other parallels between the Old and New Testaments, this one gave fuller meaning to the first. It did not replace it. Read Matthew 5:17.

The law was words on stone. It was God instructing a simple people how to relate to Him. The law was played out in ritualized form for an often uncomprehending people. It was the backdrop for prophetic utterance through the centuries covered by the Old Testament. It cannot be construed as evidence of a false way to God. It is God progressively extending Himself as human capacity and need required.

Paul is correct in Hebrews when he speaks of the necessity of faith. Read Hebrews 11:6. But this is not the faith of presumption or something of the "I'm all right, you're all right," school of theology. This faith makes effective what God has always wanted to do for us—implant within us the mindset of love, the divine character.

Paul makes very clear what is going on when he brings up Sinai in Hebrews 12.

He reminds us of the fear that came upon those people gathered there around the mount as Moses received the tables of the law from God's own hand. "But you," he says to his New Testament readers, "have come to Mount Zion and . . . to Jesus" (verses 22–24, NKJV). Of course, the "new" covenant or agreement is more effective, because the Lamb prefigured in the sanctuary has been fully revealed as the Son of God sacrificing Himself for us. However, this in no way relieves us of responsibility. Read Hebrews 12:26, 28.

Love's Evidence (Matt. 9:1–6)

Years ago in Australia, I was troubled by the developing confusion over faith and works. Far too many people were coming to the dangerous conclusion that we "are"—present continuous tense—fine with God so long as we give a Cain-like offering of the good deeds that we think appropriate. On one occasion, I asked if we were not confusing legalities with practicalities. The legality, of course, is the right God obtained by allowing His Son to die the death that sin demands of us. It was the right to save us in spite of past disobedience (Rom. 3:25). The practicality is how He now works with us to instill within us obedience and love—that holiness, without which one cannot see God.

In the generation before the American colonies formed themselves into a new republic, there was a spiritual stirring, known as "The Great Awakening." Practical godliness became a goal for many as they rediscovered great biblical truths. Popular English revivalist George Whitefield toured the colonies and shook the status quo. Perhaps the major revivalist in the colonies themselves was Jonathan Edwards. He is remembered for his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." However, that does not accurately represent the true godliness and central logic of the revival. Another of his sermons better relates to the point of our texts for this week and the need to see a harmony between grace and law. This sermon was titled "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

God has loved us with "an everlasting love." But our human affections tend to wax and wane. The "New Covenant" is God's love made evident through action—the prefigured sacrifice "made manifest."

There is no wall high enough to hide the loving reality of what God has already revealed to us. He is moved by compassion by our plight.

As with the man sick with palsy, God tells us, "'Your sins are forgiven you. . . . Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'" (Matt. 9:2–6, NKJV). He expects us to walk in the Way. To do otherwise is to show that we are not made whole.

REACT

Leviticus 16 gives an excellent overview of the sin problem. In what ways does this chapter cover more than the death and resurrection of Christ?

Prophets Old and New

TESTIMONY

2 Pet. 1:20, 21

Seventh-day Adventist doctrines are based completely on the Bible. Many do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. A small group of Adventist pioneers such as Hiram Edson and Ellen G. White spent time searching the Scriptures for truth. They often remained together, sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word, in order to understand its meaning and to prepare to teach it with power. In vision, God gave Ellen White a clear explanation of the passages with instructions on how to teach it effectively to others.¹

In the same way, God used prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel to preach future events to the people in their day as well as for the last-day church. They also spent time in fervent prayer and study and developed a strong relationship with God. Thus, they spoke prophecies concerning Christ, His mission, and His priesthood; the fall of Jerusalem; the rise and fall of kingdoms; and the end of time. Their words were solely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 18:18 says,

**“Heed the instruction; follow
the light.”**

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (NIV).

Ellen G. White says that we should “study the testimonies.” She states that they “are written for our admonition and encouragement, upon whom the ends of the world are come. If God’s people will not study these messages that are sent to them from time to time, they are guilty of rejecting light. . . . God is sending instruction to His people. Heed the instruction; follow the light. The Lord has controversy with His people because in the past they have not heeded His instruction and followed His guidance.”²

Today, if we would pray, search the Scriptures diligently, and develop a solid relationship with Christ, we would be prepared to be a light that shines to the world.

REACT

1. What does the Bible say about how we should study? See Isaiah 28:10.
2. How often should we use other sources to help shed light on the Bible?
3. What other sources would be suitable to use?

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 206.

2. *Ibid.*, book 3, p. 358.

Overcoming Prophetic Arrogance

Wednesday
March 4

HOW-TO

Leviticus 16; Pss. 8:3, 4; 23; Rom. 3:27, 28

When I was high school age, I remember my excitement over the game of basketball. I enjoyed watching it, but I really enjoyed playing. While dribbling, passing, and shooting jump shots or layups were all enjoyable parts of the experience, I really enjoyed dunking the ball the most. I spent hours doing different leg exercises trying to increase my vertical leap. I researched as to which leg was better to jump off from and which angle was best for success. I started feeling rather good about my dunking.

But then I took a trip to visit my brother. He was in college and invited me down to the gym to play a few games of half-court with some of his friends. I was proud when one of the guys asked me to show him a dunk. I flew what I felt was high off the ground and slammed the ball with confidence. He smirked. Wasn't he impressed?

Then he said to my brother, "Hey Bob, why don't you show him one of yours." At first, my brother resisted; but after much coaxing, he agreed. He leisurely

**I . . . slammed the ball with
confidence.**

jogged up to the basket and then proceeded to jump considerably higher than I did, taking the ball down to his feet while in the air, and then dunking it with two hands with time to spare. Talk about instant humility!

As Adventist Christians, we often yield to the temptation of arrogance, because we study our Bibles and know the commandments, the prophecies, and healthful lifestyle principles so well. If you find yourself sensing that this is an area God wants you to work on, here are some questions to help you focus:

Where is your focus? The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–41 teaches us a great deal about the importance of focus. Take time to review the attitudes of these sisters.

Does knowledge or Jesus save you? Romans 3:27 points out that our salvation is only through faith in Jesus, not of our own works.

So what is there to brag about? Paul says that he will "glory" in his infirmities so that the power of Christ will be on him (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thursday
March 5

The Gift of Prophecy

OPINION

2 Kings 19:32–34; Jude 20

When I was a little girl, birthdays were always so exciting, especially when it was time to open the gifts. I can count only one time when I was disappointed, but I managed to work through it and enjoy the gift anyway.

I never thought about how wonderful the gift of prophecy can be to us. Better than gold or silver, the gift of prophecy gives us hope and a promise. God knew that His children would need hope and direction along life's journey, so he placed in His Word promises and encouragement as well as warnings which were repeated time and again through His prophets.

