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Q
2002

Conflict and Contenders



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



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CQ is written by Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their friends around the world.

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Welcome to CQ's World



The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible study guide, four hundred individuals 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 individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 65,000. It is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Indonesian, and Finnish.

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Remember — a dream too big is just the right size.

“...ride forth victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right.” *Psalm 45:4, Revised Version*



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TEACHER PREPARATION
IN MINUTES . . .**



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This Quarter's Illustrator



The illustrator of this issue of *CQ* is Débora Tatiane Martins Borges. Born in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina State, Brazil, she is 24 years old and serves as pedagogic coordinator at a special education school in Tatui, São Paulo State. Married to Michelson Borges, editor of the Brazilian edition of *CQ*, in her recreational time she loves to draw and to write children's books (usually to be used as teaching aids) in partnership with her husband. Their most recent book is entitled *O Que Ele Viu na Grecia* (*What He Saw in Greece*).

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 65,000.

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.*

War in heaven



**“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16, NRSV).**

IMNSHO

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 19:7

email

Subj: Who Needs The Law
Date: 00/00/00 Eternity
From: Lucifer1@cherubs.com
Sender: Lucifer1@cherubs.com
To: Arch@ministers.com

Dear Arch,

As one of my closest friends, I want to share with you what has been on my mind.

I know that you enjoy your position as head of the ministering angels as much as I enjoy mine as primary covering cherub. Heaven is a wonderful place, and God is great, majestic, and powerful. He claims to be fair and just also, so why then the inequity? Why has Christ alone been a participant in all the divine affairs? As I am first of the covering cherubs, wouldn't they benefit from my input as well?

We have been told that God is holy and righteous and that His law is perfect and fair and exists for our good. However, as holy beings, why do angels need a law? Should we not be allowed to choose for ourselves that which is right and thus achieve the liberty we deserve? Should heaven be filled with robots or with free beings?

I know that the welfare of all angels is as important to you as it is to me. Share this email with others who are interested in their own liberty. Let me know soon what the responses are.

The Anointed One

Remember the war in heaven? This fictional email gives a fairly accurate representation of what it was about. Satan charged God that His law was meant to keep the heavenly beings in submission and exalt Himself. He deceived earth's first couple with the same misrepresentation. Consequently, misery and suffering entered our world as the result of transgression of the law. The good news is that Jesus came and proved that the law was just and good and can be kept. Only those who choose to obey God will experience true liberty.

The History of Satan's Demise

LOGOS

Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17; Revelation 12

Heaven and earth have long been the playing field for the greatest controversy the universe will ever see—the controversy between Jesus and Satan. Though most don't know it, all around us it is being played out. And while understanding one's enemy is not as important as knowing one's captain, God chose to give humanity a little insight into the history and origin of how it all began.

The passages of Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17; and Revelation 12 give us as much information as we need. Some of the points made clear are as follows:

Satan's Pre-Fight Persona

There is a difference between God's kingdom and Satan's. Revelation 12 paints God's kingdom and Son as a pregnant woman and a child. These images bring to mind thoughts like gentleness and peace.

Satan on the other hand, though once described by God as "the model of perfection" (Ezek. 28:12, NIV), said to himself, "I will ascend into heaven, . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13,14, NKJV). Over time, this pride so eroded his character that Revelation presents him as being like a "fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 12:3, NKJV), waiting to devour the "Child as soon as it was born" (verse 4, NKJV). He is also described as a "serpent" (verse 14, NKJV); an "accuser" (verse 10, NKJV), as one "enraged" (verse 17, NKJV), and "having great wrath" (verse 12, NKJV). Little wonder then that Satan is protagonist and originator of all dissent, all pain, and all death.

Round One—Heaven

Revelation 12:7-9 says, "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him" (NIV). Surely this must be one of the most sombre moments in history: angel against angel, God against Lucifer, the kingdom dividing. But it is a battle that God saw necessary to engage and one in which Satan and his influence were cast out of heaven forever.

Round Two—Jesus Victorious

This battle was over when Jesus Himself came to earth and was tempted, beaten, and killed. Revelation says the woman "gave birth to a son, a male

child, And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne” (verse 5, NIV). Satan hoped that by killing Jesus he would win the war. The result, however, was a paradox in that by Jesus’ death and subsequent resurrection Satan again lost.

Round Three—The Woman Evades the Serpent

Satan now turned himself against God’s wife, the church. “He pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus”

**Understanding one’s enemy
is not as important as
knowing one’s captain.**

(verses 13, 14, 17, NIV). Again and again through history, the devil has struggled to wipe out God’s people and the truth of the Bible. Through the attacks against Israel, to the dark days and persecution of the Middle Ages (see verses 6, 14), through to the present, the devil is determined to take as many with him to the grave as he can. But the theme remains constant: God will always deliver His people.

Round Four—You

The ultimate playing field for this controversy is in your heart. It is no use acknowledging God’s power to defeat the devil if you deny His power in your heart. But the Bible promises this result to all who trust in God: “They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (verse 11, NIV). No matter how powerful the devil and his temptations may be, no matter how many times he has had minor victories in your life, the ultimate victory of your allegiance to God is only a prayer away. By the blood of the Lamb, you can win your place in heaven, even if you taste temporary death as Jesus did.

Round Five—End of the Millennium

“I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes. . . . You have come to a horrible end and will be no more” (Ezek. 28:18, 19, NIV). There will come a time when the devil and all his followers will be no more. At the time, the universe will have had all the time it needed to arrive at the conclusion that Jesus is just and He will reign in love forever.

Star Wars—The Battle for Heaven

TESTIMONY

Rev.12:1-12

A war in heaven—surely not? Yet it actually happened; right there, before God's throne. To understand today's text, we need to read Job 1:6-12. What mystery—Satan was thrown from heaven, yet he had access to the throne and was able to argue with God.

I believe we can compare Revelation 12 with the Christmas story in a very dramatic way. There is a pregnant woman just about to give birth (verses 2, 5). Verse 3 gives an insight into how the dragon (Satan) prepares to hinder the birth of the Baby. This is a really special Child and the dragon doesn't come alone.

Reading verse 4, we may be alarmed and discouraged to see the dragon with a huge army. There is good news, however, as we read verses 5, 8, where we find assurance that he really has no power. Only with his retinue does he appear to be strong. A question comes to my mind:

Did they—his retinue—follow him by choice, or were they forced?

The rest of the story is told fast. A boy (Jesus) was born who was given authority over all nations. He also had access to the throne of God (verse 5). Again, compare

**Did his retinue follow
him by choice, or were
they forced?**

the woman in Revelation 12:6 with Mary's flight to Egypt (Matt. 2:13,14). Revelation 12 loses its drama, if we don't get an insight of what happened in heaven. After the dragon failed to hinder the Child's birth, he tried to get back into heaven because he feared he

would lose his power. What a picture! Try to imagine how a being as powerful as Satan left heaven and how he must have felt, when he lost that access (verses 7, 8).

Until Christ's birth, Satan had the opportunity to walk in and out of heaven (Job 1:6). With Jesus' birth, he lost this right and now tries to cause confusion on earth. He does this in a subtle way by questioning God's authority: "Should God . . .?"

Revelation 12 becomes meaningful through the praise hymn (verses 10-12) because it concludes that victory reigns. Evil may appear to win, but today's text invites us to rely on God because He fought and fights for us. He has already won the war.

REACT

1. How is our raising questions different from arguing with God as Satan did?
2. What could be said to a person who believes that raising questions about the church and the Bible is unhealthy and indicates unbelief?

Love Reigns

EVIDENCE

Ezek. 28:12-17; 1 John 4:16

Why did God create this world? After all, didn't He foresee all the pain it would bring upon this world and more—on Himself? I have battled with this question for most of my life, until one day a friend showed me a picture puzzle she had been working on. I had never seen a bigger picture puzzle! The excitement in her voice told me the hours of thinking, analysis, and reasoning that went into it. Walking back home, I began to think about the picture puzzle—why did my friend have to go through all those hours of labor only to finally crumble it all down? Isn't this the same question we ask today: Why, God? Was it worth creating humanity after all?

**Why did my friend
have to go through all
those hours of labor?**

All these questions, and many more can be filtered to one perfect answer—love. God saw that even though it would bring Him pain, love would triumph in the end.

Any digression from this path of love for God would result in sin. Lucifer's sins can be summed up in this acronym, POWER:

P - Pride

O - Obsession

W - Worship of self

E - Envy

R - Rebellion

Obsessed with pride, Lucifer envied and coveted Jesus' authority. In time, he began to experience a spirit of rebellion. Subtly, yet steadily, he blinded the angels, planting in their hearts his own discontent and distrust. A close reading of the history of the fall of Satan as recorded in Ezekiel 28:13-19 will reveal a striking resemblance between the king of Tyre and the prince of darkness. According to Josephus, the king of Tyre at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's siege was Ithobai, which meant "Man of Baal." Under the grasp of a fallen angel, the leaders of Tyre mirrored the exact characters of pride, selfishness, and arrogance that would eventually bring the haughty city to her knees.

God's patience and mercy in attempting to win Lucifer back to his original state proved futile. Satan had totally misrepresented the character of God. But God would rather suffer the consequence than destroy Satan because it went contrary to His nature of selfless love. He intended that His creatures render Him a service of love rather than that of fear. God desires that the entire universe taste and see that He is good. On that final day, every tongue will testify that God is truly love, and His ways are just and true. And once again, love will triumph!

HOW-TO

Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17; Revelation 12

Although the reality of the great controversy is unquestionable, it's easy to forget about it in the day-to-day balancing act of work, school, and relationships. Our world, after all, is much easier to fathom. Our struggles seem more concrete than the cosmic proportions of the battle between Christ and Satan. But is this true? Don't our choices, our passing comments to strangers, and our actions under pressure all add weight to one side or the other of this eternal battle? Yes, they do. Even though Christ has already won the great controversy, our actions today still have an effect on those onlookers who have yet not chosen a side.

1. Consider how God acted (or didn't act) when Lucifer accused Him of unfairness. How can you use His example as a role model for your life? God could have instantly annihilated Lucifer and his cohorts, but He chose to banish them instead. This shows that rash actions based on sudden anger are not wise. Now think about how long the great controversy has been raging since Lucifer's initial rebellion. What patience God must possess to have spared Satan for so many years! It is a patience born of love and of the knowledge that, in the end, truth will triumph over evil. So we ought to bear the trials that befall us with the same good grace.

2. Imagine the beginnings of the war in heaven. It all began with a few hints of doubt from Lucifer. This spread questions among a few other angels, who then whispered their concerns to even more created beings. In the end, a third of the angels left heaven—all as a result of one angel's unwise words. How do your words affect those around you? Do you voice doubts to non-Christians or Christians who might easily lose their faith? What can you do to strengthen the faith of

**Our actions today
still have an effect on
those who have yet
not chosen a side.**

everyone you speak to? The positive influence of just a few words for God can be seen in this example: If Lucifer had spoken words of confidence in God instead of doubt, one-third of heaven's angels would still reside there today. Obviously, every Christian's influence counts in the great controversy, even today. Whether it is by remaining calm under attack or by keeping harmful doubts to ourselves, we have a high calling to fight as Christ's soldiers in these last days before the battle ends forever.

REACT

What should you do when someone expresses doubt about God or Christianity to you in private? What if they express their doubt in a group situation?

Sarah Coleman Kelnhofner, Rio Rancho, New Mexico

To Be More God, or More Like God!

OPINION

Ezek. 28:17

I hate war. It seems such a waste. Waste of money, stuff, time, and most of all lives. A war in heaven! I don't like it at all—heaven is supposed to be nice, peaceful, and happy—not miserable, suffering, or at war. It doesn't fit. And then it does. War still makes no sense, and with God being love, it still is confusing. Until you think about what Lucifer did. He wanted to be, not more like God, but more like God.

And so it all began with pride, a hurt ego, wanting to be the perfect one. That doesn't sound too unfamiliar—right?

You and I might not start a war, let alone a cosmic conflict, when our pride takes a dive. But you and I are not God; we *aren't* perfect, no matter how hard we try. Only God is that, and wanting to become God, trying to take over God's place—now that would start a

Some people want us
to believe that we
can become perfect
here on earth.

cosmic conflict. So, yes, it's understandable that God must fight back and for our sake, I'm glad He does. It means salvation secured for you and me.

This quarter we will study the cosmic conflict, the war between good and evil, a classic conflict that has given stuff to lots of books and movies, and understandably so. Take a classic, "Star Wars," the good and evil fighting, a conflict involving the universe, and one person saves everyone. It is not without parallel to the real cosmic conflict we find in our Bible.

We all deal with good and evil every day, suffering, conflicts around us. Sometimes we even run into people who want us to believe that we too can become perfect here on earth—if we try harder. That, too, is pride—self-made salvation. Despite how much we might want to be more God, we can only be more *like* God, all other thoughts originate in pride. The only way is through the Cross, the acceptance of salvation. And rest assured in salvation, leave the battle itself to God. All you and I have to do is choose Him and stick with Him through whatever comes—through thick and thin, sick and sin.

REACT

1. How can God be love and lead a war?
2. Why is believing in perfection dangerous?
3. Because God is perfect and we aren't, how can we aspire to be like God without becoming discouraged?
4. What specific actions, if any, can a person do to act more like God?

When God Goes to War

EXPLORATION

Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17; 1 John 4:16; Revelation 12

CONCLUDE

Today we are in a war zone. The battle begun in heaven is joined to the death. It began when Lucifer accused God of being unjust. In the ensuing battle Lucifer and the angels who followed him were thrown out of heaven. Lucifer, who became Satan, hurt God when he deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God's action plan to defeat Satan was to send Jesus to live, die, and destroy death through His resurrection. The war was won on Calvary, but battles are still being fought in every human heart. We side with God or we side against Him. We choose.

CONSIDER

- Reading a war poem. How can you relate to what the poet says? Are there parallels with the war in heaven?
- Finding all the stories about war in a current newspaper or current affairs magazine. Consider how war's effects on humankind are similar to or different from those of the war in heaven on the angels.
- Looking at a picture of the Milky Way. Try to visualize how you compare with the vast numbers of stars. Reflect on the extent of God's love for you as a tiny speck in the universe. Read Psalm 8:3-8.
- Listing the ways Jesus has used to win the conflict with Satan. How can we apply these methods to conflict situations we find ourselves in today?
- Viewing the video *Saving Private Ryan*. Compare and contrast the view of war as depicted in this film with that of the great controversy.
- Imagining the war is over and you are in heaven. How would you describe your personal battles to the angels or beings from other worlds?
- Creating a ration coupon that includes one of God's promises for a spiritual deprivation resulting from the great controversy. Give the coupon to someone who needs the encouragement it could provide.
- Visiting the Web sites of several anti-war or pacifist organizations. Compare and contrast their approaches to peace with that of God's solution to Satan's rebellion.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chaps. 2, 29, 30, 40.

The Oxford Book of English Verse (poems describing war by William Butler Yeats, Lawrence Binyon, Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, and others).

Issues in the great controversy



“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works’ ” (John 14:10, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Isa. 14:12-14

In the center of the conflict lies two things: worship and obedience. Will you choose to worship and obey God, or will you choose Satan?

Lucifer in heaven decided that he could run the universe better than God. He thought God's universal system needed to be reformed. Who could do a better job than he? After all, no one else even noticed how bad things were. "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14, NIV).

Upon losing the war in heaven, Satan had a plan. If I can get these humans to obey me, then the universe will know that "I'm the man." Into Eden he went, disguised as a beautiful serpent, with one thing in mind: to deceive these humans.

Satan said to Eve, "Did God really say you couldn't eat of any tree?" She replied, "God said we can eat fruit from the trees, just not from the one in the middle of the Garden that you see. Not only if we eat it, but if we touch it, we will die. This is what He told us; this is no lie."

**Jesus said,
"We already had a
plan for that."**

Satan laughed within himself and thought, *This is my chance. If I can trick these humans, I will be in control at last.*

"Look at me," he said. "I'm in the tree and I have not died. Won't you give it a try? You won't surely die. Here's the reason God told you not to eat it: the moment you eat it, you will be like Him."

The universe watched to see what would happen. How sad that day must have been—seeing Adam and Eve fall into sin.

Jesus stood up and said, "It's not over yet. We already had a plan for that." Jesus came down and died on that tree, for a world full of wretches like you and me. If we come to Him and confess our sins, He will take away each of them.

To live with Him eternally we must let Him be our daily Guide. All our worship and obedience we must give to Him.

"Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in Heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish, he charged upon the loyal angels."*

*The Great Controversy, p. 591.

Exposed to the Truth

EVIDENCE

John 8:32

To improve ratings, a Brisbane, Australia, radio station introduced couple interviews with a lie detector. One of the hosts asks questions about the couple's relationship. As the couple answers the questions, the other host is viewing the results of the lie detector. Then the hosts ask the person's partner whether they think the person is telling the truth or not. The partner does not always get the right answer. Often the couples walk into the studio with a stable relationship and leave with unanswered questions and a blow to trust. At times the truth hurts.