God inspired prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, who constantly instructed, guided, and warned the people of the pitfalls of prosperity or impending doom and destruction if they refused to heed His warnings. When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, threatened to overtake Hezekiah, king of Judah, Hezekiah immediately sought word from the Lord through Isaiah. Because Isaiah was a God-fearing man, he was able to advise Hezekiah. Through Isaiah, God told Hezekiah what would happen. Read 2 Kings 19:32–34. Sennacherib never did enter the city. One hundred

and eight thousand of his men were killed, and eventually, he died at the hands of his own sons.

The greatest gift of prophecy is knowing the final outcome.

God has never left His children without guidance. Even today, we have the same awesome gift of

prophecy to help us navigate the final events. The prophecy helps us know that even though disasters will strike, God is in control. As we study the Scriptures and watch the signs of a world rapidly wrapping up, we need not fear the future. The greatest gift of prophecy is knowing the final outcome—the end of evil itself.

Prophets of old foretold of impending disaster, but they also gave the people hope in the coming Savior. The gift of prophecy inspires us to persevere and to be transformed in the image of Christ. The gift of prophecy teaches us that what God says, He does. He has instructed His prophets to warn all the people that He's coming soon, to be prepared and stay ready.

At times, it appears that Satan is winning the battle. Many people become confused and disillusioned, but the gift of prophecy helps us discern which path is the right path. Prophets and their messages encourage and inspire us to continue our journey, to look beyond what we can physically see and understand, and to remain faithful to the One who promises us eternal life. What a hope we have in the gift of prophecy.

Learning to Hear

EXPLORATION

Deut. 18:18; 1 John 4:1, 2

CONCLUDE

The Bible is about God wanting to communicate with His people and to restore the relationship He enjoyed with humans before the Fall. One of the ways He has accomplished these goals throughout history was to give specific messages to specific people. Often these messages were not easy to hear, because they were given in unusual ways and because they were challenging or even frightening. But they were always evidence of God's love and His deep desire to reconnect with His people.

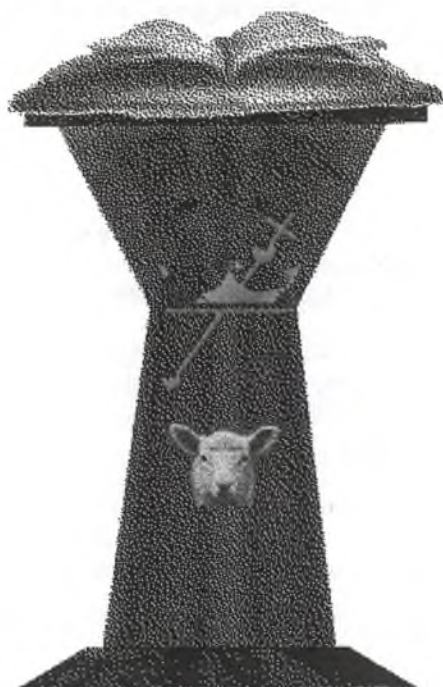
CONSIDER

- Going outside to an open place such as a forest or a park. How many distinct sounds can you hear and identify? Notice that the longer you are there, the more sounds you can pick out. Reflect on how this is like listening to God's voice.
- Finding people in your church or community who are spokespersons for a corporation, a community group, or another person. Interview them about their job and what it means to be a spokesperson. How does their job compare to a prophet's job?
- Thinking of people who are famous or are in the news at the moment. Imagine what your life might be like if you chose to live by what they say and do. Write a description or create a visual artwork to represent what your life might be like if you "followed" them. Include potential positives and negatives.
- Watching a sporting match or competition. Focus on the umpire and referee. What is their role in the game? How do they fulfill that role? How is their role like that of a prophet? How is their role different from that of a prophet?

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chap. 25, "The Call of Isaiah"; Graeme Bradford, *Prophets Are Human*.

Interpreting the Prophetic Writings



“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27, NKJV).

Error Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 2:28; Matt. 7:16; Luke 24:27

In a branch of statistics called regression, we can predict with a certain degree of confidence that if we increase a variable such as fertilizer with a confidence level of 95 percent, we can be 95 percent sure that the harvest will increase by a certain amount. However, statistics' power of prediction is still subject to error. The validity and accuracy of a prediction depends on the previous data used and the difference between the prediction and the real result. This analysis is called error analysis. Data used to create the equation will determine the degree of the standard error. The higher the standard of error, the less reliable the equation used and the prediction. A good error analysis will show where the flaws are and that certain actions have to be taken to increase the validity of the prediction.

Many dictionaries define *prophetic* as containing the nature of prediction. Therefore, these concepts regarding statistics can be used for prophetic writing.

Many people claim to have the prophetic gift, but error analysis shows that all their claims are nothing more than bad guesses.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen White had the gift of prophecy. The next question, however, is, How do we interpret

her writings? Using error analysis on her writings, with a 95 percent confidence level, we can be sure that what she wrote was inspired by God and has proven to be true.¹ In the past, she reminded people of the danger of nicotine, alcohol, meat, caffeine, and a sedentary lifestyle. At that time, many people mocked her ideas. However, current scientific research has proven that what she wrote about these subjects is true. The number of Seventh-day Adventists who have a healthy and long life is increasing, putting them among the healthiest people in the world.²

This week we will learn more about prophetic writers—not just about Ellen White—and how we interpret and analyze their errors.

Interpretation of prophetic writings must be viewed through error analysis.

1. D. S. McMahon, ed. *Acquired or Inspired? Exploring the Origins of the Adventist Lifestyle* (Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing, 2005), pp. 141, 146, 147.

2. Dan Buettner, "Longevity, The Secrets of Long Life," *National Geographic*, Nov. 2005.

Focus on Christ

LOGOS

John 16:5-13; Col. 1:9; 2 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 5:12, 13

Basic Rules of Interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20)

Misunderstandings often arise when a statement has been lifted out of context. Context includes both internal and external clues that will establish the truth about any statement under consideration.

Internally, we usually get a clear picture of what an author means by reading the words, sentences, paragraphs, even chapters, surrounding a puzzling statement. We must recognize that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White were the product of thought inspiration, not verbal inspiration, and that some word definitions may change as time passes. We also must understand the meaning of the phrase in which a word is used and recognize that the meaning of a word can change when it is used in a new context.¹

Externally, we should ask questions whose answers may help us to understand,

Not everything in the Bible or in the writings of Ellen White can be understood at first glance.

questions such as When? Where? and Why? We must consider all that a prophet has said on the subject under discussion, and we must understand the historical context of the prophecy before coming to a conclusion about it. In addition, we must allow for the maturing of authors, even prophets, in that truth

is unfolded to them only as they are able to understand it. In some instances, a person must understand the experience of an event before understanding the truth of the event. Not everything in the Bible or in the writings of Ellen White can be understood at first glance, or even after years of study.²

Important Things in Interpreting Ellen White's Writings (Col. 1:9)

First, begin your study with a prayer for guidance and understanding. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the work of prophets across the ages, is the only one who is in a position to unlock the meaning of their writings. Second, approach your study with an open mind. Most of us realize that no person is free of bias. Also recognize that bias enters into every area of our lives. But we don't need to let our biases control us. Third, read Ellen White's writings with faith, rather than with doubt.³ "Many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not pro-

pose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence.”⁴

Avoid Extreme Interpretations (John 16:5–13)

Part of our task in reading Ellen White or any other prophet is to avoid extreme interpretations and to understand their message in its proper balance. That, in turn, means that we need to read a prophet’s counsel from both ends of the spectrum on a given topic. A case in point is White’s advice against playing games. “In plunging into amusements, match games, pugilistic performances, they declared to the world that Christ was not their leader in any of these things.” This statement has led many to conclude that God frowns on all games and ball playing. However, as on all extreme interpretations, one should use caution, for the second sentence after this one reads, “Now that which burdens me is the danger of going into extremes on the other side.”⁵

It is important to read the full spectrum of what Ellen White wrote on a topic before arriving at any conclusions. When we understand why she wrote about a subject the way she did, we can see that bits of advice which appear to be contradictory often balance each other out.⁶

Always asking God’s Holy Spirit to guide our minds wisely as we read can help not to jump to wrong conclusions never intended by the prophets.

Focus on Christ (1 John 5:12, 13)

The whole motive behind prophecy is to testify about Jesus Christ and to set Him at the center of everything. When we are interpreting Ellen White’s writings, or the writings of any other prophet, we must focus on Christ and His second coming and on how He wants us to prepare for His return. This is the ultimate theme.

REACT

Explain the relationship between studying the Bible and interpreting the writings of Ellen White.

1. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 388–391.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 394–405.

3. George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1997), pp. 43, 44.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 255.

5. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 378.

6. Knight, pp. 63–69.

"Prophecy Is Fast Fulfilling"

TESTIMONY

Isa. 8:20

"On one occasion, when in New York City, I was in the night season called upon to behold buildings rising story after story toward heaven. These buildings were warranted to be fireproof, and they were erected to glorify their owners and builders. Higher and still higher these buildings rose, and in them the most costly material was used. Those to whom these buildings belonged were not asking themselves: 'How can we best glorify God?' The Lord was not in their thoughts."

"The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fireproof buildings and said: 'They are perfectly safe.' But these buildings were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction. The firemen were unable to operate the engines.

"I am instructed that when the Lord's time comes, should no change have taken place in the hearts of proud, ambitious human beings, men will find that the hand

**"The fire engines could do
nothing to stay the
destruction."**

that had been strong to save will be strong to destroy. No earthly power can stay the hand of God. No material can be used in the erection of buildings that will preserve them from destruction when God's appointed time comes to send retribution on

men for their disregard of His law and for their selfish ambition."²

"We are living in the closing scenes of this earth's history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing. We have no time—not a moment—to lose. Let us not be found sleeping on guard. Let no one say in his heart or by his works: 'My Lord delayeth His coming.' Let the message of Christ's soon return sound forth in earnest words of warning. Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us. Let ministers and lay members go forth into the ripening fields to tell the unconcerned and indifferent to seek the Lord while He may be found. The workers will find their harvest wherever they proclaim the forgotten truths of the Bible. They will find those who will accept the truth and will devote their lives to winning souls to Christ."³

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 12.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 252.

A Light Shining in a Dark Place

EVIDENCE

Isa. 8:20; John 1:14–18; Eph. 1:9, 10; 2 Tim. 3:16

In Scripture, we learn that before sin, God personally visited with humans. However, after falling to Satan's temptation, the mental and spiritual characteristics of human beings became dulled, and they could no longer find God on their own. So He took the initiative by sending His Son Jesus so that they could know God personally through Him (Eph. 1:9, 10; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 1:14–18).

Jesus, after arising from the grave, revealed Himself to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27, NKJV). What better authority to interpret for the disciples the prophecies about the Messiah and the work He came to do than Christ Himself—the Word who in the beginning was with God (John 1:1, 2).

Ellen White received the gift of prophecy to point God's last-day people back to the Bible and to Christ (2 Tim. 3:16). We must always remember that her writings should not displace the Bible or become a "second" Bible to us. Rather, her writings are a light shining in a dark place that leads us to the bigger light—the Scriptures. Before we can even use the writings of Ellen White, they must be known not to contradict the Bible. "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20, NKJV).

**They could no longer find
God on their own.**

"There is an evidence that is open to all,—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate,—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. He bids us 'taste and see that the Lord is good.' Psalm 34:8. . . . And as we draw near to Jesus, and rejoice in the fullness of His love, our doubt and darkness will disappear in the light of His presence."^{*}

^{*} *Steps to Christ*, pp. 111, 112.

Moon and Sun Analogy

HOW-TO

Rom. 2:14–16

We believe that the canon was closed with the book of Revelation and that the Bible contains all that is necessary for salvation even without the writings of Ellen White. I made this statement in a morning worship at the mission office. My former mission president's reply was, "You are not a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, because you don't believe in the writings of Ellen White."

But I do believe her writings. However, I also believe that the relationship of her writings to the Bible is one of the most misunderstood subjects in our church. Her writings are not a second Bible. She herself had this to say about what she wrote, "There is in them [her writings] truth which to the receiver is a savor of life unto life. . . . The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light [her writings] to lead men and women to the Greater light [the Bible]."¹ She used the analogy of the sun and moon. The Bible is the greater light [the sun], and her writings are the lesser light [the moon]. Here is how we can understand this analogy:

Ellen White's writings are like a local map.

1. The Bible is God's universal message to humankind in all ages, while her writings were written specifically for God's end-time people.

2. Forty different people were inspired by God to write the words of the Bible. Like 40 candles, they will give more light than the one candle of Ellen White, even though the Light and the Source are the same.

3. The Bible is like a map of a nation, while Ellen White's writings are like a local map. The national map covers a larger area than the local one, but the local map gives more detail of a specific area.

4. The writings of Ellen White are also like a telescope focusing on the Son light of the Bible.

Ellen White's writings fulfill the function of directing people's attention to the Bible. Her writings help people to understand the Bible by further impressing the truth already revealed, awakening the mind, and simplifying the truth. Furthermore, her writings teach us how to apply biblical principles to our daily lives.

1. Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903.

2. T. Housel-Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1959). Quoted by Norton Edward, *Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies syllabus on Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 42.

Do Interpret, but Not Infallible Interpreters

Thursday
March 12

OPINION

Acts 8:26–38

Luke records the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–38. On his way home after his pilgrimage to worship in Jerusalem, the Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah 53 but did not understand to whom the prophet was referring.

Luke gives the following scenario concerning the eunuch's encounter with Philip, whom the Spirit had sent to enlighten him: "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

"'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him" (Acts 8:30, 31, NIV). Then Philip began to interpret, or to explain, the meaning of what the eunuch was reading, that he was reading about Jesus and the salvation He offers (verse 35).