**The devil tells more
and more lies to cover
the original lie.**

Satan is a deceiving liar. Reread Genesis 2:16,17; 3:1-5 and ask yourself, Which of the following do you think is Satan's *basic* lie?

- God and His laws are restrictive and harsh.
- Humans will not die.
- Humans can become like God.
- If God is love, He would not deny or restrict freedom.

Which of the above lies can be proved wrong?

As a compulsive liar, the devil tells more and more lies to cover the original lie. It must be exhausting business: "You do not die; just your body dies." "You do not die; your spirit lives on in the spirit world." "You do not die; you are reincarnated into another life form." "You do not die; death just transfers you to another reality." "Death in fact is the means to paradise."

Yet normally we do *not* want to die; we fear death (Heb. 2:14,15). What is the truth? The original lie—"You will not die"—is easily exposed, but the cover-up lies are not so easily answered. When you have been told a lie all your life, it is hard to believe the truth. By nature we are inclined to believe a lie; the truth is not always attractive. Besides using a lie detector, how can we know what is truth?

First, truth must be presented as an option. The truth is that death is a sleep (Dan. 12:2; John 11:11-14). To humans it seems so permanent, but to God, who created life, death is but a sleep. God can wake us up from it (John 5:22-29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). God in the form of Jesus experienced death and conquered it for human's sake (Matt. 27:50; Rev. 1:18).

Truth must have its evidence as well: once you dig up a grave, you know death is real. Jesus is real, and there is evidence for His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Flavius Josephus *Antiquities*, xvii 33).

However, once truth is identified, choice is still necessary. The basic issue is: Who is telling the truth?

To Believe or Not to Believe

LOGOS

John 8:41-46; 14:9-11; Rev. 12:17

Do you believe God and trust His Word? This is simple but powerful question at the center of the great controversy, the battle between good and evil. As Satan tempts humanity to his side, he attacks at the heart of their belief in God and His Word. With Eve in the Garden of Eden, it was a question of belief. God said, "You will die." Satan said, "You will not die." Eve chose not to believe God. Sin on this earth was the terrible consequence.

Satan is the father of lies. He does not want us to believe God's truth. God is truth. Satan wants to destroy God's character by saying what He said was or is a lie.

The Pharisees did not believe Jesus. In the eighth chapter of John, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. In verse 41, the Pharisees state that God is their Father. Jesus then points out that if God were their Father, they would love Him because He came from God. He explained to them that their inability to understand His speech and hear His words (accept His truth) indicated that they were not of God. He went on to explain that because they did not believe Him, they were actually on the devil's side. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

When the religious leaders of Jesus' day questioned Him about who He was, He uncovered who they were, whose side they really were on. Jesus explains that if the Pharisees were of God, they would recognize who He was and would understand what He was really talking about. If the Pharisees were on God's side, they would know with whom they were in contact. " 'If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?' " Jesus asked (John 8:46, NIV). In other words, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You do not believe because you are not on God's side; you are on Satan's side."

Jesus pleaded with the disciples to believe. Just after the Lord's Supper, Jesus was talking to the disciples. Thomas was posing questions of doubt, but Philip chimed in and said, "Show us the Father." Jesus then asked, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show

**He uncovered who they
were, whose side they
really were on.**

us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the

Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves' ” (John 14:9-11, NKJV). It all comes down to that question: “Do you believe?”

Satan is angry and especially targets those who believe God's Word. Our actions are reflective of our answer to the question “Do you believe?” The remnant in Revelation 12:17 demonstrate whose side they are on; they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

Whose side are you standing on? Do you believe God and trust His Word? Daily we are involved in a warfare, the conflict of the ages. With each decision, action, or neglect of action, with each temptation, we are showing whose side we are on. Do you believe God and His Word? When Christ was tempted, He in His humanity chose to believe in God and His Word. God has said that He loves us. He has promised to provide for us. He will help us. With every temptation, He has already outlined a way of escape. He assures us in His Word that in times of disaster, pain, and trouble He will never leave us. Despite the devastation of sin around us, He has already conquered Satan by His death on the cross. He offers us victory over sin. His promises are true. Satan is at war with God and does not want us to believe. Do you believe?

REACT

1. As you reflect on your own personal struggle with sin, what issues of the great controversy can you identify?

2. As you read newspaper headlines, what issues of the great controversy can you identify?

3. Find two biblical truths and state how they can be used to overcome Satan's temptations.

4. God's truth is so simple. Why is it so difficult for some to believe and trust God, especially during difficult times?

5. Is a fear of death simply a symptom of unbelief about eternal life? Explain your answer.

6. Is it ever possible that a suicide could be an affirmation of belief in God's mercy and salvation? Explain your answer.

7. What are some short- and long-term physical and psychological reactions to rejecting truth?

8. Is it ever possible that *not* exposing someone to truth could be a *kind* act? Explain your answer.

9. What do people do to justify bending the truth?

10. Are there ever circumstances when a white (harmless) lie is appropriate? Explain your answer.

11. Are there ever circumstances when it would be wise to be quiet and *not* tell an “awful” truth? Explain your answer.

Tuesday
January 8

God Made Humans, Not Robots

TESTIMONY

Ezek. 28:11-19; John 8:42-47

“Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. God’s government included not only the inhabitants of Heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of Heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds. . . . Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, or see to what his work was leading.”¹

“Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. . . . Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God’s government was just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper, and his real object, must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works.”²

“Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain in heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then

“Satan could use what
God could not—
flattery and deceit.”

have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love.”³

God made humans with feelings and emotions. He made us with freedom of choice. He would not have it any other way. As a result, He wants us to serve Him and obey His law out of love, out of our own freewill.

REACT

1. What is the best way to explain God’s love and mercy to an unbeliever in the face of tragedy?

2. How can we demonstrate God’s love and mercy in our daily activities? Be specific.

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 497.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 498, 499.

Size Up Your Prophets

HOW-TO

Matt. 7:16, 17

The Church Universal and Triumphant, or the CUT, has been one of the most flamboyant survivalist cults of the last half century. Its leader had the right last name. Elizabeth Claire Prophet taught a mix of reincarnation, karma, and paranoia-driven cultural separatism. After leading her cult for two decades, Prophet declared that the time had come for the nuclear holocaust in 1990. The end did not come, and followers left in droves.*

**Prophet declared that
the time had come for
the nuclear holocaust
in 1990.**

This is the pattern of false prophets. After a meteoric rise to popularity, the very supernatural scoundrel that used them to draw souls into delusion yanks out the props and lets them appear as the self-inflated fools that they are. Pride and prestige give way to shame and embarrassment.

Will Ellen White suffer similar embarrassment? Some would select isolated texts to try to prove that she has, but in fact her writings have been proven true again and again. In sharp contrast to the self-exalting prophets of their own invention, Ellen White was motivated by one all-consuming desire: to exalt her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Her life and ministry are an echo of Jesus' prediction that the manifestation of the Spirit would bring glory to God. "He will glorify Me," He said, "for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14, NKJV). This quality of glorification of Christ is one of the marks of the true gift of prophecy.

There is an even more subtle form of self-exaltation that appears in Christendom. This claims to glorify Christ, spouting His name freely, but their love for Him fails His authenticity test: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15, NKJV). This is another primary test of the true gift of prophecy; the influence will lead to obedience of all the commandments of God (Isa. 8:20).

The practical significance of this is that the same principles apply to any spiritual gift. These two basic litmus tests—exaltation of Christ and obedience to Him—apply to anyone who seems to have the unction. There will be an increase in both true and false prophets as time draws to a close (Joel 2:28; Matt. 24:24), so we need to have our discernment tools sharp and ready to use.

REACT

1. Which of the works of Ellen White make Jesus the most real to you?
2. How does a true prophet lead others to obedience?

*Joe Szimhart, *End of a False "Prophet,"* Spiritual Counterfeits Project, Inc., Newsletter, Spring 1998, vol. 22:4.

OPINION

John 14:10; Phil. 4:13; James 1:19-21, 26; Eph. 4:26, 27, 29, 31

“Move it, you fat pig!”

My last class of the day ended late (even though, ironically, the teacher said she’d end the class extra early). I was desperately trying to catch the last rush-hour bus of the day, which would cut a half hour out of my traveling time. At the worst time possible, here was this person taking their sweet Georgia time delaying me with each step. So I told the person to move! What was a girl to do?

Hold up; stop; rewind. The above scenario took place strictly in my mind. If you’re thinking, “Girl, regardless of where the scenario took place, the fact is that you disrespected someone!”—then you’re right. I was exercising no control. I let my frustration get the best of me. I showed absolutely no respect.

I . . . I . . . I . . . As you can see, the common theme here is “I.” Instead of allowing God to handle the situation, I was trying to handle it my way. I was filled with so much rage rushing to catch my bus that the littlest thing would have made me erupt violently.

When I got home that evening, I came across an article that was especially fitting to what I had just experienced. Nobel Peace Prize winner, archbishop Desmond Tutu, stated that “people have an extraordinary capacity for evil. . . . None of us knows how we will react when confronted by a number of circumstances that could lead to unspeakable wrongs.”¹

“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless” (James 1:26, NIV).

However, if in our fight against sin we allow God to have supreme control in our lives, we will begin to see a divine transformation in our attitudes and behaviors. By yielding control to God, we prevent Satan from gaining a foothold (Eph. 4:27).

So I told the person to move! What was a girl to do?

So, cheer up! It must also be acknowledged that “there is an extraordinary capacity in us for goodness,”² and this capacity is divine.

REACT

1. In what sense is the great controversy a personal issue?
2. How is it possible to allow God to have complete control in our lives—at *all* times? Explain your answer.

1. Royson James, “An Extraordinary Capacity,” *Adventist Review*, September 2000.

2. *Ibid.*

Truth or Dare

EXPLORATION

1 Pet. 5:6-10

CONCLUDE

Satan's "I" problem (Isa. 14:13, 14), the underlying cause of the great controversy, presents a problem for you. When he dares you to follow his deceptions, do you dare stand for truth (Ps. 119:160; John 8:31, 32; 18:37)? As Satan continues his great controversy with God, seeking to devour you along the way, will your belief in God shine through for all to see? When you face a truth-or-dare moment, take comfort in knowing that the same Christ who resisted and defeated the enemy gives you the extraordinary capacity to share in His victory, daily and eternally.

CONSIDER

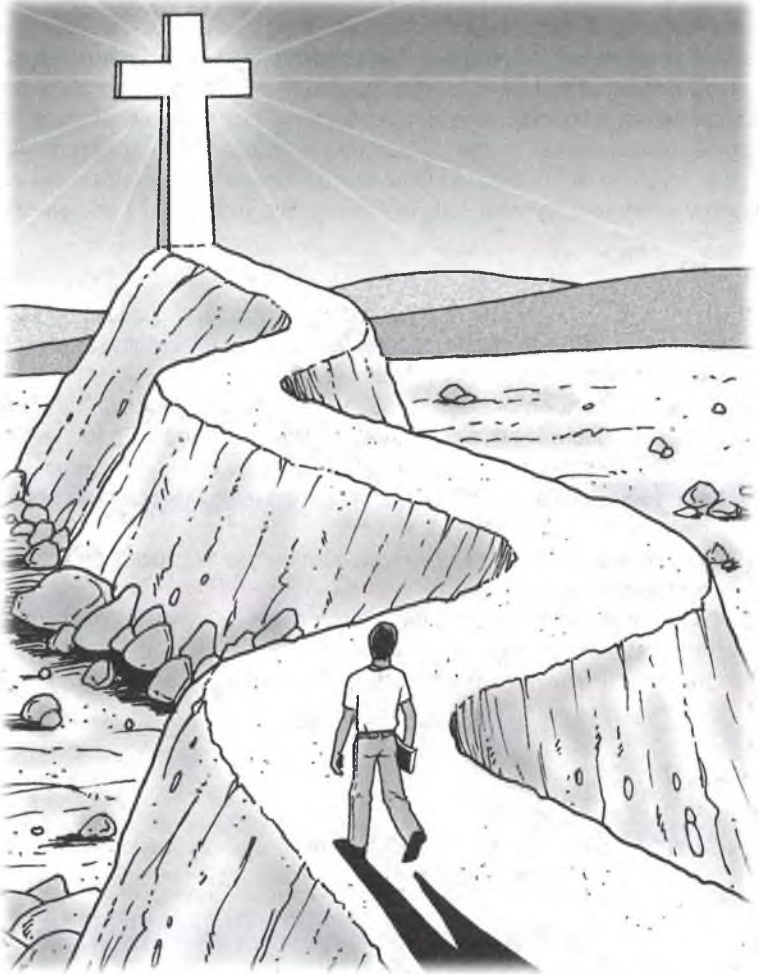
- Interviewing a law enforcement officer to learn what excuses criminals have used to explain why they broke the law. Compare what you learn with the excuses for sinning given by Adam, Eve, or you.
- Drawing a cartoon or comic strip in the style of "Peanuts," "Far Side," or "The Boondocks" to illustrate great controversy issues. Send them to CQ for possible inclusion in "CQ's World," <www.cq.youthpages.org>.
- Listing six specific results of the great controversy that you have personally observed in nature in the past week.
- Creating a scrapbook from newspaper or magazine articles depicting great controversy issues.
- Comparing and contrasting the conflict in the *Star Wars* movies to that of the great controversy.
- Creating a drawing or photographic montage that illustrates great controversy issues.

CONNECT

1 John, 2 John, 3 John.

The Great Controversy, chaps. 32, 33; *Christ's Object Lessons*, chaps. 21, 22.

The contenders



“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life’ ” (John 8:12, NKJV).

Sporting the "Servant" Label

INTRODUCTION

Phil. 2:5-8

Inside the sanctuary, the man realized how he must look: like someone's servant unable to take a bath for weeks. The organist was playing beautifully in concert with the pianist and the congregation was belting out the chorus: "He's coming, coming, coming soon I know; coming back to this earth again. And the weary pilgrim . . ."

Several nearby members of the congregation picked up the man's scent, lost their tune, and turned to see the cause. He was a grimy fellow, about 30ish, an eyesore standing on the freshly vacuumed burgundy carpet, in their recently restored sanctuary.

Whispered reactions alerted others who also stopped singing to peer at the intruder, who was now looking down at his feet. By the time the song ended, few had made it to the part when "the Saviour comes to reign." Several deacons approached, and asked the stranger if they could help.

"I'm a visitor," the man said. "Your sign says: 'Visitors Welcome.' I was passing by, heard your singing, and decided to join you."

"Of course," Deacon Sparks answered slowly, noticing that nobody moved and the place was so quiet, one could have heard a pin drop. He quickly scanned the room for an empty pew, while the congregation watched to see what he would do with this unexpected visitor. Spotting an empty space, he motioned to the young man to follow him. Several deacons standing in the way backed off so as not to be touched. They were already thinking of the disinfecting it would take to purify their house of worship.

**"I was passing by, heard
your singing, and
decided to join you."**

With the guest now seated, the service continued with the introduction of visitors. As each was called, they stood to be identified in the midst of the "Amens" and "Welcomes" graced upon them. Finally, only the stranger had yet to be introduced. With children straining their necks for a better look and the people in his vicinity wincing from his strong odor, the stranger was invited to stand and give his name, hometown, and church.

For the first time, he took his eyes off the ground, stood confidently and faced the audience.

"My name is Jesus of Nazareth and this is my church. 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head' " (Matt. 8:20, NKJV).

Sunday
January 13

The Victory Is Yours— Seize It!

LOGOS

Phil. 2:5-11; 1 John 1:5-10; 3:4-9

Christ's presence dispels darkness (1 John 1:5-10).

"What two things are essential to seeing?" asked a teacher of a group of 10-year-olds. The students had been experimenting with cameras and discovering similarities between them and their own eyes. Several children blurted out different parts of the eye as essential to seeing, but the teacher shook her head no each time. Finally, she said, "Light and sight." You need light and sight in order to see. In complete darkness normal eyes are rendered nonfunctional.

Before the world began, everything was darkness. And God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1:3, 4, NKJV). Darkness cannot abide where Christ dwells. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. When we abide in Him, we dwell in His light and are covered with His righteousness. In a darkened room one stumbles over unseen objects. Likewise, without Christ to guide our way, we wander around as blind people. But we do not have to remain in darkness. With Christ to illuminate our way, we need not stumble in this sinful world. His cleansing power delivers us from our sins, and we can be free from the bands of darkness. Since He is the light of the world, when we abide in His presence we see clearly and are covered with His righteousness. Because we are walking in the light, "We are not of the night nor of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5, NKJV).

Abiding in Him we cannot sin (1 John 3:4-9).