As Luke concludes his book, he tells Theophilus that Jesus also explained truth to His apostles so that that they too could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Revelation is what God says, while interpretation is the meaning we give to what He says. We have a way of confusing the two, identifying what we suppose the Scriptures teach with what they actually teach. Those who deny that they interpret, but simply "take the Bible for what it says" are often only kidding themselves.

One who doesn't interpret does nothing.

There is no way to make sense of any literature except by ascertaining its meaning. This is true of the simplest sentences, whether in the Bible or some other printed material. If Jesus tells us that "the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33, NIV), we don't just take it for what it says. One who doesn't interpret does nothing. "It is important that we realize that we do interpret and that we are not infallible interpreters."*

REACT

1. In 2 Peter 1:20, 21, how are the believers entrenched in custom or the traditions of the church so that they have difficulties in hearing God accurately?

2. Why do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Our opinions are founded on interpretations of Scripture. Scripture is infallible, so our views of its meaning are infallible too."

*Leroy Garrett, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," *Restoration Review* 17, no. 8 (Oct. 1975), p. 150.

A Prophetic Compass

EXPLORATION

2 Pet. 1:19

CONCLUDE

In her time, Ellen White was at the forefront of controversial church developments. She was a female leader in a male-dominated society. She was in the vanguard of remarkable advancements in Bible study. And she was always pointing people to the radiance of Jesus Christ and His soon return. How sad that so often, her work is used as a disciplinary tool rather than as an instrument of light and illumination. Yet the more time we spend in personal prayer, Bible study, and researching her prophetic writings, the clearer will be our understanding of the future—and of Ellen White.

CONSIDER

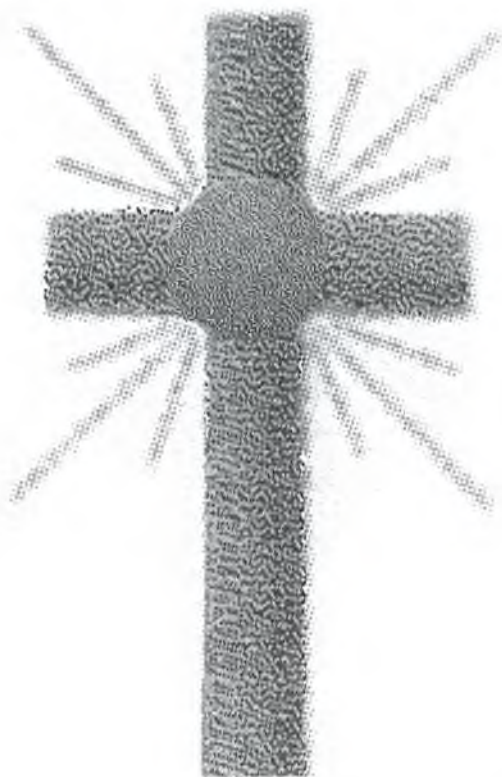
- Exploring the E. G. White Estate Web site at <http://www.whiteestate.org>.
- Researching the life and work of one of the biblical prophets. What were the societal and political times of this prophet? How reliable were their prophecies? What are the similarities between the life and times of this prophet and those of Ellen White?
- Using a compass to get around for one day. What makes a compass a reliable navigator? Consider how a prophet is a spiritual compass.
- Doing a puzzle (jigsaw, Sudoku, crossword, or other). How do you approach something that at first glance makes no sense? What role do prophets play in helping us unravel the puzzles in Revelation?
- Playing or singing hymns that were composed during Ellen White's lifetime. (Check hymns in the Early Advent section of the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* as a start.) What themes predominate?
- Tutoring someone. What methods do you use to make the subject clear and easy to understand? What common factors are there between tutors and prophets like Ellen White?

CONNECT

Martin Weber, *Adventist Hot Potatoes*, chap. 10.

Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines, 1988 edition, pp. 222–228.

The Blessings of the Prophetic Gift



**"Surely the Lord God does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets"
(Amos 3:7, NKJV).**

Turning Back to God for Health

INTRODUCTION

Isa. 1:18

I have read many books and attended many seminars on health. I've also organized nutrition classes in my community. However, I'm still left with an important question to answer: in what specific ways can we live today so we can ask God for the health we need?

Our world is in desperate need of good health. This can be clearly seen from the numerous health messages that continue to flood the electronic and print media. In the beginning, out of His love for humans, God Himself designed a three-dimensional health plan for us to enjoy as long as we obeyed the heavenly principles stipulated in His Word.

Unfortunately, however, sin has corrupted our health. The paradise on earth, once brilliant and perfect in health, has been reduced to physical, mental, and spiritual substandards. We cannot escape this situation unless we go back to our Creator to inquire of His original plan for healthful living.

**Our world is in desperate
need of good health.**

God pleads with us through the voice of the prophet Isaiah to come to Him so that we can reason together with Him (Isa. 1:18). It's quite difficult for us, with our weakness of heart, to experience a restoration of total health.

But if we don't return to God to have an intimate relationship with Him, His Word will not be able to infiltrate the inner sanctum of our being. To regain the original noble powers and well-balanced minds with which God created human beings, we must inquire of Him what we must do. We must act in line with the instructions He gives us.

God's health principles champion a wholesome, healthful lifestyle, which, in turn, institutes a wholesome healing both at the individual and corporate levels. We in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are faced with a challenge of holding up the mantle of health reform and of sharing God's health principles with an ailing world.

Ellen White revealed God's health principles to our church. Without these principles, our church probably would not exist the way it is now. This week we are studying how the gift of prophecy through Ellen White has revolutionized health. How has the Lord used this gift to benefit the church?

The Schools of the Prophets

EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 2:12, 13

"The Lord himself directed the education of Israel. His care was not restricted to their religious interests; whatever affected their mental or physical well-being, was also the subject of divine providence, and came within the sphere of divine law."¹

From this inspired comment of E. G. White, we can learn that the prophets and the people of Israel received the most balanced education desired for the human mind. Again, we should not sidestep the fact that God Himself directed their learning process through parents, nature, and God's Word.

This same type of education should benefit all generations, from the past to the present, and into the future. Like the role-model ministers in Israel, our present ministers should set an example that will exalt the presence and power of God, so we also will stand as an example to other people.

"Such was the training of Moses in the lowly cabin home in Goshen; of Samuel, by the faithful Hannah; of David, in the hill dwelling in Bethlehem; of Daniel, before the scenes of the captivity separated him from the home of his fathers. Such too, was the early life of Christ at Nazareth; such the training by which the child Timothy learned from the 'lips of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice,' the truths of Holy Writ."²

God often uses the less fortunate . . . members of society to bring liberation and peace to His people.

We need to know whether modern-day prophets have followed in the footsteps of the pioneers. How were the great reformers of the past educated and trained? God often uses the less fortunate and the despised members of society to bring liberation and peace to His people. Such were the roots of Luther, who "sprung from the ranks of poverty. His early years were spent in the humble home of a German peasant. . . . Hardship, privation and severe discipline were the school in which Infinite Wisdom prepared Luther for the important mission of his life."³

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 592.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 120.