Sin cannot abide in God's presence. The uprising of sin within the holy atmosphere of heaven was in direct conflict with the character of God, which knew no sin. Thus Satan could no longer abide in that holy mountain. There could be no compromise. The battle over good and evil was on. Lucifer, so named for his brightness, was not satisfied with his position as covering cherub and declared that he would be like the Most High God. Through the ages he has continued his destructive work in an attempt to destroy God's reputation. He uses coercion, deceit, and fear in an attempt to draw us away from Christ. The results of his work are seen everywhere. Wars, hatred, discontent, and everything evil continue to increase as we come closer to the battle's end.

We have been warned that in stark contrast to Christ's gentle character, Satan roams around like "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, NKJV).

At every turn, Satan attempts to misrepresent God and make Him culpable for the pain and suffering we go through. His deceitful methods and lies are nothing new. "You will not surely die," he told Eve, "For God knows that in the day you eat

of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God” (Gen 3:4, 5, NKJV). But we need not be deceived because we know that when we are born of God, we become His sons and daughters and are empowered by His abiding presence.

Christ is the Victor (Phil. 2:5-11).

By ourselves, we would be no match for the devil. But Jesus conquered sin and its consequences by His sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, we need not fear. The Captain of our army has already won the battle. Paying the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus showed that God is love and that His laws are for our good. His life here demonstrated who God really is. He said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30, KJV). “‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’” (14:9, NIV).

Jesus calls us to His side with the love and compassion characteristic of His nature. “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, KJV), He says. He gently shows us that His way is right and for our good. Although He wants what is best for us, He never compels. He leaves both paths open before us so that we can choose on whose side we will stand. “In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve.”*

**No one wants to be
on a losing team.**

Everyone loves a winner. No one wants to be on a losing team. Mohammad Ali is considered the greatest boxer of all time. Whenever he entered the ring, there was always an anticipation of victory even before the fight was over. Mohammad had built himself a reputation, and was deemed fit to carry the title of “The Greatest.” Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross sealed the fate of the great controversy. Christ has conquered and is victorious. He alone is worthy to receive honor and glory for He overcame. He is the worthy Lamb. Let’s endeavor to place ourselves on His side so that we can share in the victory. “God also has highly exalted [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11, NKJV).

REACT

1. What lies about God have you heard from people around you? from television and other media? from other Christians?
2. Why do you think free choice is so important to God?
3. When are we challenged to grant other people freedom of choice in day-to-day life? Give specific examples.

**The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

Beware of Satan's Traps

TESTIMONY

1 John 3:7, 8

"Satan can present a counterfeit so closely resembling the truth that it deceives those who are willing to be deceived, who desire to shun the self-denial and sacrifice demanded by the truth; but it is impossible for him to hold under his power one soul who honestly desires, at whatever cost, to know the truth. . . .

"The followers of Christ know little of the plots which Satan and his hosts are forming against them. But He who sitteth in the heavens will overrule all these devices for the accomplishment of His deep designs. The Lord permits His people to be subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation . . . for the very object of the trial is to prepare them to resist all the allurements of evil."¹

How can we then escape Satan's traps? "Neither wicked men nor devils can hinder the work of God or shut out His presence from His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises. Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' [Zech 4: 6.]"²

"Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted. Therefore he seeks to draw away the soldiers of the cross from their strong fortification, while he lies in ambush with his forces, ready to destroy all who venture upon his ground. Only in humble reliance upon God, and obedience to all His commandments, can we be secure. No man is safe for a day or an hour

**"Satan is an expert
in quoting
Scripture."**

without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand his Word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter, and the means by which he may be successfully resisted. Satan is an expert in quoting Scripture, placing his own interpretation upon passages by which he hopes to cause us to stumble. We should study the Bible with humility of heart, never losing sight of our dependence upon God. While we must constantly guard against the devices of Satan, we should pray in faith continually, 'Lead us not into temptation.'"³

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 528.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 529.

3. *Ibid.*

Victor and Villain

EVIDENCE

1 John 3:8

Each day sin and the temptation to sin remind us that we are embroiled in a war. Whether we like it or not, we have been drafted from birth to the losing side. Initially, this frightening reality had nothing to do with us. The villain, Lucifer, coveted God's position, status, and authority as the Supreme Being. He undermined the loyalty of one third of the angels and began a war in heaven. Christ, the Victor, defended God's government and won the war. Satan and his imps were cast down to the earth. This is where we come into the picture.

Four key elements are present in 1 John 3:8: sin, the sinner, the inventor of sin, and the Savior from sin. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*, a failing to hit the mark, a wrong deed, a separation from God.¹ Because our first parents gave in to Satan, we are born with fallen natures, and are therefore sinners—prone to miss the mark of God's perfect law. The "father of lies" leads us into sin.

The Counselor thus
gave us a choice and
a chance.

As sinners we are "of the devil" (1 John 3:8, NRSV), literally children of the devil who do his will. However, we are also God's children by creation and most importantly by redemption. The Son of God came as a human, died for our sins, and proved that we can be rescued from the control of Satan. The Counselor thus gave us a choice and a chance to be transformed from sinners to saints. God has the power to destroy the works of the devil. The Greek word for destroy, *luo*, means "to loose," "to release," hence, "to break up."² The Mediator between God and humanity came to release us from the bondage to sin.

Thus, though we may be embroiled in the battle between the Savior and the devil, we are not doomed. As in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, someone will come looking for us to prevent us from dying on the battlefield. Indeed, Jesus did that over two thousand years ago. The question today is: are you willing to come over to the Victor's side?

REACT

1. Are we mere pawns in the battle between Christ and Satan? Explain your answer.
2. In your Bible find the terms used above to describe the Victor and the villain, and explain why each is significant.

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 p. 650.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 652.

How to Fight a Won War

HOW-TO

Rom. 8:28

Knowing the outcome of a war might make one fight differently. It changes your outlook and perhaps even your strategy. For some, slacking off is an option if winning is guaranteed. However, this is all the reason to stay in the fight, to be named as a victor, and to claim the prize. You don't want to find later that your side has won and you lost because you gave up.

"By long experience in War . . . high courage and stability of character . . . resists the beating of the waves. He who would yield . . . would never carry out an undertaking, and on that account perseverance . . . is a most necessary counterpoise."*

Our heavenly Father instructs us to let Him handle our battles. In order to prepare for combat, we need to protect ourselves with the armor of God. This means studying the Word and communing with God always. This shields us from the forces that pelt us with sin and temptation. By not giving up on God and what He has in store for us, we are exercising faith that He is able to bring us through.

**Knowing the
outcome of a war
might make one fight
differently.**

REACT

1. Identify something in your life for which you do not know the outcome.
2. What are the benefits of practicing perseverance?
3. How do we prepare for the war? Be specific.
4. Why should we stay in the war even if we might lose life's smaller battles?
5. When have you seen God work for the good in your life? How did you know it was God?
6. How do you feel when you hear people call a natural disaster "an act of God"?
7. Satan's tactics are sometimes quite subtle. How can we be sure that we maintain our allegiance to Christ as we come closer to the end of this world?
8. John 3 tells us that we cannot sin if we are born of God. How do we become born of God?

*Karl von Clausewitz, "On War," <www.sonshi.com>.

The Real Contenders

OPINION

Eph. 6:12

Growing up, I learned of one conflict that would affect all humanity. This conflict has both historical and future significance, and there are two adversaries: Christ on the side of good, and Satan on the side of evil. My responsibility was to decide with which faction I would identify and thus who I would contend against.

In a graduate sociology class, I was presented with two opponents: the majority of the population on the side of justice, and the financially powerful on the side of injustice. This struggle also has both historical and future importance. It appears that I was also being asked to decide with which contender I would identify when the conflict came to a head.

**The battle is not for control
of material resources but for
our very souls.**

Christ and Satan both want a metamorphosis of the world as we know it, but in very different ways. Both conflicts call for me to actively engage in the conflict. Is it possible for me to really be a participant in both conflicts?

I had to answer the question posed above because both causes seemed right. However, after serious thought, I realized that I could not take part in the struggle of the majority poor against the minority rich. If I decided to take part in that particular conflict, I would by default decide to contend against Christ. The conflict against injustice had merit, but I could not identify with its premises. The only contender who can really change the world to make injustice cease is Christ. The battle is not for control of material resources but for our very souls.

As humans we have to fight as well, but we need to be absolutely sure on which side we are fighting and who is the foe. As Ephesians 6:12 indicates, the battle is not a physical one but a spiritual one. I decided that I would ally myself with the side that was not only going to win but had already won.

REACT

1. How important is it to be certain who the contenders are in the cosmic conflict?
2. Does the decision to join with Christ in the great controversy mean that we should not get involved in social issues? Explain your answer.
3. In your opinion, which of Satan's weapons are causing the most damage today? Why?
4. How have you seen God provide a spiritual defense when you or a friend were faced with temptation?

Perfect Choice in an Imperfect World

EXPLORATION

Josh. 24:14, 15; Matt. 6:24

CONCLUDE

Some contenders are people, places, media, and events that disrupt, trap, and destroy. That's the devil at work. Some contenders fight for your best welfare, inner peace, and peerless future. That's God at work. There is a great controversy abroad in the land. The devil insists on bondage; God offers freedom. "I have only one doctrine," said H. M. S. Richards, "the doctrine that I am a great sinner, and God is a great Savior." A perfect choice in a very imperfect world.

CONSIDER

- Doing a readers' theater rendition of the Kahlil Gibran pieces cited below. Only two readers are needed, each taking alternate sentences. Perhaps perform it for the Sabbath School you attend and follow with discussion.
- Examining the poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling. It's available at: <http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/Rudyard_Kipling/kipling_if.htm>. Consider how one could live up to the poem's expectations.
- Composing a letter or email to someone who—from your perspective—is irksome, uncivil, or untruthful. Express simply and clearly your feelings about their behaviors and your sanctified way of dealing with your feelings and their behavior. If you intend to send it, let a friend read it beforehand.
- Envisioning what a more perfect world would be like. Picture it in your mind's eye, perhaps putting thought to words and/or to music.
- Sketching or painting a scene of present settings but free of evil. Would, for example, every thorn be a rose? How would a Palestine-Israeli negotiation scene appear in an ideal world?
- Visiting a nursing facility or medical center where an acquaintance may be residing. If you have no such acquaintance, ask permission simply to visit patients briefly. See if your visit will give you reason to compare the effects of our sinful state to a more perfect one.

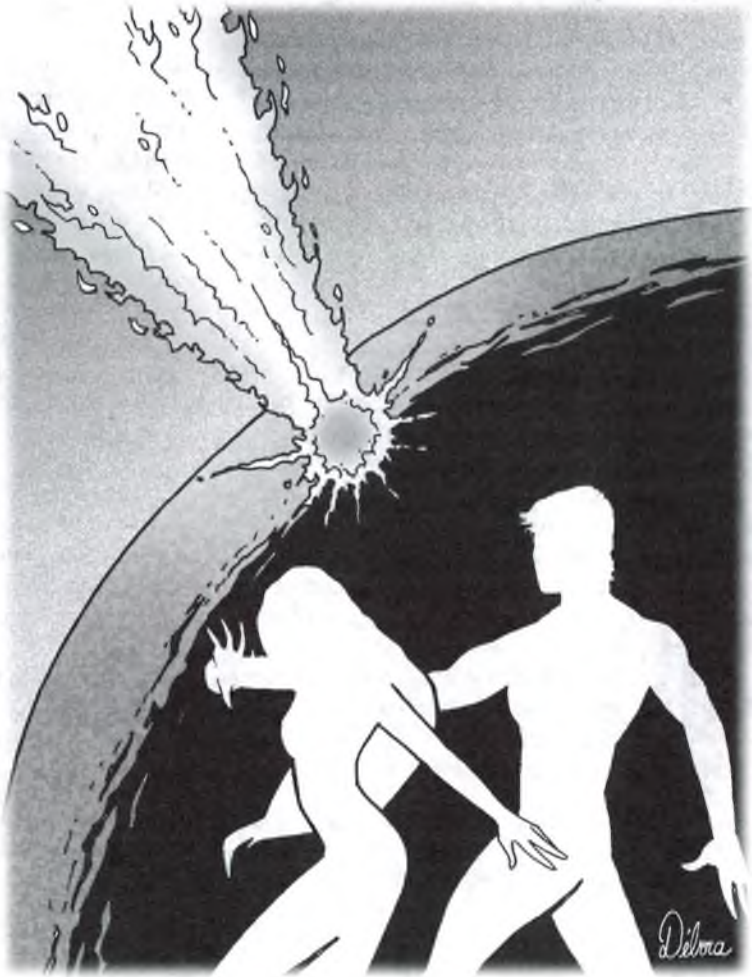
CONNECT

Proverbs 3:26-35.

The Great Controversy, chap. 30.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, "Pain" and "Good and Evil," <<http://www.columbia.edu/~gm84/gibtable.html>>.

The war comes to Earth



“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your Seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel’ ” (Gen. 3:15, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Gen. 3:1-6; Ps. 119:151, 152

If you are reading this, then chances are that you have already taken the first successful step in the war between God and Satan by joining the Lord's army. Unlike wars between nations, being in this army puts you in a different type of war: one of a spiritual nature. According to Ephesians 6:12, this struggle is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

How did we, as earthly beings, get involved in a war of this magnitude? It began in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve specific instructions to follow. Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempted Eve. He made her believe that God was simply being selfish and wanted her to believe that she could be as all-knowing and all-powerful as He is. He convinced her that by eating the fruit she would not die and would be as

How did we, as earthly beings, get involved in a war of this magnitude?

powerful and knowledgeable as He is. Eve naively fell for the sneak tactics of the serpent, and thus the war commenced on earth. This battle resulted in sin entering this land, and eventually in Cain murdering his brother, and the Flood in which Noah and his family were the only humans saved.

Today, Satan is continuously busy in his attempt to defeat God. Although we already know the end result, he will continue to take as many souls as he can, until the great war is all over. The best way to defeat this enemy is to become familiar with his tactics, and plan our strategy to overcome his objectives. This week, we will explore the tactics used that first brought this war to earth and those that the devil is currently using.

Even though this battle may seem tough, remember that it is between God and Satan, and, most importantly, that God is in firm control of history. One songwriter states, "I'm a soldier in the army, but I don't have to fight. I've got angels all around me to protect me day and night. I will have no fear for my God is near."*

*Madison Mission Mass Choir Live, *Open Praise* (Madison Communications, 1998).

He Knew . . . He Acted . . . Will He conquer?

EVIDENCE

Gen. 3:1-6; Matt. 4:1-11

When Satan brought the war to earth, he chose his tactics well. He knew it was imperative to conquer the first humans in order to conquer humankind. He knew that his best angle of attack was to take them in their most vulnerable state—when they were separated from each other. He knew that because of their untainted love for each other, he could use one to capture the other. He knew that to reign supreme, he had to conquer Adam, and thus conquer the world.

He observed Eve as she wandered along around the Garden. She was separated from her husband. She was curious.

He observed Eve as she returned to her husband and saw the pain in Adam's eyes when Adam realized what his wife had done.

Alas, Satan had conquered humankind, but it did not end there. This was only the beginning of the war on earth. Satan had conquered the first Adam, but reinforcement was yet to come in the form of the Second Adam—Jesus Christ.

When Christ entered the wilderness, there were no physical beings for Him to wrestle. Satan knew that Christ needed to be physically nourished in the wilderness. He knew that Jesus also needed to be socially nourished in the wilderness without the support and comfort of family or friends.

Satan tempted Jesus to turn the stone into bread. However, Jesus replied by reminding Satan that to win this war we do not need physical nourishment. Instead, we need spiritual nourishment in the form of God's Word. Satan tempted Jesus to call on the support and comfort of angels by jumping off the pinnacle of the temple. Nevertheless, Jesus reminded Satan that even though it is essential to have the support and comfort that God offers us, we should not willfully try God by putting ourselves in harm's way. Satan offered Jesus wealth in exchange for His soul. This time, Jesus not only refused Him, but He emphasized that choosing God above all other

**Satan tempted Jesus to
call on the support and
comfort of angels.**

beings to worship is more important than obtaining any amount of riches.

To God be the glory! This time the devil was defeated.

Unfortunately, however, the war continues. And the decisions we make help to determine who will win the war for our souls. It is therefore our duty to decide for God if we intend to be on the winning side when the war is over.

Monday
January 21

The War Comes to Earth

LOGOS

Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6; 4:1-12; 6:1-9:17; 11:1-9

God created the angel Lucifer, sinless and perfect in beauty. Lucifer, "son of the morning" (Isa. 14:12, KJV), was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. He stood in the presence of God Almighty, and the ceaseless rays of glory surrounding the eternal God rested upon him. Lucifer was next in command in heaven only to Jesus. Heaven was a joyful place for the angelic being. The angels delighted to do the will of God. It wasn't until iniquity was found in Lucifer that chaos broke out in heaven.

"It was Satan's desire for the supremacy that caused discord among the angels. The mighty Lucifer, 'son of the morning,' claimed the right to honor and authority above the Son of God; and this not being accorded him, he determined to rebel against the government of Heaven. He therefore appealed to the angelic host, complaining of God's injustice, and declaring himself deeply wronged. His false representations won to his side one-third of all the heavenly angels; and so strong

"So strong was their delusion that they would not be corrected."

was their delusion that they would not be corrected; they clung to Lucifer, and were expelled from Heaven with him."¹

Lucifer whose name was changed to Satan—"devil," "adversary," "accuser"—is the originator of sin. There was a war in heaven. Satan and one third of the angels tried to take the throne of God. This war was like no other war that our finite minds could comprehend. Satan and his host were defeated and cast out of heaven into the earth.

God placed Adam and Eve in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Everything they could ever want was there for them. God placed in the midst of the Garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and forbade Adam and Eve from eating of that tree. Angels of God warned them of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from one another. Eve erred by wandering away from Adam and approaching the forbidden tree. Satan was limited to only the tree of knowledge. So he entered the body of a serpent, which was the craftiest creature God created. Thus Satan began Eve's delusion. She saw this beautiful serpent talking and eating of the forbidden fruit.

The serpent "said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil' " (Gen. 3:1-5, NKJV).

Satan put doubt in Eve's mind, which led to unbelief in what God said. Eve saw that the fruit was good for food; she ate, and no change took place. She wasn't wiser or able to improve her condition. She took the fruit to Adam, and He knew it was wrong, but he ate willfully because of his love for Eve. Thus Satan was able to gain dominion of the earth.

"The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency."²

God blessed Adam and Eve with Cain and Abel. Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel was a shepherd. God tested these brothers with their offerings. Abel brought a sacrifice from the flock to his altar according to God's directions. God respected Abel's offering and received it. Cain brought fruit to the altar—disobeying God's command. God didn't accept Cain's offering. These two brothers represent two classes of people, those who depend totally on God and those who depend on their own merits.

When God saw that the wickedness of humanity was widespread, He told Noah to build an ark to save those who believed from impending doom. Noah preached for 120 years, warning the people of the coming judgment of God. Noah's hearers laughed and mocked him as the people of the world do today. We show our disbelief by lifestyles that bring no glory to God. As God had an ark of safety at that time, He has one now in Jesus Christ the Word of God.

Soon God's character will be vindicated and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Satan and his host, along with all who choose to obey him, will be destroyed. Soon, everyone who chooses Jesus will enjoy eternal life.

REACT

1. What does the war between Christ and Satan have to do with you personally?
2. What tactics did Satan use to cause Eve to doubt God? How does he still use these tactics on you personally?
3. What do you think God meant in Genesis 4:7?
4. What are the best ways to "master" sin?

1. *Signs of the Times*, October 25, 1893.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

We Are More Than Conquerors

TESTIMONY

Ps. 119:60

Though numerous catastrophes seem to be the result of human combat, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12, NIV). “From the very beginning of the great controversy in Heaven, it has been Satan’s purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator; and though he was cast out of Heaven, he has continued the same warfare upon the earth.”¹ Satan discredits God’s holy law and claims it is impossible to obey.

After Satan deceived humanity in the Garden of Eden, God forewarned him of One who would crush his head (Gen. 3:15). Unfortunately, without God’s protection,

**Despite Satan’s blows,
we have nothing to fear.**

“the civilized world would become a horde of robbers and assassins; and peace, rest, and happiness would be banished from the earth.”² Currently, “the whole system of religious principles and doctrines, which

should form the foundation and frame-work of social life, seems to be a tottering mass, ready to fall to ruin.”³

Despite Satan’s blows, we have nothing to fear; his head was crushed on Mount Calvary! The battle has already been won and our Victor—Jesus—will be returning soon. Instead of attaining exaltation, Satan will reap inevitable destruction.

When problems erupt, experts are consulted. Long-lasting, effective solutions, however, are rarely found. By avoiding the Word, some of the highly educated have confused themselves and others into thinking that problems are necessary and stabilizing functions of society. God’s design did not include poverty, exploitation, and selfishness. Unfortunately, human solutions have us going nowhere.

God’s unadulterated law is the only solution to life’s tribulations, a weapon that will win the struggle between good and evil. We find perfect peace, stability, and security in Him. When our Savior returns, all will be restored to His original plan. In the meantime, we can claim the victory because “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37, NKJV).

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 582.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 585.

3. *Ibid.*

How to Survive the War

HOW-TO

Dan.12:1; Rev. 21:1-4

For six thousand years the war between good and evil, which is known as the great controversy, has been in battle here on earth. In earth's history, many wars have been fought and victories celebrated, but no one knew the outcome. Those wars were always in doubt.

Though we may suffer some battle scars, knowing the outcome of the war between good and evil will help us to survive the war. Here are some survival tips:

1. Beware of false teachings. Deception is Satan's most divisive war tactic. "Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions."¹ Remember that Satan is the father of deception. Be aware of this war tactic. The only way to discern what is true or false is to be a student of God's Word by studying and praying daily.

2. Respect and obey your leader. "Fear God and give glory to Him" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). Recognize who God is and that He is Master of your life. He is our Creator and Redeemer, our Lord and Captain. He is our "Chief of Staff." To survive, we must follow His command and His command only.

3. Accept the fact that victory is ours. Daniel 12:1 speaks of a terrible time of trouble. This is the war at its peak. When it appears as if the adversary has the upper hand and is about to shout the cry of victory, our Chief of Staff will stand.

"Dark heavy clouds come up, and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying, 'It is done.' Revelation 16:17."² This gives us hope that the victory is ours. Yes, that's right: through Jesus we win. We survive by knowing victory is ours, guaranteed in Him.

The only way to discern
what is true or false is to be
a student of God's Word.

4. Believe in God's promise of the "post war." "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1, NKJV). Not only do we know the outcome of the war, but we also know what is to take place *after* the war. Oh, what a mighty God we serve who can lead us to ultimate victory and also can reveal to us our future home.

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 593.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 636.

An Attempt to Discredit God

OPINION

Gen. 11:1-9

What causes humankind to be obsessed with obtaining things? Could it be curiosity? Could it be longing for truth? Or, could it be a result of allowing sin to enter our minds?

In Genesis 11:1-9, humanity began to build a tower to heaven. God was so disturbed by this act that He confused their tongues. From that moment, humankind

**What is our tower
today?**

was not to speak the same language, and they were to separate. The separation came, but we have begun to strive for togetherness. Students are required to learn at least one foreign language, and the world market has begun to require employees to be bilingual.

In these and other ways, we are again moving closer to obtaining one tongue as we try hard to understand one another. So what is our tower today?

Look at the various space missions that have been sent to explore the possibility of other life forms. We have become obsessed with universal exploration. We no longer need to gather bricks for a tower; now we gather steel to build space ships that will withstand universal forces.

The war has come to its climax: a point at which we are trying to become God and to discredit His miracles. This time, the Lord is not stepping in to cause confusion.

Instead, He reminds us: "Surely I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20, NKJV).

REACT

1. What are the spiritual implications, if any, of efforts by humanity to learn to speak one tongue?
2. Do you think God sometimes hinders or prevents human progress? Why or why not?
3. If you think He does, in what ways?
4. As time continues, do you see the world becoming more unified or less unified? Why?
5. What factors in today's world contribute to unity? to disunity?
6. If all humanity were suddenly to accept God's Word, would all chaos automatically cease to exist? Explain your answer.

Life in the War Zone

EXPLORATION

Gen. 3:15

CONCLUDE

As Adam and Eve were deceived and disobedient, we can be deceived and disobey—because Satan continues to fight a war he's lost, hoping to fool people into joining him. But through God's grace and justice, we have been forgiven and the enemy has been condemned. Satan will be lost; praise God we can choose to be saved! Even more than it reflects Satan, our world reflects God's presence. God is the Victor and will one day erase all evil from our war-torn world. This knowledge can challenge us and completely change our walk with God.

CONSIDER

- Listening to Carman's "The Champion" from his 1985 album of the same name. Imagine that you're there, watching the scene.
- Writing a play or acting out a drama of the great controversy with only two characters, Christ and Satan. Follow the story from Creation to the Second Coming. Consider what insights may come to you about how Christ or Satan is handling the battle, about their choices, about their characters?
- Asking older church members what they think about the great controversy. Ask how their understanding of the great controversy has specifically affected their lives and their relationship with God.
- Reading Revelation 2. Paraphrase it into your modern language. Visualize it. After a lifetime of struggle on this war-torn earth, here's heaven. What's that first look at heaven like for you?
- Making an analytical study of ranks and duties of the military service of your home country. Compare these with specific duties you might perform in Christ's army, such as personal witnessing, giving Bible studies, intercessory prayer, hospitality, visiting, music, charitable giving, and so on. Choose two of these duties and begin to carry them out this quarter.
- Utilizing the game of Risk or Stratego to position the playing pieces so that one army has clearly won, but mopping-up operations are still in progress. Ask God to help you to internalize the truth that God is the Victor, both now and for eternity. Meditate on Christ's victory on the cross, visualizing to yourself the idea that the war is almost over—you're nearly there!

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chap. 42.

Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman III, *Bold Love*, pp. 195-200; and *Bold Purpose*, chaps. 26, 27; Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps*, chaps. 5, 9.

Winning and losing



“ ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him’ ”
(1 Kings 18:21, NKJV).

“What Do You Want From Me?”

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 39

I could not understand what God expected me to do. How could He allow this to happen to me? It was bad enough that I had always been a misfit in my family. I never had a close relationship with my older brothers and sister.

My mom had died while I was young, and though my dad was always loving and encouraging to me, I still wanted acceptance from my older siblings. I was just odd to them, and I admit, sometimes I was a pest. I still did not deserve to be carried off to a foreign country.

At first I thought life could get no worse. Then I was sent to the house of a top official in this country. Things began to look brighter. He trusted me with all his possessions and even made me his accountant. I did not let all this power and luxury go to my head though. I knew the tragedy of arrogance too well. God's saving grace had turned my misfortune into a blessing, and I would not forget it.

I don't know what
God wants from
me.

All too soon my blessing turned into what I believed to be a curse. My boss's wife began to make advances toward me. Sure, she was attractive in a way, but she was the boss's wife! How could I betray his trust? How could I turn my back on God after He had been so faithful? I could not.

I turned her down several times, but she was persistent. When she cornered me in a dimly lit, secluded room, I told her No and ran for my life, ran so fast I left my jacket in her hands. She set me up, and now here I am in jail.

I don't know what God wants from me. Sometimes I question whether I made the right choice. I know He cares and He has a plan for my life, but I do not know where He is going with this plan. Yes, I have questions. Doing the right thing seems hard at times. I do not know what God wants from me exactly, but I do know His track record proves His faithfulness. I cannot turn my back on Him now.

Sunday
January 27

Are You Swimming on Your Own?

LOGOS

Genesis 39; Judg. 13-16; 2 Samuel 11; 12; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Heb. 11:23-29

One Sunday afternoon a group of my friends and I had arranged to go to the beach, but things happened and only a friend of mine and I were able to go. We headed to the beach, and as soon as we got there we noticed that the water was very choppy. We were warned to be cautious of the undercurrent.

The beach was filled with a lot of people, so we went in the water and began to body surf. In a while we saw a perfect wave and decided to ride it. It took me under. After the wave ended, I didn't realize how far I was from the shore until my friend told me we needed to head back. I wasn't worried because I could just touch the ground, but as soon as I began to swim toward the beach, I realized I was being swept backward. My friend was in the same situation, and he warned me to take my time because if I kept on swimming at the pace I was, I would tire quickly. I tried to slow down, but then I began to go under—and I got a cramp in my left leg. Now I was really losing it. All I could think of was that I was going to die and go to hell since I knew I wasn't living the life I was supposed to be living.

Then I spotted a man and called to him for help. He didn't seem to hear me. Instead of coming toward me, he was going away. The more I tried to get close to him, the farther he went. I gave up and thought, *This is it. This is where I'm going to die.* I went under one last time, and while I was sinking a thought came into my head: God was telling me He was there to help me out, but I had to stop trying for myself and I had to trust in Him.

Inside my head, I just cried out, "God, please help me!" And right then and there a surfer came out of nowhere and took me to shore. My friend was saved too.

We sat on the beach and talked about what had just taken place, about why it had happened to us. I realized that this experience symbolized my life: I was going through life living on my own. I was swimming with my own strength. The funny thing is that the more I swam, the farther away I was getting from shore. That's how it is in our Christian walk.

*This is where
I'm going to die.*

The more we do the things on our own without God's help, the farther away from Him we are.

I almost lost my life that day, but I told God that I was not going to keep on living on my own but with Him. I decided to put all my trust in Him.

Are you struggling to get out of a specific sin? Do you feel that the more you try to do right, the more wrong you do? If you do, God is there. This controversy between good and evil is real. And our Lord God is real too. You don't have to

keep on swimming alone. Let Him take control. Remember what Jesus said: “‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light’ ” (Matt. 11:28-30, NIV).

REACT

1. Can we overcome temptation by ourselves? Explain your answer.
2. How can we stop depending on ourselves and depend more on God? Be specific.
3. Again and again you fall to the same sin. What does God want you to do so He can grant you freedom?
4. What is the difference between the forms of religious persuasion used by Puritans in New England or during the Inquisition and God's use of traumatic incidents—like near-death experiences—to encourage us to repent?
5. In today's reading, do you think God would have saved the author if he had not prayed for God's help or that God would have saved him earlier if he had prayed sooner? Explain your answer.
6. Does God often wait to answer prayers until the last minute to reinforce His power over us? Explain your answer.
7. Where is the freedom of choice in God's do-it-or-else scenarios found throughout the Bible? (e.g., Gen. 2:17; Exod. 30:20; Lev. 8:35; 1 Sam. 13:13, 14; Ezek. 18:4; John 15:6).
8. What is the difference between Christians using violence to support their beliefs, such as destroying abortion clinics, and the Israelites slaughtering whole tribes in their quest for the “Promised Land”? If we believe the biblical laws of wrong and right, don't we have an obligation to use whatever means necessary to convince others of that rightness for their own good?
9. Why was it seemingly acceptable for Old Testament people to kill and pillage but wrong for New Testament people?
10. How do you explain the low percentage of financially successful or influential Seventh-day Adventists—compared to those of other religions—in light of such biblical texts as Matthew 19:26; Jeremiah 29:11? If we are followers of God, why doesn't His promise in Joshua 1:7 seem to hold true anymore?

Are You Weak Enough?

TESTIMONY

2 Cor. 12:9, 10

When is the last time you boasted about your weaknesses before God? "Look, Jesus! I'm a liar! And I'm addicted to lusts of the world!"

When Paul agonized over a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7, NKJV), the Lord's response was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (verse 9, NIV). Without hesitation, Paul blurts, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (verse 9, NIV).

"The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will. . . . Desires for goodness and purity are right, so far as they go; but if we stop here, they avail nothing. . . . They do not yield the will to God. They do not *choose* to serve Him.

"God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. *We cannot change our hearts; we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure.*"

"Talk courage to the people; lift them up to God in prayer. Many who have been overcome by temptation are humiliated by their failures, and they feel that it is in vain for them to approach unto God; but this thought is of the enemy's

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that . . . relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour."

suggestion. When they have sinned, and feel that they cannot pray, tell them that it is then the time to pray. Ashamed they may be, and deeply humbled; but as they confess their sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour."²

In the battle for freedom from falling, our job is to choose Christ. As His grace rests on you and me, His power will be made perfect, and we will be given freedom and complete victory.

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176, italics supplied.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 182.

A Winner

EVIDENCE

Heb. 11:25

Listening to a sermon or reading stories about God's people in the Bible always challenges me. I admire their firmness and commitment toward God. Convinced that God's people were on to something real, I was baptized. I have never regretted my decision to choose God first.

Moses' autobiography is one good example to explore. He was "historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, and he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame. . . . 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.'"* Although Moses was intelligent and had a guaranteed share of Egypt's wealth, he chose to follow God's plan to deliver the Israelites from Egypt.

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we have to learn to sacrifice and humble ourselves before God because only through His power will we overcome Satan's devices.

I received this message from a friend and thought I would share it here:

I asked GOD to take away my pain. GOD said, No. It's not for Me to take away, but for you to give up.

I asked GOD to grant me patience. GOD said, No. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted—it's earned.

I asked GOD to give me happiness. GOD said, No. I give you blessings; happiness is up to you.

I asked GOD to make my spirit grow. GOD said, No. You must grow your own, but I will prune you and make you fruitful.

I asked GOD for all things that I might enjoy life. GOD said, No. I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things.

It is wise to include God in all our plans. The following principles should be used as our strategy against Satan:

1. Choose God first. A winner will always choose God first. If we choose to respect God's law, we will receive God's blessing. God's people are always fighting a winning battle against Satan.