Health Quest

LOGOS

Exod. 17:14; 19:4-6; 34:27; Lev. 11:1-8; Isa. 44:8; 49:6

A Light to the Nations (Isa. 44:8; 49:6)

Agnes before the Egyptians built the first pyramid, God had chosen Israel and revealed His truths to them. Israel was chosen to preserve God's law for all the world. Read Isaiah 44:21. The voice of the Creator through the prophet Isaiah shows how particular He was about His chosen people Israel. The deliverances brought through the guidance of the prophets were a symbol that Israel was chosen to reveal God to the world in all spheres of life.

The bitter truth, however, is that, although chosen by God as the symbol of heaven on earth, Israel often was concerned with worldly greatness. "They had studied the prophecies, but without spiritual insight. Thus they overlooked those scriptures that point to the humiliation of Christ's first advent, and misapplied those that speak to the glory of His second coming. Pride obscured their vision. They interpreted prophecy in accordance with their own selfish desires."

**As Moses was to the
Israelites, so were the
church pioneers to our
denomination.**

Confirming the Covenant (Exod. 17:14; 34:27)

For several years, war and captivity ravaged the people of Israel. They were held captives in other lands, and they spent years fighting for the land God had promised them. Despite all this, their stamp as a chosen nation became more and more significant amid the disasters that befell them. Even after Israel had been wasted by war and captivity, the promise was theirs, that "the remnant of Jacob, / surrounded by many peoples, / shall be like dew from the Lord, / like showers on the grass, / which do not depend upon people / or wait for any mortal" (Mic. 5:7, NRSV). It is against this backdrop that Israel stood strong among nations, conquering one kingdom after another, by the leading hands of God's messengers. All the regulations and guidelines regarding the festivals, diet, and other rituals were given to Moses to confirm the covenant between God and Israel.

God's Peculiar Treasure (Exod. 19:4-6)

"From a race of slaves the Israelites had been exalted above all peoples, to be the peculiar treasure of the King of kings. God had separated them from the world,

that He might commit to them a sacred trust.”² Through Moses, the people of Israel were instructed not to forget the commandments given to them by the only true God. The Ten Commandments represented not only the will of God for humankind but God’s holy character as well. These laws of holy living were to guide them in their spiritual, economic, and social undertakings.

Because these laws represent God’s holy character, they are eternal. Thus, these laws are for humankind today just as much as they were for Israel and the people of their time. As Moses was to the Israelites, so were the church pioneers to our denomination, pioneers who laid the foundation of the worldwide Adventist movement. So is Ellen White, who went extra miles to spread the health principles God revealed to her. By maintaining the principles given to the Israelites in the Ten Commandments, we confirm that we descend from the roots of Israel and that God’s sacred trust is upon us.

Prescription for Healthful Living (Lev. 11:1–8)

For the best results in terms of health, God Himself instructed the Israelites regarding the foods to eat for optimum health and long life. God specified the ideal diet for humans in Genesis 1:29. However, sin affected the nature of this diet. God had to come up with a different diet so people could continue with a better life. Thus He specified which animals were fit for human consumption.

In order to maintain this standard of diet, we must return to God in reverence to receive the insight needed to fight the counterfeit diet that Satan has put in place today. Currently, the Spirit of Prophecy directs us to a simple, natural diet. “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.”³

REACT

1. What did the people of Israel need to do in order to serve God as the chosen nation? Was it all just about obeying the rules? What else was involved? Support your answer from texts in both the Old and the New Testaments.

2. What other activities besides eating support good health and long life? Which of the Ten Commandments supports a long life?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 30.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 314.

3. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 81.

Doing It the Creator's Way

TESTIMONY

Ps. 25:14

The Bible is clear that our bodies are the temple of the Lord, and that any physical defilement degenerates us to a lower standard. It is therefore critical that we thoughtfully study Ellen White's counsel on health. "God demands that the appetites be cleansed, and that self-denial be practiced in regard to those things which are not good. This is a work that will have to be done before His people can stand before him a perfected people."¹

The Israelites were warned by God to be careful as far as their diet was concerned. They were to educate themselves regarding the spirit of obedience, based on the fact that "an ordinary mind, trained to obey a 'Thus saith the Lord,' is better qualified for God's work than those who have capabilities, but do not employ them rightly."²

Today, with so many unhealthful food choices available, the blessing of the prophetic gift concerning health reform must not be overlooked. It is given to us anew through Ellen White, so that we can share it with a world bombarded with unhealthy choices.

**"The dust of selfishness
and earthliness must be
expelled."**

"Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened. . . . He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had God not specially interposed."³

"The windows of impulse, of feeling, must be opened up toward heaven, and the dust of selfishness and earthliness must be expelled."⁴

REACT

Ellen White did not have a PhD in health sciences. However, such science continues to verify her words regarding healthful living. What does this teach us about her instructions?

1. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 380, 381.

2. *Maranatha*, p. 63.

3. *Steps to Christ*, p. 19.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 940.

Understanding Reform Products

HOW-TO

Prov. 3:7

Understanding Ellen White's comments and principles on health is crucial to our lives as Adventists, because health reform is one of the key areas that gives Adventism its special mission. Therefore, we should seek to know through the Holy Spirit's guidance how we can better understand the principles regarding health issues. Mrs. White herself wrote, "Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due him, of that do we make a god."* This is why it is important to revisit the issue of health reform and discover how we can better understand it.

1. *Learn about the social context of Ellen White's writings.* There are some places in the world where her writings are construed in a particular context other than the context in which they were written. However, we should understand the original context of the issue she is addressing, for once her writings are lifted out of that context, their whole meaning changes, and we misinterpret her words.

It is critical that Ellen White's counsel regarding health be considered in its totality.

2. *Learn about the time and place of her writings.* In applying the principles of health reform, the time and place aspects of the issue should be considered in relationship to the topic being discussed. What was a problem in one part of the world may not have been an issue in another part of the world. Also, time changes many aspects of life, so a piece of advice written at one point in time might not be applicable to another point in time.

3. *Understand the overall counsel on a given topic.* In some parts of the world, issues of health reform have caused major contention. It is critical that Ellen White's counsel regarding health be considered in its totality. Her absolute statements and her variable statements must be taken into account. Her absolute statements refer to what may seem as policy statements that leave little or no room for a cheapening form of compromise. Her variable statements, on the other hand, are those based on underlying principles that can be used to interpret meaning or to guide behavior given the time, place, and circumstances she was addressing.

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

Redeeming Our Salvation

OPINION

1 Pet. 1:13, 14

Just like Israel of old, I believe our church needs the *three Rs*: revival, repentance, and reformation. For Israel, revival means a new flush of spiritual growth; repentance is shedding the shackles of sin to acquire forgiveness; and reformation implies a combined state of revival and repentance, in order to be acceptable before God.