2. Have faith in God. We can do anything through Christ who gives us strength (Phil. 4:13).

3. Remember the rewards God has promised us. We should do this especially when we are troubled and tempted to sin.

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 245.

HOW-TO

Josh. 1:1-9

As we review the instructions God gave to Joshua to prepare him for the battles they would face, we can also learn how to keep winning in the battle against Satan and how to make practical applications that will help us today.

1. **“Now therefore, arise, go” (Josh. 1:2, NKJV).** We often procrastinate, sit back and wait for people to come to us instead of taking action to go out and win souls. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to*

We need to stop putting God off.

the end of the age’ ” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NKJV; emphasis supplied). We need to remember that with God we can do anything; but without Him, we can do nothing (Matt. 19:26; John 15:5).

After Saul was converted and received his sight, he was asked, “ ‘What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name’ ” (Acts 22:16, NIV). We need to stop putting God off and choose this day whom we will serve.

2. **“Be strong and of good courage, . . . do according to all the law’ ” (Josh. 1: 6, 7, NKJV).** Throughout the Bible, God demonstrates the importance He places on faith and obedience. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6, NKJV) and “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder’ ” (James 2:10, 11, NKJV).

3. **“Meditate in [this Book of the Law] day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it” (Josh. 1:8, NKJV).** When contending with Satan in the wilderness, Jesus showed the importance of knowing the Scriptures and was able to fight off the attacks of the devil with the Word of God (Matt. 4:1-11). God has clearly shown us through His Word how to keep winning and to keep from losing the fight against Satan (Eph. 6:10-18).

4. **“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go’ ” (Josh. 1:9, NKJV).** God does not want us to be afraid or discouraged. Just as God promised to be with Joshua as He was with Moses (1:5) and to be with the disciples to the end of the world, He has promised to be with us wherever we go today.

Now that you have clear instructions from God regarding how to keep winning and keep from sinning, the choice is up to you to win or lose.

What Spirit Moves You?

OPINION

1 Kings 18:21

As a second-grade teacher, I am often asked the big why questions in life by my students: Why is the sky blue? Why does the ocean look blue when the water is clear? Why did the president lie? Why are there so many mean people?

Often such questions indicate that my students have been pondering them for some time and that the answer is relevant and important in their lives. When I was asked why there are so many mean people, I knew the answer: the battle between good and evil is being fought in every heart, in every nation, in every corner of the world. Sometimes as we watch the evening news it seems as if Satan is winning.

Every day we must decide whom will we serve. From the minute we wake up, and throughout the day, we are constantly deciding which spirit will be guiding our thoughts, words, and actions. Our choosing to welcome Satan's spirit explains why we yell at the driver who cuts us off on the freeway or why we join in as a group of colleagues criticize another colleague during a morning break or why we snap at our spouse in the evening as we arrive home. Satan will attempt to infiltrate our thoughts, words, and actions if we allow him to do so.

On the other hand, choosing God's spirit explains why we give our lunch to the homeless person we pass daily on our way to work or why we simply choose not to respond to the person who has been tailgating us for the past three miles, or why we console a colleague whose father has passed away. God's spirit is in charge when we choose to serve others, humble ourselves, and express our love to others.

At different stages of our day, or possibly our lives, we may be controlled by one of these two spirits. It is a choice that we make every minute of every day. "Many look on the conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan."* When we neglect our daily time with God, when we don't take time to study His Word, or maintain a constant communion with Him through prayer, what we are really choosing is to serve Satan and to let his spirit guide our lives.

Why are there so many mean people?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 116.

Friday
February 1

Heads You Win! Hearts You Win!

EXPLORATION

Eph. 2:1-10

CONCLUDE

We can't change our feelings or desires, but we can give God permission to change our hearts. We can't exert enough willpower to follow our chosen course in life, but we can surrender our wills to God and let our actions flow from His power.

CONSIDER

- Writing a letter to God, telling Him what you really want from Him and are willing to commit to Him in your relationship.
- Covenanting to pray for your fellow workers or classmates at a specific time each day this week.
- Making a visible symbol of a struggle in your life and Christ's strength working for you.
- Listing or learning songs to sing in time of temptation or fear, e.g. "Have Faith in God," "Be Strong and of Good Courage," "Trusting Jesus, That Is All."
- Making a welcome sign for God's spirit. Place it on the inside of the front door to your home.
- Making a clock face or calendar frame that says, "Choose ye this day whom you will serve." Place it where it will serve as a reminder to you of the importance of your daily choice to follow God's leading in your life.

CONNECT

Proverbs 3:1, 2; 16:7; Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Colossians 1:22, 23.

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*; Edith Schaeffer, *Affliction*; Philip Yancey, *Reaching for the Invisible God*.

Faith amid turmoil



" 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last
on the earth' " (Job 19:25, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Job 19:25

Alone you watch
Brokenhearted
As people look past you
To the place where it started

Instead of some fruit
People taste the life of society
And mock those who value
The choice of sobriety

Bombarded by messages
That entice and degrade
It is a wonder how anyone
Can stand in this day and age

And yet we remember
Those faithful and strong
When tempted by Satan
To follow the wrong

But how do we stand
When life is confusing?
Do we follow the crowd?
Or take courage in choosing

To stand on our own
With convictions proclaimed
That God is the answer
To all of life's pain

We know what to do
It is easy to say
But harder to follow
In our world today

Dear God grant us courage
To take that first step
Away from the trap
That Satan has set

Remind me again
Of your power and might
Give me courage and strength
To stand in the light.

To Have Faith Like Joseph

EVIDENCE

Genesis 37–40

It is easy to forget that biblical people were much like us. They had hopes and dreams. They worried about many of the same basic needs that we do today. Somewhere along their life paths, though, they made a choice—to have total faith in God. God asks us to make the same choice today: to have total faith in Him. The world may have changed significantly since Joseph, Abraham, Esther, or Daniel were alive; however, our God has not changed. He expects us to trust Him fully, and we need to trust Him no matter what happens in life.

It is easy to lose faith. Many times we have heard others ask where God was when something went wrong. Usually when time has passed, though, we look back at the situation and see that God carried us through it and we are better people because we relied upon Him fully during that downtime in our life. In order to trust someone, however, we need to know them fully. God has left us His Word, and He listens when we pray, so we need to rely upon Him especially when we are going through turmoil. The story of Joseph is a perfect illustration of the type of faith we need in today's world. Imagine the thoughts that went through his head when his brothers betrayed him (Gen. 37:27, 28). Later on in his life he was cast in jail because of the false testimony of Potiphar's wife (39:7-20). Joseph had every reason in the world to doubt God and yet did not. Even when the chief butler forgot about him (40:23), Joseph did not give up on the Lord. Indeed, he noted that it was God who allowed these things to happen so that he would be in the important position he eventually held (45:5-9).

**Biblical people
were much like us.**

Like Joseph's faith, our faith needs to be rooted fully in God. We need to realize that as mortals we are unable to see the big picture. God has a purpose for each of us. We need to look at our lives as service for God, not service for self. This is the only way we can truly have total faith in God. It was God who created us and placed us here. God knows the future; He knows what is best for us. When we go through trials, we need to remember how God has helped us in the past and trust fully in Him, as Joseph did.

REACT

What percentage of Joseph's suffering had to do with his own behavior caused by his upbringing? How did his attitudes affect his brothers (Gen. 37:3-7)? Potiphar's wife (39:8, 9)?

Hope Amid Hopelessness

LOGOS

Gen. 17:1-11; 22:1-18; Ruth 1:16, 17; 4:13-22; Esther 4:13-17; Job 19:25-27; Dan. 6:22

In each of the scriptural examples cited above, God's children faced death or great loss because of their loyalty to God. Each was brought to the point of decision. Should they be obedient to God regardless of the consequences? Was there not an easier way? However, as each faced the terrible ramifications of their loyalty, they remained true to God, and thus witnesses to His miraculous power and providential leading.

Father of the Faithful (Gen. 17:1-11; 22:1-18; Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 11:17-19)

In Genesis 12:1-3 we find God's call to Abraham. With the call comes a promise. Abraham would become a great nation, and through him all people on earth would be blessed. As the story progresses, the promises are reiterated within the context of covenant. Thus both in Genesis 15 and 17 God reaffirms His promises to Abraham as their relationship is deepened through covenant making. God even blesses Abraham through his failings! Ishmael, a product of faithlessness, is drawn into the promise (16:9-16; 2:9-13).

But now comes the supreme test. Abraham is called to sacrifice the child of promise. The child of miracle, the hope for all nations, must die. God seems to contradict Himself. How can the God who gave Isaac in fulfillment of His covenant promise now take him away? His entire pilgrimage seems for nothing. Can you not imagine the horror that God's command must have caused in this aging parent? Yet Abraham obeys. His trust in God is now supreme. Nothing else, not even his son, his only son Isaac, is more important than his loyalty to God. So with heavy heart and leaden steps he travels three days to Mount Moriah (22:4).

We must also take note of the faith of Isaac. At the last moment Isaac would have realized the awful truth. The strapping youth could have escaped from his aged father. Yet he submitted. The interaction of Abraham and Isaac, father and son, reminds us of the greater sacrifice, centuries later, when God gave up His only Son and Jesus submitted to the cruel death of the cross. The death of the Lamb of God is alluded to at Moriah as Abraham tells his son " 'God will provide for Himself the lamb' " (verse 8, NKJV). Then Isaac is spared and the ram takes his place. Isaac experiences the wonder of substitutionary sacrifice.

"Though He Slay Me" (Job 19:25-27)

Job's situation has similarities to Abraham's. Like Abraham, he is called blameless (Job 1:1, Gen. 17:1). And like Abraham, he is tested in a frightening and

incomprehensible way. God's acts seemed in contradiction to His promises. Job loses everything of value and is left destitute, bereft of hope. He curses the day of his birth (Job 3). He longs for death (verses 20-22). What sense could be made of his situation? Yet in the midst of hopelessness there is an incredible expression of hope. He knows his Redeemer lives. He knows that, though he die, he will see God. And he yearns to see Him (19:25-27).

Eventually God ends the test, and in power reveals Himself to Job. Though his questions are not answered, Job is content in the assurance of God's presence. And in the end, God provides.

A God Who Tests

Job's story is not primarily about justice. How can the birth of a new child really replace the life of another? (42:13). The focus is on the faith of God's servant. In spite of the brutal reality of his situation, Job maintains his faith in a mysterious God whose actions he does not understand. The controversy, open to the universe (chapters 1;2), is outside Job's vision.

Can you not imagine the horror that God's command must have caused?

Just so, Abraham could not see the universal dimension. The cosmic battle was reduced to one upraised knife. The same is true in our lives. Often we stumble through our troubles, seeking understanding as unanswered questions crowd our thoughts. Our high calling is to live in trusting obedience in the moment, in spite of our situation, knowing our Redeemer lives. By God's grace, and within God's plan, we can share in the joyous victory of Abraham and Job.

REACT

1. How do you respond to God's commands when they go against your wishes?
2. God will not lead us contrary to His will as revealed in Scripture. Yet Abraham was told to engage in human sacrifice. How did Abraham know it was truly God's voice leading him to offer Isaac?
3. In what ways are Seventh-day Adventists like Jews in their outlook on life?
4. How does it make you feel to think you might be suffering just so God can prove a point to Satan? How do you think Job's children who died would have felt about being sacrificed as an experiment between God and Satan?
5. Do you think Job ever came to understand the purpose of his terrible ordeal?
6. Why did God feel He had to justify the reality of His love for us?
7. What would you tell a friend who was suffering pain or loss and felt God was totally ignoring their prayers? What makes us think we can interpret God's actions in another person's life?

The Lesson Book of the Universe

TESTIMONY

Gen. 22:1-18

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations, but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds.

The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe.

Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation.

Heavenly beings were witnesses of the scene as the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac were tested. The trial was far more severe than that

**The faith of Abraham
and the submission of
Isaac were tested.**

which had been brought upon Adam. Compliance with the probation laid upon our first parents involved no suffering, but the command to Abraham demanded the most agonizing sacrifice. All heaven beheld with wonder and admiration

Abraham's unflinching obedience. All heaven applauded his fidelity. Satan's accusations were shown to be false. God declared to His servants, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Gen. 22:12, NIV).

"God's covenant, confirmed to Abraham by an oath before the intelligences of other worlds, testified that obedience will be rewarded."* Abraham's obedience teaches us that nothing is too precious for us to give to God.

REACT

1. How does today's article give the impression that bad things come from God in order to teach us?
2. How does the Bible imply that the more we suffer the better Christians we must be?

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 155.

How to Claim the Victory

HOW-TO

1 Cor. 15:57; 1 Pet. 1:13

Are you inspired by the biblical accounts of heroes like Daniel, Esther, and Job? As Christians we regard these men and women as champions of the faith and heroes in the great controversy. However, we often fail to realize that today we are in the middle of the cosmic conflict between good and evil as much as the heroes of old were. In fact, as the coming of our Lord approaches, Scripture tells us that Satan will turn up the heat and increase his attacks on God's people. He knows that his time is short (1 Pet. 5:8). Can we stand today like Daniel and the other heroes of old?

Scripture tells us
that Satan will
turn up the heat.

Bible heroes were indeed special, but was the power available to Daniel greater than that available to us today? Since God is just as powerful yesterday as He is today, the answer is No. Perhaps, we are just using less of His power.

I suggest that the secret to victory is not so secret. It is available to us today. Here are some ideas of how to claim victory today:

1. Tap into the real source of power. The victory comes through God's power. Our battle is not against flesh and blood (Ezek. 6:12). Remember, the battle is Christ's and He has already won it! Let's be connected to the Conqueror.

2. Know the territory. When we are under God's wings, the devil can't touch us (1 Pet. 1:13). Why should we step out into Satan's territory? Allow no temptation to have a chance in your life. Let's keep our focus on what is good (Phil. 4:8).

3. Claim the victory. It is not difficult to pledge allegiance to the winning team. The battles in your life and mine are won. God promises the victory to us; He has done it all. Let's claim His promise today (1 Cor. 15:57).

4. Give glory to God. Victory is a promised reality. Would we then attribute our success to our own strength? No! Remember that you are an instrument in God's hand to bring glory to Him. Let's together thank God for giving us victory in life.

REACT

1. If Christ won the victory for us, why do we as Christians struggle so much with the sin in our lives?

2. If, without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), what would happen if archaeologists discovered irrefutable evidence that the Bible was real, thus removing all doubt of God's existence?

Weathering Whatever Comes

OPINION

Dan. 3:17

Imagine a man who has had his faith tried from day one. He lives in a country where his belief in God could warrant his death, yet every day he has faith in God that he is doing the right thing and that God will provide for him.

Now imagine a man who lives every day free from trials until one day his car breaks down, his wife leaves him, and he finds out he has cancer. He believes his life cannot get any worse, yet his faith in God continues. Still another man exists who loves God, has faith that God is leading in his life, yet never finds that his faith is tested. God always provides for him. As he grows older, he has a feeling of satisfaction about his life and praises God for all God has done for him. He tells his children that faith in God is the key to a happy life. Is the faith of the man, who in his life has experienced nothing but turmoil stronger than the man's who has experienced nothing but God's blessings?

Faith is like a beautiful boat. One man's boat has spent her life at sea, she has weathered many storms, and he knows he can depend on her because she has been proven. The other man's boat has spent her life close to the harbor, she has been well cared for, she makes short trips, and never sees the rage of the seas. Some men laugh at her and say she is not a real boat until she faces the wrath of the mighty sea, but she turns away from them, proud, knowing that she is doing her job

**Faith is like a
beautiful boat.**

by staying close to shore. She knows that she does not need to face the sea to prove she is a good boat. Yet one day she is caught out a little too far from shore when a big storm rolls in. She was not prepared for this kind of weather, but she knows she is a good boat. She brings her crew safely to shore. The crew say what a good boat she is. She feels proud yet she knows she didn't need a big storm to test her.

In the same way, as people, we don't need turmoil to test us to prove that we have faith. Still, our faith should be strong and we need to have kept up the maintenance, so that should we find ourselves caught in a storm we are prepared to handle it.

REACT

1. How does the Bible send conflicting messages about prosperity and piety?
2. A current computer game on the market, called "Messiah," involves God using a cherub sent to this planet to "straighten us out," using pain, violence, and disaster. How does the Bible relate to this concept?

Total Faith

EXPLORATION

Heb. 11:1, 2

CONCLUDE

When we read the stories of Bible heroes and heroines, it's tempting to believe that their whole lives revolved around one or two episodes of trial or temptation that were quickly resolved in a few verses or chapters. In fact, the dramatic scenes recorded in the Scriptures are merely glimpses of people who dedicated themselves to knowing God's will—and doing it—every day throughout their lives. Their day-to-day choices were the same then as ours are today: whether or not to trust God completely, no matter where or how He leads us.

CONSIDER

- Drawing an episode in your personal experience when God's power sustained you in a time of high stress. Draw the story in more than one panel if you like. Stick figures are fine.
- Making up a list of heaven's top ten Bible heroes—in addition to Jesus. After you have a list of ten, rank them in order of faithfulness demonstrated or challenges overcome.
- Thinking of a person you know personally who has been an example of faithfulness in spite of trial or tragedy. What positive characteristics of this person do you think were dominant?
- Contacting someone who has endured (or is enduring) some kind of personal tragedy. In an interview format, ask her or him to describe briefly her or his struggles and how God's faithfulness has been revealed.
- Playing a tape or CD of a song that describes your trust relationship with a God who never abandons us, but is sometimes silent in our suffering.
- Using pipe cleaners or modeling clay to create a symbol of God's support for His people in good times and bad.
- Listing the things in nature that are, for you, the most powerful symbols of God's never-ending love.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, "The Test of Discipleship."

Chris Blake, *Searching for a God to Love*, chap. 9; Tony Campolo, *The Kingdom of God Is a Party*, chap. 11; Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, chaps. 2, 3.

Jesus models victory



“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children” (Gal. 4:4, 5, NRSV).

Resisting the Devil Through Christ

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 4:1-11

Being in an Adventist school doesn't mean that you're free from all worldly things; the truth is, the pressure is strongest in these places because you see others just like yourself doing what shouldn't be done. And for someone who doesn't have a strong will, it's so easy to give in to temptation.

A friend once asked me to a holiday spot to celebrate another friend's birthday. The group was to be comprised of Adventists, so I was confident that they were my type of acquaintances. I had second thoughts though, and these led to my prayer for things to work out fine.

Before leaving, we passed by a supermarket to buy some groceries. I noticed alcoholic beverages in one cart, and I instinctively whispered another prayer for our weekend party. I soon found out that some of them were non-Adventists.

The party turned out fine, though there was drinking. My friend and I were asked to drink, but we were firm in refusing. We did look a bit out of place in the crowd but it didn't matter; what we believed was more important.

Not doing what others are doing may leave one different from others, but isn't that the point of being an individual? It is having one's own beliefs and not conforming just because everybody else is doing something, especially if you know that what you believe is right. Spreading the Gospel is accomplished not only in speaking, but also in living life the way Jesus did. He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness but He withstood all of it.

As followers of Christ, we can resist Satan as well if we look up to Jesus as our Model. Jesus came to earth as a Son of man to set an example for His followers, so that when we feel the burden too much to bear, we can always have Him as an inspiration in overcoming temptations.

Moreover, He gave us a promise: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when

you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13, NIV). Jesus doesn't allow any temptation to lure us if He knows it's beyond our ability, so the temptations we experience now are all within our ability to overcome. Let us keep in mind that we can overcome any temptation, like peer pressure, because God has promised us that we can. It's only a matter of choosing to hold onto that promise.

**What we believed was
more important.**

LOGOS

Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:6-28; John 6:1-15

We can understand how a life and work such as that of Jesus would commence with the “temptation.” Judaism never conceived of such an idea, because it never conceived of a messiah like Jesus. Biblical teaching, and even the psychological necessity of the case, must have pointed to temptation and victory as the condition of spiritual greatness. It could not have been otherwise in a world hostile to God. There can be no crown of victory without a contest, no moral ideal without personal attainment. In Jesus Christ’s life in us, we have the victory!

Living the Same Life

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me” (Luke 4:18, NIV). Anointing may signify two things:

First, anointing is the endowment of a person with gifts and abilities for his or her work. “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him” (1 John 2:27, NIV). The anointing is said to teach us all things.

God doesn't ask anyone to undertake a ministry without giving him or her the gifts for the discharge of it.

Second, anointing also was a symbol of God’s calling out, sending a person to the execution of an office. “The prophet poured the oil on Jehu’s head and declared, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “I anoint you king over the Lord’s people Israel” ’ ” (2 Kings 9:6, NIV). Upon obeying God’s call and receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we will have a sure victory!

God doesn’t ask anyone to undertake a ministry without giving him or her the gifts for the discharge of it. But what was this employment to which Christ was anointed? “To preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18, 19, NIV).

Spiritual Stamina From God’s Word

This will be our secret: Jesus encountered and overcame trials and temptations in His earthly ministry. He exemplified His life through God’s Word to gain victory in every battle. Nobody can make the excuse that Jesus’ victory was made possible

because He is God. But we as humans can't overcome temptation on our own because we were born in weakness. We have the natural desire of falling away or the tendency to commit evil. This will be our common reaction.

In this matter we need also to accept the fact that Jesus responded without hesitation to the challenge of saving lost humanity. The Bible testifies that He has no intention of using His divine power to do away with temptation; instead He became human, experiencing all of life's sufferings and sacrifices. In fact, Jesus became our best Model because He overcame temptations incomparably bigger than ours.

First, Jesus was tempted by Satan's subtle command to use His extraordinary power to make bread out of stones. Jesus answered, "It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"'" (Matt. 4:4, NIV).

Second, Jesus was enticed by Satan's abuse of Scripture to believe that there would be no risk for the Son of God to throw Himself down from the highest point of the temple. Jesus answered, "It is also written: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test"'" (verse 7, NIV).

Third, Satan knew that Jesus was with God in the beginning, at the creation of the world. Even so, Satan offered earthly reward if Jesus were to bow down and worship him. But because Jesus' life was devoted to His Father's will, though He was in human condition, He resisted the devil: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only"'" (verse 10, NIV). Then the devil left Him, and the angels came and attended Him. Jesus lives in the Word! He speaks from the spoken Word with power. He lived His life through the Word. He gained the victory not because He is God, but because He used the power of the Word.

We have nothing to fear for the battle in our daily living because Jesus is our victory!

REACT

1. What temptation in your life is most difficult to overcome?
2. What are your gifts (name at least one) and how might God be anointing you to use that gift?
3. Jesus answered Satan's temptations with Scripture, and that is a lesson for us in spiritual warfare. But what about new Christians who are not well-schooled in the Bible? How does God help them resist temptation?
4. We're not tempted with the same objects as Jesus was in the wilderness, but the principles are the same for us today. Take each temptation and name an equivalent temptation that you face.
5. Can someone who does not have access to Scripture still come to know God enough to be saved? Why or why not?

TESTIMONY

John 16:33

One morning at school, Charlie and Roberto were invited to a friend's house to watch an obscene TV show. At first they refused, but the friend insisted. "What's wrong with the show?" he asked. "How can just watching something affect your faith?" These words opened the door for doubt in their minds, and they decided to go.

Before the show ended, they felt guilty and left. They thought they were strong, but darkness veiled their souls, and they felt sorry about that night.

Many times in life, Satan is successful in tempting us and holding us as prisoners of sin. He keeps injecting doubt in our minds so as to weaken our faith, which ensures our entrapment. Ellen White was correct in saying, "In our own strengths it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us."¹

Every human encounters Satan's devouring power. From Adam and Eve to Joseph, from Judas to our time, all have experienced the fallen angel's assault. Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, but He rose from the rest spotless, overcame temptation, and prevailed in the conflict with Satan.

Every human
encounters Satan's
devouring power.

How did He do this? "Only by the word could He resist temptation. 'It is written,' He said."² He also equipped Himself with prayer and meditation.

Jesus' victory was not for His self-exaltation. He did this for us. All His actions and lessons were examples for us to follow, that we may be like Him.

"Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. . . . So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. . . . That we may attain to perfection of character."²

In times of temptation look neither to the circumstances nor to the weakness of self but to the power of the Word. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps. 119:11, NIV).

Jesus encourages us to "take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV).

REACT

What are the building blocks of a trusting relationship? Be specific.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 122.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

He Came, We Saw, Together We Conquer

EVIDENCE

John 16:33

“In every temptation the weapon of [Jesus’] warfare was the Word of God.”¹ Evidently, the word of God has an active role in resisting Satan’s snares. “Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations; but he was repulsed in every conflict.”² Because Christ was well acquainted with the Word of God, He was able to overcome the tempter’s lures.

God makes Himself known to us through His Word. By reading it, we become aware of His unwavering love for humanity. As we come to know more about His character, the desire to develop a solid and intimate relationship with Him becomes stronger. The deeper we study the Scriptures, the more we become equipped and prepared to face trials just as Christ was.

“No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan.”

We are comforted with the fact that “no man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin.”³ “Christ will give strength to all who seek it.”⁴ We should not be afraid to face Satan’s temptations, for Christ declared, “‘Take heart! I have overcome the world’” (John 16:33, NIV).

The knowledge of Christ’s victorious battle against Satan should encourage us to devote time in meditating upon His Word and developing a trusting relationship with Him. But let us be reminded of the sufferings Christ endured that made Him a perfect example. He took the form of a human to show that, through divine aid, human beings can be victorious over sin. He experienced humanity as marred by sin, and bore Himself the heaviest of all temptations that we, too, may become conquerors. “The Christian life is a life of warfare, of continual conflict. It is a battle and a march. But every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory.”⁵

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

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 510.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 5, 1895.

Victory in Campus Ministry

HOW-TO

Phil. 4:13

There is a constant challenge on a non-Adventist university campus that reminds Seventh-day Adventist students of the great controversy. We often interact with students of different beliefs. And we see this as a great opportunity to witness to other people about Jesus.

On the other hand, Satan knows our weaknesses and deliberately attacks us in those areas. In our school, we sometimes encounter teachers who schedule exams on the Sabbath and students who smoke, drink, and use profane language. These and other forms of worldly things are temptations that Satan uses so that we may lose our belief and faith in God. As our Savior, however, Jesus Christ overcame the world. So can we! But for us to be victorious, we should always look at Him as our Model.

**“Every promise
in God’s word
is ours.”**

1. Have complete faith and dependence on God. “In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature.”¹ We must always rely on God for guidance, wisdom, and strength, for “only through realizing our weakness and looking steadfastly unto Jesus can we walk securely.”²

2. Exercise self-control over appetites and passions. “For our sake He (Jesus) exercised a self-control stronger than hunger or death.”³ Like Jesus, we must not give in to worldly pleasures and sensual indulgence, and we should hold firm to our Christian beliefs and convictions. “Our only hope of eternal life is through bringing the appetites and passions into subjection to the will of God.”⁴

3. Face Satan’s temptations with the words of the Scriptures. “Every promise in God’s word is ours.”⁵ And we should “look not to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word.”⁶ Jesus used the Scriptures as His weapon, and with it He was able to win the battle.

4. Communicate with our Father through prayers. By maintaining an open line to the Father, Jesus was able to resist Satan’s temptation. It is vital for us to keep in touch with God, so that we may see things in the light of His will.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 122.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

6. *Ibid.*

The Spirit of a Fighter

OPINION

1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:57

The spirit lives on.

Everywhere we see people engaged in struggles. All of us are fighters in our own right. Unfortunately, we can never win the battle by ourselves because of our sinful nature. Thus we are weak fighters at best; we are sure of doom. Hopeless though it may seem, however, the fortress of God would never allow us to raise the white flag of defeat. Our Model Fighter lived out the true spirit and meaning of fighting for God's cause.

Jesus perfected the strategy to take into the battlefield. If we did not have Him as our influence, we would lose to such an ominous power of darkness. However, we can count on Him to lead us simply because He can say, "Been there. Done that." What we must do is let Him take over the driver's seat. In such a spirit of following our Leader we can fight effectively, shoulder-to-shoulder, rallying on God's righteous side.

Here's how we can equip ourselves for the battle:

1. Arm with the best weapons. Nothing can ever substitute for the Word of God as the most effective fighting tool against Satan's forces. Jesus introduced His fighting stance with "It is written." As the great warrior of Israel put it, "By the word of your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent" (Ps.17:4, NIV).

2. Assume the fighter's attitude. The drumbeat reinforces the courage of the soldier; likewise our attitudes should be led by the Holy Spirit, perennially guiding us in whatever attack and defense we wish to implement. By having such spirit in line with God's purposes, our goal in defeating Satan is clear and present.

He can say, "Been there. Done that."

3. Keep in mind that we carry the honor of our Sovereign. Our God the Father as our Sovereign Head claims us to be rightfully His sons and daughters, as well as fighters in His infantry. By being in God's army, we are made accountable and commissioned to do our best for Him even if we lose our lives in the battle—in exchange for life eternal. This is like a medal of honor entitled to a fallen patriot.

As fighters for Christ, we must gear ourselves with these principles and carry these out faithfully. Jesus really wants us to follow Him so that we may live with Him someday, after all conflicts are settled and fighting is obsolete. All that remains is the spirit of following God. And then the spirit lives on—forevermore.

REACT

In what specific aspects of your life do you see evidence of the great controversy?

EXPLORATION

1 John 4:4

CONCLUDE

Is it possible to meet temptation head-on consistently, without eventually yielding to it? The testimony of the Wilderness Warrior, Jesus, is a mighty “Yes! With God all things are possible.” Jesus encountered every genus of temptation humans can imagine. He met temptation as a human and overcame as only humans can—through divine empowerment. Jesus did not rely on His human strength. The Word (made flesh) placed His faith in the power and promises of the (written) Word and steadfastly clung to its assurance of victory as He relied only on God. Such experience of total dependence on Heaven for victory is within the realm of possibilities for all sons and daughters of Adam.

CONSIDER

- Drawing a cartoon or comic strip that contrasts victory over temptation relying on divine power vs. yielding to temptation relying on human strength.
- Determining the odds against a human being overcoming satanic forces in his or her own strength. Consider the differences in age and experience between the foes.
- Creating a series of silly similes that reveal the futility of meeting temptation in your own strength. For example: “Trying to resist temptation in my own strength is like trying to push a bus up a steep hill with its emergency brakes on!”
- Singing or playing the old hymn “Yield Not to Temptation.” Memorize the refrain, and then teach it to a child.
- Pantomiming a boxing match between you and the devil. Picture yourself being knocked down repeatedly until you and Jesus form a tag team and vanquish Satan.
- Interviewing someone who is a recovering addict in a 12-step program. Ask about their experience and what they have learned especially from the first three steps.

CONNECT

1 Samuel 30:1-31; John 16:33; Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:14.
Steps to Christ, “Rejoicing in the Lord.”

The **great** controversy in the **parables** of Jesus



“ ‘The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father’ ” (Matt. 13:43, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Luke 15:21-23

Some choices in life are obvious. No experience needed. No degree needed. For example, "Should I choose dinner at a gourmet restaurant or eat out of a garbage can?" "Should I stop at a red light, or ignore the signal and take my chances with that semi?"

Other choices in life are not so obvious. Some involve temptation, confusion, complexity, and therefore require insight, foresight, and God-sight. The parables we are studying this week show a spectrum of choices or effects of choices.

In Luke 15 the prodigal son made a choice. He seems to have said to himself,

The prodigal son thought that he was embarking on a glorious, prosperous adventure.

Hey, instead of working for Dad here on the ranch, I think I'll take my money and run to the city. He left a home, a business, comfort, food, love—for what? Eventually, we are told, for the company of pigs. That result, however, was not so obvious at first. The prodigal son thought that he was

embarking on a glorious, prosperous adventure. How could he have been so misguided, so deceived?

Picture for a moment two residences. One could well be called a palace. Surrounded by beautifully manicured grounds, it is white and resplendent. Attendants, well-dressed and smiling, are waiting by the pillared staircase to lead you ceremoniously through the grand entrance. A palace can be so inviting.

The other residence could most appropriately be called a cabin. Surrounded by a forest, it is weathered and rundown and looks as if it could be quaintly featured in a painting, but hardly in a home and garden magazine. A squirrel may be on the sagging porch to greet you, but otherwise no ceremony, no finery.

Some choices may seem to lead toward a palace—ease, enjoyment, fun. Certainly that is what the prodigal son had in mind when he took off with his inheritance.

Other choices may seem to lead toward a remote cabin—hardship, solitude, simplicity. Perhaps that is what the prodigal son was trying to escape—the predictability of life with his father. What he found out was that the palace that he entered was a palace of pain, and the cabin he had left was a cabin of comfort. So before it was too late, the prodigal son left the company of pigs and returned to his father.

Is the great controversy as clear in day-to-day choices as a palace is to a cabin? Not with our eyes, but with God's, our path can lead directly to Him and His house.

Parables: at Me, in Me

EVIDENCE

Matt. 13:3-8

The parables of Jesus are a collection of stories that we have heard countless times. A parable is “a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson.”¹

But how is this different from a fable or an allegory? We often consider parables as lessons on how to live our lives, rather than looking deeper at how they illuminate the great controversy. The parable is different from the fable or allegory in that it seeks “to set forth a truth spiritual and heavenly,”² while the fable “never lifts itself above earth,” and the allegory “needs not . . . an interpretation to be brought to it from without, since it contains its interpretation within itself.”³

Jesus chose the parable over the fable because He was not concerned solely with this earth. He did not use allegory because it leaves no room for examination; all that can be drawn from it is currently present.