The same three elements still apply to us today, both as individuals and as the church. In order to grow in righteousness, we need a daily dose of spiritual growth. That is revival. Also, we cannot afford to dispense with the act of repentance. These two elements working together in an individual or in a church bring about reformation.

As far as health reform is concerned, biblical health principles are still the best life extenders. Christ Himself championed the ministry of healing. A healing ministry and the teaching of God's health principles are ways we too can spread the good news of salvation.

Christ Himself championed the ministry of healing.

However, as we share our message of health reform, we must "be careful to ensure that our interpretation of Ellen White's writings is consistent with the teaching of Scripture

regarding salvation. Our safety is by paying close attention to the principles of interpretation, by not overlooking the context, time and place, and the overall counsel of Ellen White on health issues. By so doing, as we share the principles of our health message, we will at the same time guard against the pitfalls of setting up false criteria for salvation."*

REACT

1. How does the Adventist health message enable us to live a life that prepares as both physically and spiritually for Christ's second coming?
2. How can we use the medical expertise available to us without compromising our faith?

* Limoni Manu, "Nonvegetarians Will Not Enter Heaven? Guidelines for interpreting Ellen White on the Topic of Health," *Adventist Review*, August 25, 2005, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2005-1538/story2.html>. Retrieved December 10, 2007.

A Sacred Trust

EXPLORATION

3 John 2

CONCLUDE

The healthful living principles that God has given the Adventist Church are a priceless treasure. No other church has been entrusted with this special knowledge. But just having the information is not enough. We must incorporate it into our lives. Then we, as living examples, can share this lifesaving health message with the world.

CONSIDER

- Using your computer or various art supplies to create a poster based on 3 John 2. Post it where it can be seen every day, by you and/or others.
- Rating yourself on how well you have been following important health guidelines. NEWSTART has been used as an acronym for the basic Adventist health principles: Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trust in God. Using O, S, and N (Outstanding, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement), grade yourself on how well you have been following each principle during the past month.
- Learning more about Adventist health studies. A grant from the National Institutes of Health has made it possible for Loma Linda University to conduct a second Adventist health study. The study, involving over 100,000 church members, is the largest health study ever attempted. Visit <http://www.llu.edu/llu/health/> to learn about the research being done and also what was discovered during the first study.
- Singing all three verses of the song "We Praise Thee With Our Minds," number 642 in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. Thank God for the health principles He has given to our church.
- Deciding which two or three health principles would have the most positive effect on your life. Set a goal to follow these principles for a month and journal your daily progress.

CONNECT

Don McMahon, *Acquired or Inspired?*; Mervyn G. Hardinge, *A Physician Explains Ellen White's Counsel on Drugs, Herbs, and Natural Remedies*.

Confidence in the Prophetic Gift



“Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper’ ” (2 Chron. 20:20, NKJV).

Getting Help With Life's Exam

INTRODUCTION

2 Tim. 2:15

"Didn't you get the study guide?" Just a question from my roommate, trying to help, and I definitely was in need of plenty of that. It was my sophomore year in college, and I was completely stumped as I tried to plough through my accounting textbook. My anti-number-crunching brain was struggling to grasp the details of the general ledger, and my debits and credits were definitely starting to blur together. When I had visited the bookstore to pick up the *War and Peace*-sized textbooks for each class, the extra study guides seemed to be unneeded fluff, just more weight in my book bag. But now in my dorm room, I was really wishing I had picked up the study guide for this particular subject, something to bring clarity to all the info I was trying to soak in.

Sometimes when I sit down to read the Bible, it reminds me of that old accounting textbook—packed with nuggets of truth, but sometimes difficult to completely comprehend. Thankfully, God doesn't expect me to understand His deep, incredible truths the first time through. In my quest to find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, God has promised me study guides. One of the most comforting Bible verses I know is John 16:13, where Jesus said that "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (NIV).

**I was completely stumped
as I tried to plough through
my accounting textbook.**

Both the Holy Spirit and prophecy are meant to be study guides in understanding God's Word. How do we know if we have a reliable study guide? How can we have confidence that we are listening to the right source? Something I always keep in mind is that a study guide doesn't tell a different story than the textbook; it only helps us to understand the textbook better. A study guide is never a substitute, but always a tool to clarify and better explain the truths that already exist.

In this week's lesson, we seek to learn more about God's truths to us, and how we can ensure that we have the right study guides to help us along the way.

Open Hearts and Opened Doors

LOGOS

Ps. 41:9; Isa. 53:4–6; Matt. 23:27–32; John 5:39; Acts 10:9–16, 44–48; 17:11

Persecuting the Prophets (Matt. 23:27–32)

This passage is the last of “seven woes” with which Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. In these verses, He says that they show honor and respect for dead prophets, even building and preserving their tombs, while showing contempt for the messages of living prophets. By their actions, they show that they are following the example of their fathers, who persecuted the prophets. Jesus here picks up on a tradition that appears throughout the Old Testament—that the leaders of Israel had killed the prophets sent to them (1 Kings 19:10, 14; 2 Chron. 24:18–22; 36:15–17; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 2:30; and 26:20–24). This passage in Matthew serves not only as an exhortation to heed the words of the prophets but to remind us that we should not be surprised when prophets are ignored or rejected.

We must have a degree of skepticism.

The Suffering Servant (Ps. 41:9; Isa. 53:4–6)

When Jesus reprimanded the scribes and Pharisees for rejecting the prophetic word in their own day, He was chastising them for rejecting both His messages and the messages of John the Baptist. The reception Jesus received was not unusual and was predicted by those earlier prophets who testified of Him (John 5:39), portraying Him as a “suffering servant,” “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3–6)—rejected even by a close friend (Ps. 41:9). Earlier, in Matthew 5:10–12, Jesus told the disciples to expect persecution and to rejoice in it, because that is the same fate the prophets met. It’s also sharing in His own sufferings.

The Priority of Scripture (John 5:39; Acts 17:11)

The scribes and Pharisees claimed to be honoring the prophets of old, but in failing to recognize Jesus, they showed they were not heeding that prophetic witness; they searched the Scriptures, thinking that in the bare words they had eternal life, failing to see that the Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39, NIV).

It’s possible to be diligent in reading the Bible yet miss the point! The prophetic message points to Jesus; if we are reading it and not finding Him in it, we’re not reading it correctly. If we read it and see only the law, and not the gospel, we’re not reading it correctly. That greatest of prophetic books in the New Testament, the book

of Revelation, is the “revelation of Jesus Christ”—it both comes from Him and reveals Him. It shows Him in glory, as the One who has been given all authority, as the One who will come again to put an end to sin and to create a new heaven and a new earth. If we read Revelation and get absorbed in timelines and beasts and numbers and don’t see Jesus as the heart of the book, we’re missing the point.

We can say that is also a test for later prophets. Do they preach Jesus? If they stand in the tradition of biblical prophets, they must. He must be the focal point of their message, and what they say about Him must be consistent with Scripture. The Bible must be the test of any prophetic word in two ways. First, because of the normative value of Scripture, it alone is our creed. It alone is the standard by which all teaching must be judged. Second, because of the Christocentric principle just laid out—that Jesus is at the heart of Scripture—He must be at the heart of any prophet’s message.

Jesus said one of the signs of the end would be the appearance of many false prophets (Matt. 24:24), and that’s certainly true of our day. Clearly, we must have a degree of skepticism. We can’t believe everyone who claims to be a prophet. We must search the Scriptures, and test would-be prophets by it. While prophets need to expect persecution, as we’ve already seen, true prophets always will welcome that skepticism which is rooted in a commitment to test everything by Scripture (Acts 17:11).

The Purpose of Prophecy (Acts 10:9–16, 44–48)

What then is the purpose of prophecy? It will always point to Jesus, and preach a message about Him that is consistent with the Bible. In that sense, it never will tell us something we shouldn’t already know. Rather, it will open up new horizons and new implications. It will help us apply the teachings of Jesus to new situations. The vision of Peter given in Acts 10:9–16, 44–48 gives us an example of how this can work. Up to this point, the apostles were faithfully witnessing about Jesus, but their witness was limited to the people of Israel. Jesus had told them that they must be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), but years had gone by and they hadn’t progressed much beyond the area that Jesus Himself had traveled. Peter’s vision changed all that. It was a vision of unclean foods lowered to him on a sheet. A Voice said, “Get up and eat!” He replies, three times, “I’ve never eaten anything unclean!” He woke up, went down stairs, and greeted the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Suddenly, the vision made sense. “I must not call any man unclean.” The gospel message could not be limited to the people of Israel. It must go to all the world. It broke down the barriers within Peter’s mind and opened up new avenues for ministry.

REACT

1. Why must prophetic claims be tested by Scripture?
2. How has the prophetic gift opened your eyes to new challenges?

William J. Cork, Houston, Texas, U.S.A.

Hold Tightly

TESTIMONY

Heb. 10:23

"We must cherish and cultivate the faith of which prophets and apostles have testified—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 final fulfillment in the glorious Advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. The time of waiting may seem long, the soul may be oppressed by discouraging circumstances, many in whom confidence has been placed may fall by the way; but with the prophet who endeavored to encourage Judah in a time of unparalleled apostasy, let us confidently declare, 'The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.'"¹

"We must have a knowledge of the Scriptures, that we may trace down the lines of prophecy and . . . see that the day is approaching, so that with increased zeal and effort we may exhort one another to faithfulness. . . . Give up our faith? lose

"Give up our faith? lose our confidence? become impatient? No, no."

our confidence? become impatient? No, no. We will not think of such a thing. . . . See how the specifications of the prophecies have been and are fulfilling. Let us lift up our heads and rejoice, for our redemption draweth nigh. It is nearer than when we first

believed. Shall we not wait patiently, filled with courage and faith? Shall we not make ready a people to stand in the day of final reckoning?"²

"Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. But God's people, who in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold. They are to stand firm as a rock, holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end."³

REACT

What do you do to sustain your trust in God each day? What challenges do you face in your endeavor?

1. *My Life Today*, p. 55.

2. *That I May Know Him*, p. 348.

3. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 109.

Primo's Plague

EVIDENCE

2 Tim. 3:16

"Prophets are the plague of today, and perhaps of all time, because it is impossible to tell a true prophet from a false one," wrote Primo Levi.¹

I understand what Levi is saying. Growing up when David Koresh, the self-proclaimed prophet of God, was making Waco, Texas, infamous, caused me to be skeptical about all things prophetic. So can we have confidence in prophetic gift? Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

God's breath, His Word, creates miracles. From giving Adam life to waking the dead to revealing Himself to us through a solitary preacher on Patmos, God is actively present through His Word. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, God through Paul designates the spiritual gift of prophecy as part of the body of Christ. But can we all prophesy?

Os Guinness divides prophets into small *p* prophets and capital *P* Prophets. To understand the difference between the two, the prophecy's intent must first be revealed. "The intent of revelation is not to inform us about God but to involve us in God."² By that definition, we are all called to be God's prophets "interpreting events from the perspective of faith and under the aspect of eternity, and always with an eye to what we should do, not simply know."³ Thus, the gift of prophecy engages our imagination and challenges us with the present righteousness of Christ. But who has the authority to speak for God?

**God's breath, His Word,
creates miracles.**

The capital *P* Prophets are those "who have heard a direct, explicit, supernatural word from God and can legitimately say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'"⁴ The Bible is the source to understanding the validity of a Prophet. Some criteria to consider include (1) does the prophet's message glorify God (John 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 4:1, 2)? and (2) does the prophet's message agree with the Bible (Isa. 8:20)?

This list is not exhaustive. So this week as you study, fill out the list and solidify your confidence in the prophetic gift. While you do, know that Christ is working out His prophecy in your life. Read Jeremiah 29:11.

1. Os Guinness, *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003), pp.20, 21.

2. Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), p.13

3. <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prophet>

4. Guinness, *Prophetic untimeliness*, p.21.

Developing Confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy

HOW-TO

2 Tim. 3:16, 17

My wife and I have four-year-old twin boys who, like many twins or multiples, created their own audible language which only they could understand. During the week that I was writing this section of the lesson study, I heard them use the word *ketchercation*. According to them, it means both “you do what you do” and “you don’t do what you don’t do.” *Ketchercation* is a perfect place to begin talking about how to develop and foster confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy (SOP).

Don’t do what you’re not supposed to do:

1. *Don’t bludgeon people over the head with E. G. White quotations.* If a child was repeatedly beat with a canoe paddle by parents attempting to break the rod rather than spare it, imagine the feelings that surface when the child learns that he or she needs to embrace his or her bottom’s number one enemy as an agent of good. Likewise, it would be difficult for anyone to have confidence in the redeeming features of an item if their predominant experiences with it brought pain.

2. *Don’t use the SOP as a measuring stick to determine others’ shortcomings.* Instead, apply the lessons to your own life and become consumed

with simply and truly loving God and other people.

3. *Don’t study the SOP instead of the Bible.* While studying a certain topic or event in the Bible, be sure to read enough before and after the section to help you establish context and perspective. Ask the Holy Spirit to supply you with insight to grasp the complete message. Be still and wait for your mind to process what the Spirit is attempting to impress. Once you feel you have an understanding, refer to the SOP to see if it shares a similar insight. Most likely, its viewpoints will be in sync, while providing additional food for thought. Each time this experience is repeated, confidence in the SOP grows.

4. *Don’t keep the SOP to yourself.* Share the process in number 3 with others, and practice *ketchercation*.

Ketchercation is a perfect place to begin talking about how to develop . . . confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy.