We can look at the parables from different angles, and this is what Jesus would like. He wants us to search for the meaning, not just from the individual parable, but how they fit together and in some cases set up tensions. The parables “force people to make a judgment on some commonplace situation and then to transfer that judgment to a spiritual plane.”⁴

In the parable of the sower, He illustrates the dynamics of those who receive the Word of God—not just the Word, but The Word who was speaking to them. There were people in this parable in which the seed sprang up, then died quickly, possibly because it was too much of the head and not of the heart, but just as possibly because it was too much of the heart and not of the head. The passage between the explanation of the story of the sower and the story itself illustrates how Jesus wants us to dig into the parable and wrestle with its meanings, as well as to allow it to enter and wrestle in us.

Jesus intended that these stories be scrutinized. He was trying to illustrate concepts that are not understood about the great controversy. His wish was to get at the heart of the great controversy, the character of God. He says, “I will speak to you in parables. I will explain mysteries hidden since the creation of the world” (Matt. 13:35, NLT).

The parables “force people to make a judgment on some commonplace situation.”

1. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), p. 989.

2. Richard C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1953), p. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

4. Leland Ryken, *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1974), p. 303.

Stories That Set the Record Straight

LOGOS

Matt. 13:1-9, 18-30; 21:33-41; 22:1-14; Luke 15

The Generous Farmer (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-30)

The candle you gave your daughter last Christmas? She “loaned” it to a friend. Your coworker gushed about “the perfect picture frame” but, two months later, the gift still sits unfilled. “I’ve been busy,” your husband winces when you remind him that the certificate for his new cologne is still on the dresser. Meanwhile, he still smells like a horse. Fortunately, there’s Aunt Minerva. The scarf you bought for her—she’s worn it every day! Next holiday, won’t you be tempted, at least a little bit, to make hers the only gift you give?

I am sure the farmer in Jesus’ parable is tempted to back way off on sowing seed. He has encountered “unworthy” soil, despicable weeds, even an agricultural saboteur! Fortunately, however, he doesn’t skimp (2 Cor. 9:6).

The parables of Jesus develop a clear picture of God. He is generous! His blessings are broadcast freely (Matt. 5:45).

In the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the “father of lies” has tried to distort our picture of God, making Him out to be unreasonable and stingy, skimping on the good things, even for His friends (Gen. 3:4, 5). Satan accuses God of being selective with His blessings or, worse yet, manipulative in the way He sows His seed (Job 1:9-11). The parables set the record straight about the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:11, 24) and its generous King.

Meanwhile, he
still smells like a
horse.

The Lavish Landlord (Matt. 21:33-46)

Much time, work, and money go into setting up a vineyard. The landowner spares no expense. He builds a wall around the place—distinctive and secure. He constructs a state-of-the-art winepress and installs a surveillance system to safeguard the grapes.

The landowner left his management team in charge of a rundown farm; you might be able to justify their hostility at harvest time. When the landowner sends servants to collect his portion, some get beat up and others are killed. The landowner’s trusted overseers have morphed into murdering, thieving thugs.

Finally, the owner sends his own son to negotiate with the managers, but they take his life too. When the landowner finally brings “those wretches to a wretched end” (verse 41, NIV), there is a collective sigh of relief.

The great controversy that began in heaven quickly moved to planet Earth (Rev. 12:7-9). Jesus uses familiar things like fields, farmers, and fathers in His stories to help us put this cosmic conflict into perspective. It is a war fought on the battleground of every human mind and heart. Christ's ultimate victory was secured on the Cross (Heb. 10:12-14). Our responses to God's generosity and grace, however, determine our own, individual destinies.

The Fabulous Feast (Matt. 22:1-14)

God's generous nature is, once again, the central focus. A king sends out invitations to a wedding feast and follows up with servants bearing personal reminders. Everyone on the "A" list, though, has an excuse. Some of the invitees assault the king's messengers. Some of the king's servants are even killed.

So the king sends out invitations to anyone and everyone. He even buys a new tuxedo or formal gown for every guest to wear. One man's total disregard for the king's generosity leaves him on the outside looking in.

"Many are called," Jesus sums the story up, "but few are chosen." In other words, some will choose not to receive the magnificent gifts of a gracious King.

The Forgiving Father (Luke 15)

When a shepherd spots his lost lamb and a homemaker finds the coin she had misplaced, friends gather to celebrate. Same thing in heaven, Jesus says. God throws a party every time one sinner turns and heads for home.

Why is it, though, that every party has a killjoy? The neighbors think the father has lost his mind when he grafts his spoiled kid back onto the family tree like nothing ever happened. It is more than the older brother can stomach. And all the father can think to say sounds like just more foolish, prodigal generosity: "'Son, . . . everything I have is yours'" (verse 31, NIV). "Please come to the celebration. The one we feared was dead has come back to us alive!"

The truths of Jesus' parables expose Satan's lies about our heavenly Father. The good news is that God is far more generous than we could have ever imagined. The sobering news is that such outrageous grace demands our wholehearted response. The gift is so expensive it cost the Son of God His very life. Devaluing it in any way bears eternal consequences. Equally eternal, and infinitely more desirable, are the results of embracing God's amazing grace.

REACT

1. In looking at other parables, how do you see Christ painting a picture of God? How do such messages apply to our understanding of the great controversy?
2. How do the people of our age misunderstand the character of God? What are the implications for the gospel and the three angels' messages that we wish to share?

Sowing the World With Truth

TESTIMONY

Matt. 13:1-9, 18-30; 25:1-13; John 14:8-11

The teachings and parables of Christ speak of the great controversy from different viewpoints. Some address the issues of the cosmic conflict more directly than others. Jesus sought to address the effects of the great controversy and critical issues for the redemption of humanity.

“Christ came to sow the world with truth. Ever since the fall of man, Satan has been sowing the seeds of error. It was by a lie that he first gained control over men,

**“Christ came to
sow the world
with truth.”**

and thus he still works to overthrow God’s kingdom in the earth and to bring men under his power. A sower from a higher world, Christ came to sow the seeds of truth. He who had stood in the councils of God, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, could bring to men the pure principles of truth. Ever since the fall of man, Christ had been the

Revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed, ‘the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever,’ is communicated to men. 1 Peter 1:23.”¹

The parable of the tares continues to shed light on the character of God in the midst of the devil’s accusations. “The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God’s own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God’s goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil, He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one; for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain.”²

The need for spreading the truth still remains. “It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.”³

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 37, 38.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Practical Parabolic Methods

HOW-TO

Matt. 13:1-9; 22:1-14

As I read over these familiar parables, I was struck by the thought that they have everything to do with the role Christ expects us to play in the great controversy, especially in relation to His commission in Matthew 28.

In the parables of the sower and the wedding banquet Christ is represented first as the Sower, sowing seeds without discretion, then as a King, inviting all, without discretion, to the wedding banquet. The important concept is "without discretion." The sower scattered seeds everywhere and the king sent his servants into the highways and byways. It was in this way that Christ called us to Himself.

Just as Christ called us, He expects us to call others. We are to transform ourselves from receivers of the Word into sowers. "His servants in like manner must go forth to sow."¹ We are being called to be sales people for the kingdom. We are to present a view of God's kingdom to everyone without discretion. Whether our message is received or shunned is not the issue. What we are called to do is to present, allowing people the opportunity to respond.

"There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9, NKJV). Salesmen have been offering "stuff" to people since the beginning of time, and taking a look at some of their sale's techniques might help us in sowing the good Word to those around us.

The important concept
is "without discretion."

An article in *Entrepreneur* magazine laid out the sales process in six steps.² Following are three that are specifically relevant to our mission:

1. Develop trust and an emotional rapport with the client through common bonds. It is all about relationships. We need to build relationships with those around us. When we have the relationships, then and only then should we begin sharing what makes our lives different.

2. Explain the benefits for the prospect. Our lives should be a witness to the power of Christ. They should demonstrate the benefits of the kingdom of God. Through our example others will see what He can do in their lives.

3. Close the sale. It isn't our job to push Christ, but we do need to give others opportunity to respond to Him. So often we like to say that our lives are witness enough and miss opportunities to give people the opportunity to respond to Christ's prompting.

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 36.

2. Alan Rothman, "Lend Me Your Ears," *Entrepreneur*, April 1998.

Thursday
February 21

How Far Will You Go?

OPINION

Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 15:11-32

What does it take to know fully the good life that God has to offer us and to be part of His family? Most likely, you already believe that Jesus lived and died and rose again, you acknowledge that God is in and above all, and you recognize that He can forgive sin. Satan has a knack for convincing us that the mere acknowledgment of Christ is sufficient for salvation.

“But,” you may ask, “what else is there?”

Say you have a physical condition for which you can wear a bracelet so that medical personnel would know how to help you in an emergency. Yet you decide

Satan has a knack for convincing us that the mere acknowledgment of Christ is sufficient for salvation.

not to wear the bracelet, even though it might save your life. Or picture yourself playing for a successful athletic team but refusing to wear the uniform.

Similarly, you are given the chance to enjoy a life blessed by God, to look forward to eternal life with Him, and to be part of a community of Christians and experience its benefits.

You understand the offer, even decide that it is what you want, yet you don't accept the grace He offers or the name it carries. James declares, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (2:19, NIV). Satan tries to convince us that all that is required of us is to believe, that we'll have more freedom if we don't fully commit ourselves to a Christian life.

In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus pointed out the individual who refused to wear the wedding garments, a customary courtesy of the day. It wasn't enough to come to the feast. The wedding hosts offered pleasing garments for the guests, which also signified their belonging at the event. The God of grace offers us a way to live a blessed life, but we can't truly partake of it unless we recognize and accept the grace He offers in making us His children.

The prodigal son knew his need of salvation from his situation. And he knew that returning to his father's house, even as a mere servant, would be the best place he could go because he would be treated well there. His brother, on the other hand, had not experienced the regretful life the prodigal had. His days were spent under his father's care and protection, probably taking for granted the blessings he received every day.

Many of us know a loving God exists for us, but not all of us have recognized our need of His love and grace.

Cosmic Conflict and Human Consequences

EXPLORATION

Matt. 13:1-9, 28-30; 21:33-41; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Luke 15; John 14:8-11

CONCLUDE

In His parables Jesus presents the full spectrum of choices open to humanity and the consequences of those choices. The parables guide readers to a deeper understanding by helping them to make judgments at a physical level and then transferring these judgments to the spiritual level. The parables expose Satan's deceptions about the Father and present the other aspect of the cosmic conflict. They demonstrate God's generosity and present His true character. They present the outcome of embracing or rejecting God's amazing grace. They leave the reader in no doubt of the consequences of his choices.

CONSIDER

- Exploring the Web site at the following URL: <<http://www.rc.net/wcc/parables.htm>>. What does this resource add to your appreciation for Jesus' parables?
- Rewriting a parable of Jesus, using a modern setting.
- Listing the characteristics of God presented in the different parables. Analyze why those attributes are significant in the controversy between God and Satan.
- Asking some strangers the following question: "Can you give me one word to describe your concept of God?" How do these words compare with the picture presented in the parables?
- Singing a song of praise to God for His goodness and generosity toward us.
- Making contact with someone who no longer enjoys Christian fellowship and inviting him or her for a meal.
- Planting some seeds or a bulb as a reminder of God's Word planted in your mind.
- Giving a plant to a friend. Explain that God's love is like a plant. The more you water it and feed it, the stronger and healthier it becomes.

CONNECT

Christ's Object Lessons, chaps. 1, 2, 4, 15, 16, 23, 24.

The great controversy and the miracles of Jesus



“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die’ ”(John 11:25, 26, NRSV).

Recipe for Miracles

INTRODUCTION

Exod. 14:14

“Jesus loves you and is always there for you. He will never allow anything to happen to you that you can’t handle.”

Sound familiar? These statements are, of course, 100-percent true; however, we hear them since early childhood so frequently that we stop really hearing it and knowing it in our hearts.

In our busy lives we get so bogged down with the mundane issues that we often neglect to stop and really take the time to know God. Sure, we know He loves us, and we love Him. But can you really say your relationship with Him is where you know it should be? If you can answer affirmatively, then you will have no problem with knowing who God is and who you are in Him.

The reason this is of such paramount importance is that Satan is doing whatever he can to get us off track with God. But we have a God who loves us dearly.

Fact: God is

Fact: Satan is

Fact: God loves

Fact: God protects

The miracles that occur in our lives today are just as awesome and impacting as the kind Jesus performed 2,000 years ago, demonstrating His ability to challenge and win over Satan and his grip on the human race. The net result is the same now as then: love and protection from the designs of Satan (Exod.14:14).

In order for you to recognize and have the right to expect miracles in your life, you need the following:

Recipe for Miracles

1 dash of knowing God

1 dash of knowing you didn't know God

1 dash of knowing who God wants you to be

1 dash of knowing that God can change you

1 dash of choosing to give God control of your life

1 dash of being thankful to God for *all* aspects of your life (happy or burdened)

Combine all ingredients gently and prayerfully. Using faith and vision mix together with prayer until you can accept the outcome. For best results use thoughts, words, and actions, constantly sprinkling them with prayer. Bake until blessed.

You may use as much prayer and knowing God as you wish—the more you use the better the final result!

“You won’t have to lift a finger in your defense!”

Setting the Captives Free

LOGOS

Matt. 8:5-13; 12:22-32; Mark 5:25-34; John 5:1-18; 11:1-45

As I read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' miracles, one word comes to mind—*faith*. Though Jesus was concerned about the physical suffering of the individuals He healed, His primary goal was to draw out an admission of faith in God: to awaken a realization that God cares for them, both physically and spiritually.

The human mind can be imprisoned by its own ignorance or misunderstanding. Jesus wanted to set people free from a culture that interpreted suffering as a judgment from God. Hence the great controversy was played out here in challenging the misconceptions about God, which Satan had woven into the fabric of 4,000 years of human existence.

“I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” (Matt. 8:10, NIV). The centurion was a Gentile, a member of a despised race, resented for his presence as part of the occupational forces

of Rome. Jews were discouraged from associating with Gentiles and forbidden to enter their homes. Yet Jesus was prepared to come under his roof, to heal his servant, in order to break down the barriers the Jewish race had erected. In their exclusiveness, the Jews had lost

sight of the fact that there was a world outside of the borders of their nation, in need of the knowledge of a faith in God. Jesus went on to state the truth “that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places . . . in the kingdom of heaven” (verse 11, NIV).

What a tragedy that the Pharisees attributed the miracles that Jesus performed to the work of Satan (Matt. 12:24). It is interesting to note that in the controversy at the end of time, Satan himself will use miracles to establish the authenticity of his counterfeit religious revival (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13.)

“If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed” (Mark 5:28, NIV). If the woman who had been subjected to internal bleeding had been around today, she would probably have been diagnosed with *endometriosis*, a painful condition that can be treated with hormone replacement drugs or surgery. Given the rudimentary medical practices of the day, it is hardly surprising she “had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors” (verse 26, NIV).

Like many of the recipients of Jesus' healing powers, this woman had heard stories of Jesus' ability to heal, and thus a hope was kindled in her mind that Jesus might be able to help her. So she put her hope into action and her touch of faith

The human mind can be
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achieved the desired result. While God seeks to awaken faith from within us, we must also reach out in faith for Him. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1, NIV).

Physical suffering had made this woman an outcast from society, since her condition made her ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:25). Now she would be accepted back into the community of faith. It is Satan's desire to isolate us as individuals from the support network of the community of faith.

"When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' " (John 5:6, NIV). The paralytic had been physically imprisoned in his suffering for 38 long years. A pitiful sight this man would have been, among the many disabled people who hung around the pool of Bethesda, waiting in vain, in the superstitious belief that the stirring of the waters would bring them healing. There are places in the world today, such as Lourdes in France, where similar beliefs are maintained.

This man lived in an age when physical suffering was interpreted as a judgment from God. The ceremonial law prevented Jewish males who were injured or disabled from entering the temple precincts. Here is another example of a soul who had been cut off from the community of faith. Fortunately for the paralytic, Jesus sought him out and asked, "Do you want to get well?"

Jesus is still asking that question of us today, whether we are in need of physical, spiritual, or emotional healing, for we have all been crippled by the effects of sin. Do you want to get well?

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up" (John 11:1, NIV). One of the great showdowns between Christ and Satan took place over the body of Lazarus. Jesus, the Author of life, was challenging Satan's authority to hold His friend Lazarus in the grave.

The great controversy is played out in the lives of men and women at every moment on this planet. Through disobedience and rebellion we all live under the penalty of death. Every time someone dies, it makes a mockery of Satan's claim that "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4, NIV).