"Prophet's Message Cost Baby His Life"

Thursday
March 26

OPINION

2 Tim. 2:15

A little boy in New Zealand should be turning nine this year [2009], but he died at six months of age on March 29, 2001. This precious little baby didn't die in a car accident. He didn't die of some common childhood illness. He died from misdirected zeal. Despite his ongoing illness, his vegan parents refused any medical treatment and ignored counsel to vary his diet. Instead they relied on herbal and other remedies. Medical experts said the baby died due to complications from a vitamin B₁₂ deficiency.

According to Adventist News Network, his parents were charged with manslaughter on June 13, 2002, and sentenced to five years in jail. The couple regularly attended a Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Zealand, where the wife was a member.

At the time, an Adventist pastor said the couple seemed to experience great grief at the loss of their child.

According to Adventist News Network, "They told the court that their actions were based on their religious beliefs and their interpretation of the writings of Ellen White." The *New Zealand Herald* ran a shocking headline: "Prophet's Message Cost Baby His Life."

**This precious little baby . . .
died from misdirected zeal.**

When jailed in 2002, the mother was six months pregnant and later gave birth to a baby girl in prison. In October 2005, the couple was released from prison and reunited with their three-year-old daughter, who had been living with the mother's sister. Although their deep pain remained, they had a fresh start.

Over the years many people have misread Ellen White's life-affirming, Christ-promoting writings. It's possible to string together out-of-context sentences from her writings to support almost anything. Of course, people have done the same sort of thing with the Bible, which has been used to justify everything from the Crusades to anti-Semitism to slavery. The church has a vital responsibility to promote a balanced and informed reading of Ellen White. From Waco, Texas, to the North Island of New Zealand, we can see a shocking price being paid for "Adventist" extremism. And it's a price that shouldn't be paid.

Prophecy Uplifts Jesus

EXPLORATION

John 3:14, 15

CONCLUDE

The purpose of all prophecy is to lift up Jesus and through Him, provide salvation to all who believe. Whether it be prophecy from long ago or more recently, if it does not lift up Jesus as the one and only Way, it is not from God. Sometimes false prophets try to obscure the issues and undermine our faith, but sincere Bible study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will clarify the source and the issues we face on a day-to-day basis.

CONSIDER

- Diagramming the major prophets from the Old Testament. Under each name write a text that indicates they were uplifting Jesus and His grace.
- Designing a board game that moves the player from this current life to heaven. Along the way, place “traps” of false prophets and “extra help” from true prophets. Print Bible texts for the players to read if they land on a “trap” or “extra help.” Make a spinner or use die to calculate the moves. Find someone to play the game with you.
- Interviewing five people about their belief in prophets both from the past and the present. Ask why they do or do not believe in prophets/prophecy. How do they determine who and what to believe? In their opinion, what is the most important prophecy of all time?
- Searching on the Internet for the word *prophet* or *prophecy*. Reflect on your findings.
- Getting a group together to play charades. Prepare a list of prophets. Divide into small groups and give one prophet to each group. Tell them to pantomime something about the prophet that will help the others guess who it is.

CONNECT

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 232–235.

Fascinating Stories of Forgotten Lives, “The Boy Who Heard God’s Voice,” pp. 91–130, www.wpublishinggroup.com; *God’s Message for Each Day*, p. 221, by Eugene Peterson, www.Thomasnelson.com.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Walking the Walk: The Christian Life

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 2009, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: Love

Logos: Isaiah 53; Matt. 22:37–39; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 3; 1 John 4.

Memory Text: “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV).

It is only fitting that a study guide dealing with key concepts of the Christian faith should start with the topic of love. The apostle Paul points out that however important faith and hope and other elements of Christianity are, it all starts with love. Without love, we are as he said, “nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2).

Some five centuries before Christ was born, the Greek philosopher Sophocles said, “One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life. That word is love.” True as these words are, this Greek sage still was ignorant about the depth of love that was to be proclaimed and modeled by our Savior.

God is love. Whatever else God is, and whatever He has done, is doing, and will do—everything is a manifestation of His love. This love is as comforting as it is difficult to comprehend. God’s love far exceeds what human beings usually label as love, which is sometimes a mere shallow feeling or temporary infatuation that’s often mixed with selfishness and greed. God does not just have love or show love. He is love.

The Week at a Glance: God’s love for humanity has been revealed in numerous ways, the greatest being the Cross. As followers of Jesus, we respond to His love by loving others as Christ loved us.

Lesson 2: Faith

Logos: Eph. 6:10–18; Hebrews 11; James 2:18, 19; 1 Pet. 1:3–8.

Memory Text: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV).

Faith is not to be confused with rational conviction. Faith in the biblical sense is not based primarily on our reason (even though it is not unreasonable or irrational!); nor is it based on our emotions (though emotions do play a role). Faith is a deep-rooted assurance that affects the entire person. Faith is a principle that governs the

life. Faith is the means by which we reach out and grab hold of the promises of a God we can't see yet we know is there.

Hebrews 11:1 speaks about the "substance" of our faith. William G. Johnsson, an expert on Hebrews, suggests that the best translation is: "Faith is the title deed to what we hope for, the certainty of what we do not see" (*The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Hebrews* [Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1994], p. 204).

The Week at a Glance: Faith is the guiding principle in the life of a Christian. It's how we are to live and to relate to God and to others. However important an intellectual assent to doctrines is, faith is so much more than just that. This week we'll look at how much more.

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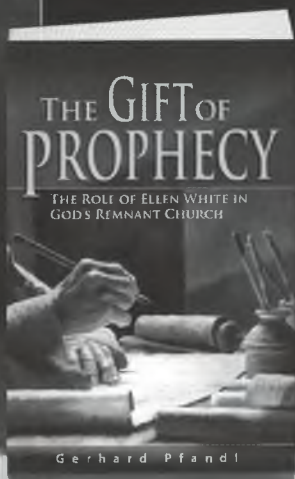
Are Ellen White's Writings Still Relevant?

Gerhard Pfandl

"From the very beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have believed that the gift of prophecy has been manifested in their midst in the life and work of Ellen G. White (1827-1915)....

"Near the close of her life she declared, 'Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last.' (3 SM 55)."

Dr. Pfandl answers questions regarding the prophetic gift and shares many of the blessings that have come to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.



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ABC for pricing in Canada.

The school in southern Philippines is bright and clean. Rebar juts from the roof where the school's second story secondary school will someday stand.

A student's mother approaches and follows my gaze to the rebar. "We are not Adventists," she offers. "But we love this school. My boys started studying here before this building was erected. The old school was pretty bad, but that didn't matter to us. We're happy with the education our sons are receiving." Then she grows quiet. "Our oldest son will graduate this year, and the secondary school won't be ready for him."

I see her yearning and I wish I could do something to finish the school in time for her son to study there. Then I realize that part of this

quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build this secondary school. Maybe her son can still study in an Adventist school, where he can learn more about the love of God. It may be his only opportunity to hear the truth. I want him to know. For me it's personal.



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