God's compassion for us does not leave us in this state, however. Through faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we are released from the penalty wrought by sin (see Romans 5). Ultimately, Jesus will resurrect all His followers who have died, at the end of time, when He returns to claim them as His own, in the process of bringing the great controversy to an end (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

REACT

1. Do Christians ever have an excuse for excluding anyone from the community of faith? Explain your answer.
2. How important is our belief in the resurrection? (See 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.)
3. To what extent, if any, do feelings have to do with faith?

TESTIMONY

John 11:25; Rev. 13:13

"The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God's servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought."¹ Today we see many miracles being performed in the name of Jesus; yet if we look further into the lives of these so called "miracle workers," we see where the real power comes from.

"I saw our people in great distress, weeping, and praying, pleading the sure promises of God, while the wicked were all around us, mocking us, and threatening to destroy us. . . . They declared that they had the truth, that miracles were among them, that angels from heaven talked with them, and walked with them, that great power, and signs and wonders were performed among them . . . The whole world was converted and in harmony

**"There is to be among
God's people no
spiritual stupidity."**

with the Sunday law, and this little feeble people stood out in defiance of the laws of the land, and the laws of God, and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth. God's people will not find their safety in working miracles, . . . They are to take their stand on the living Word—"It is written."²

As His followers, we need to know His Word and be close to Him. Miracles are being performed now. We know what to do. "I am instructed to say that in the future great watchfulness will be needed. There is to be among God's people no spiritual stupidity. Evil spirits are actively engaged in seeking to control the minds of human beings."³

REACT

1. Your best friend is going to a healing service. What advice would you give?
2. How can one know whether a miracle is from God?
3. Explain in your own words what Ellen White means by "spiritual stupidity" in the quotation above from *Selected Messages*.

1. *Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, p. 54.

2. *Maranatha*, p. 209.

3. *Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, p. 53.

The Leap of Faith

EVIDENCE

John 5:1-8

Albert Einstein said, "It is theory that decides what we can observe." When considering evidence of God, broadly speaking, there are two possible theories: one centered on a personal knowledge of God and one that relies on proof and arbitrary evidence. The first theory allows us to interpret others' behavior as an expression of their personal knowledge of God. The second tends to push us to measure, compare, and contrast others' behavior and invariably focus on faults.

People typically see evidence as supporting their current ideas. Very rarely, even in the case of something miraculous, will evidence change a theory. In the case of the miracle described in John 5:1-8, if Jesus were not the total expression of love, His attempts to heal others would have been regarded with suspicion. When told to roll up his mat and go home, the man did so. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, he was able to see the problem from a different view; he was given a different theory. Jesus made no attempt to explain, convince, or win the cripple over to His philosophy. He simply said, "Roll up your mat and go home." The man did so because he believed Jesus embodied a kind of evidence that denied that his walking was impossible.

To seek evidence is not a symptom of a lack of faith; it is a symptom of the many small, urgent but unimportant daily details that slowly numb the mind into auto-pilot, eventually becoming the dominant decision-making force in our lives. If we are able to adjust our theory so that it focuses on knowing God, we would inevitably see that having information about God is a weak substitute. When we put Christ at the center of our life, our theories of what we can observe will grow from this. Inevitably as our expression of faith reflects this center, we will become the best proof, or evidence, of God that this world has.

**To seek evidence is
not a symptom of a
lack of faith.**

REACT

1. What could people have observed about Jesus that gave congruency to His amazing requests of them?
2. This man went from despair to faith in Jesus' power in a moment. Why?
3. How did the amazing miracles of Christ "make sense" to those who observed them?
4. How did the miracles of Christ challenge the "theories" of the day? How did they support or even further build upon them?

God Knows— Know God!

HOW-TO

John 14:9-12

There should be no place in your life where God is not.

Jesus used miracles to provide evidence that He was the Son of God and that He is a greater force than Satan. Miracles do happen today, but unfortunately we live in an era in which Satan cunningly counterfeits them. So if miracles aren't the same indisputable evidence in the twenty-first century as they were in the first century, how do we prove today that Jesus is the Son of God?

We have to have faith that Jesus is the Son of God and believe in His Word. To trust completely in someone, we have to know

Him. So, how do we get to know God?

● **Talk to God.** You know your friends because you spend time with them and talk with them. You can't expect your relationship with God to be any different. You didn't get to know your friends by spending only three minutes talking to them in the morning and repeating the same thing each time.

● **Convince God.** Demonstrate to God that you are committed. Show Him you are making an effort and take time for Him. Don't wait for time to become available. Prove to God that you are serious about wanting to know Him and give Him a set time every day—a time when you are alone.

● **Prioritize God.** Place God first in your life. All your other interests must be of secondary importance. When you know God, then you are independent of anything or anyone else for your happiness. Learn all you can about Him in the Bible.

● **Live God.** Live every day as if you are in God's presence—because you are! Let Him permeate every aspect of your life. There should be no place in your life where God is not. Bring God into your everyday life—not just your church life.

● **Surrender to God.** Hand yourself over to God. He holds your future in His hands—but only if you let Him. Nothing happens to you that He doesn't know about or isn't prepared to help you through. The more of yourself you give to God, the more of Himself He will give to you. If you ask Him to, God can give you a thirst for Him that will never be quenched.

REACT

1. What would be the most difficult part of the above five steps for you to achieve? Why?

2. If you were told that the measure of your stress is the measure of your distance from God, would you be satisfied with your relationship with Him? Explain your answer.

Hang On— That'll Cost You

OPINION

Mark 5:34

Of all the antics performed by revival preachers, faith healing gets a lot of attention. It is instant and gives a skeptical audience proof that God is really working through that preacher. In a world in which seeing is believing, conversions flow quickly from the show provided by these performers.

Recently a chronically ill patient reportedly came to a faith healing crusade. When he finally fought his way to the front of the crowd, the healer was a little worried that the type of healing required for this person would be very difficult. However, never one to resist an opportunity to help relieve suffering, the preacher suggested that a significant monetary donation would guarantee that the healing could be. The money changed hands, but the instant healing was followed by the death of the healed.

The Gospel records reveal faith healings in Bible times. People of the time would have responded in the same way we do now—seeing is believing. Many were healed by the power of the first faith healer. Many were converted because of the power of the first faith healer.

The chronically ill patient who paid money to the fraudulent faith healer received nothing in return. He had been promised life by the faith healer (and only on this earth) in return for payment. I say that this is fraudulent.

All this stands in contrast with God's promise that we can have life for free (Rom. 6:23). When Jesus healed the sick on earth, He didn't demand anything in return except for us to follow Him. He was giving—He gave twice. First He gave health for earthly sickness, then He gave His life for a healthy life for us out of this earth.

The Gospel records
reveal faith healings
in Bible times.

REACT

1. How would you respond to a faith healer telling you he could make you well?
2. Why do people respond to false claims of healing?
3. Generally, Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead because of His great compassion for human suffering. In at least three situations, however, He gave other very specific reasons for performing a physical healing. According to Matthew 9:1-8, what was the reason behind the healing?
4. "The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:15, NIV). Why do people who have faith still suffer or die?

Friday
March 1

The Miracle Worker

EXPLORATION

2 Thess. 2:3-10

CONCLUDE

With faith firmly rooted in Christ, you can withstand Satan's stormy blasts of deception. In the face of false miracles and counterfeit religious revival, you can stand strong bolstered by your community of faith. Your knowledge of God's Word, and the words of God's prophets both ancient and recent, will confirm what is truly of God and condemn that which is of Satan. With Christ at the center of your life, actually knowing Him from your moment-by-moment walk with Him through your day, you will safely navigate Satan's minefields. Beware the frauds. Bask in the sunshine of His presence.

CONSIDER

- Composing a song that recounts a miracle performed by Jesus.
- Role-playing the part of an undeceived Christian in the situation described in *The Great Controversy*, chap. 39, in which Satan impersonates Christ.
- Creating a graphic representation depicting the daily miracle of how the human body is designed and works. Include astounding facts such as volume of blood pumped by a 70-year-old heart (approximately 46 million gallons, 174 million liters) as noted in the *World Book Encyclopedia* or other reference work. Feature details of intricate design such as the eye, ear, etc.
- Researching the word "miracle" as used in popular culture. Compare and contrast the biblical use of the word to its use in the media. Discuss how it is used in the world of sports (considered by some to be a modern "secular religion") such as a miracle finish to a competition, a miracle pass completion, the *Orlando Miracle* of the WNBA, the "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!" comment made by sportscaster Al Michaels at the conclusion of an Olympic hockey game, etc.
- Evaluating the broadcast of a televised faith healer.
- Polling members of your church to identify those who believe they have experienced or witnessed a miracle. Interview those who are willing, and collect their stories for sharing with the congregation through a report in a church newsletter article, special publication, or Sabbath School program.

CONNECT

1 Kings 18:20-40.

The Great Controversy, chaps. 37-39.

James Randi, *The Faith Healers*; Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind*.

Jesus wins



“ ‘I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do’ ” (John 17:4, NKJV).

And the Winner Is . . .

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 26:29

The bell rings and the match begins. In the left corner is Lucifer, the deceiver, clothed in black trunks with a devilish glint in his eyes. He assesses his opponent in the right corner and breaks into a confident smile. Standing in the right corner is me, the earthling, defiantly eyeing the arch deceiver of all nations. The two foes meet once again in a boxing match that has drawn the interest of all heaven. The stakes are high, for this match means the difference between life and death. Lucifer's fans grin knowingly.

I awake at 5:00 A.M. and bow in humble meditation so that Jesus, my Friend and Defender, can fill my cup with wisdom and strength for the trials of the day. I am awed at being in God's presence and am strengthened by His Word. Lucifer in the left corner ducks from the rain of blows. But as the day wears on and I miss my lunchtime meditation and prayer and finally flop down in my bed at the end of the day—too tired to talk to my Friend Jesus—the opponent in the left corner makes his move. His flailing blows find their target when a left uppercut successfully connects, putting me flat on my back on the floor—technical knockout.

Is this the way it is meant to be? Will I live each day defeated in the first round? It's time to call in a replacement. I lift my tired head and shout for help. I become excited as I remember that divinity took on humanity and lived a life that ended with the victim's blood being shed at the Cross for me. But Jesus the victim became Jesus the Victor and even now is willing to take my place if I will let Him.

In the closing scenes of His life on earth Jesus successfully completed the plan that had been laid out by the Godhead. By the strength of His arm, Jesus wins the bout when He declares, "It is finished." I glory in the victory that is sure because His strength is perfect in my weakness. I take courage because through Jesus I am victorious. I can beat the odds that say I will become a statistic, one of the many war casualties.

**A left uppercut
successfully
connects.**

Victor or Victim?

EVIDENCE

Romans 8; Col. 2:8-15

As we climb the ladder of life, success is our ultimate goal and we strive to win at any cost. We thrive on the thrill of victory and try to avoid being victims in the rat race—judging our success by the earthly benefits we realize along the way.

“God has given the youth a ladder to climb, a ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. Above this ladder is God, and on every round fall the bright beams of His glory.”¹ In our quest for earthly success, are we choosing to be Satan’s victims instead of basking in the victory that was won for us through Jesus Christ? Are we choosing death over eternal life? Are we still falling victim to Satan’s lies?

God had truthfully warned Adam and Eve of the wages of sin, but Satan declared to Eve: “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4, NIV). For four thousand years it seemed that Satan was correct because our merciful God did not immediately obliterate sinful humanity. Then, at the Cross, Jesus died in our place, paying the ultimate price for our redemption. Yet, more than two thousand years later, Satan “is seeking to overcome men today, as he overcame our first parents, by shaking their confidence in their Creator, and leading them to doubt the wisdom of his government and the justice of his laws.”²

**Instead of fleeing
from the tempter,
we stop to reason
with him.**

Instead of fleeing from the tempter, we stop to reason with him. “It is thus that many are still overcome. They doubt and argue concerning the requirements of God, and instead of obeying the divine commands they accept human theories, which but disguise the devices of Satan.”³ The apostle Paul warns against “deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world” (Col. 2:8, NIV).

Are we prepared to gain the victory over self, or are we satisfied with being victims of our EGO (easing God out)? Are we too BUSY (being under Satan’s yoke) to experience the victory that’s ours through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior?

We can be victors! Even though we may still have to experience physical death, we have the assurance of living again, eternally. Because Jesus won at Calvary, we too can be victorious over Satan; we need not fear because with Jesus at our side, Satan is rendered powerless.

Victor or victim? It’s your choice!

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 95.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 534.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 531, 532.

Monday
March 4

The Man — The Mission — The Solution

LOGOS

Mark 10:29-34; 14:17-25, 32-42; 1 Cor. 15:1-28; Col. 1:19, 20

"In 1957, Henri Spaak, then Secretary-General of NATO in Europe, told an audience, 'We are tired of committees. Send us a man whether he be God or the devil and we will receive him.'"¹

This world has long passed its critical point. The conflict between good and evil is of such magnitude that only supernatural forces can and will solve it. Thanks be to God that we are not left alone to face this cosmic conflict. Can you hear our heavenly Father's voice saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Luke 9:35, NKJV).

A long time ago an old prophet named John, isolated and left to die on an island called Patmos, was re-introduced to the Man with the solution. "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. . . . And I have the keys of Hades and of Death'" (Rev. 1:17, 18, NKJV).

Jesus "knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and went to God. He had a full consciousness of His divinity; but He had laid aside His royal crown and kingly robes, and had taken the form of a servant."² "His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. Thus He lived the law of God, and by His example showed how we are to obey it."³

"Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:20-22, NKJV).

Mission accomplished!

The apostle Paul poses a very important question: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3, NKJV). There is only one way out of this great controversy between good and evil. It includes the following:

1. Get to know Jesus through His Word. "The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. 'The truth shall make you free; and Christ is the truth.'"⁴

2. Get to know Jesus through prayer. "Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate."⁵

3. Become Jesus' close companion through witnessing. "Carl Lawrence, in his book *The Church in China*, tells the story of a 19-year-old Christian girl who

was arrested, badly beaten, and roughly thrown into a dungeon. There was no light. . . . The floor was all wet. The smell told her it was human excrement. Rats and vermin were everywhere.

“As she sat there on the floor, she felt something warm run down her arm. She grabbed it and for the first time realized she was still bleeding from the beating. . . . Silently, squatting so as little of her body as possible would rest on the floor, she began to thank the Lord that she was worthy to suffer for Him. All she would have had to do was denounce her Savior, but she refused, and here she was—alone, beaten, and weeping tears of joy as her cell became her house of peace. Quietly she asked Him for wisdom and strength, not that she would get out of this terrible place, but that wherever He put her, she would be able to continue to preach the gospel of her Lord. . . .

“ ‘Send us a man whether he be God or the devil and we will receive him.’ ”

“As she sat quietly singing a hymn, the Lord gave her a message: ‘This is to be your ministry.’

“ ‘But,’ she objected, ‘I am all alone. Whom can I preach to?’ She continued to pray that her ministry would be fulfilled. Suddenly an idea came to her. She stood up and called for the guard. ‘Sir, can I do some hard labor for you?’

“The guard looked at her with contempt, mingled with surprise. No one had ever made that kind of request before. ‘Look!’ she exclaimed, ‘This prison is so dirty, there is human waste everywhere. Let me go into the cells and clean up this filthy place. All you have to do is give me some water and a brush.’

“Soon she found herself on her hands and knees cleaning and preaching. She was looking into the faces of people no longer recognizable as human beings. . . . When they realized that they could have eternal life, they became excited. They would fall down on the dirty floor and repent of their sins. Soon all the prisoners believed in Jesus Christ.”⁶

REACT

1. What role does suffering play in our witness for Christ? Can you offer a first-hand example?

2. How do you maintain your spiritual life when prayer doesn't seem to be working? What is the essence of prayer?

1. Texe Marrs, *Millennium* (Austin, Texas: Living Truth Publishers, 1990), p. 92.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 644.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 649.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

5. *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

6. *New Ways to Tell the Old, Old Story*, pp. 21, 22.

Tuesday
March 5

Victory Swallows Death

TESTIMONY

Rom. 6:23

“Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, ‘It is finished.’ John 19:30. The battle had been won. . . . Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost.”¹

The war between God and Satan began before humankind was created. Yet humanity is at the center of this war. Using all the powers of evil, Satan seeks to bring destruction to humankind. As with everything else, he wanted control over humankind because we belonged to God. He could gain power over us by causing us to sin and keeping us in sin. God sought to free humanity from the clutches of the devil. And even before our creation, the Godhead had a plan for our salvation if we should ever fall prey to Lucifer.

From the time Jesus came to this earth as a baby, Satan used every method he could to destroy the Son of God. “In every possible way he sought to prevent Jesus from developing a perfect childhood, a faultless manhood, a holy ministry, and an unblemished sacrifice.”² If Satan had succeeded in just one of these areas, if just one sin had been found in Christ then all of humanity would have been lost and the victory would be Satan’s. But this did not happen; Christ defeated the enemy as a human, relying upon God for power.

Jesus’ expression “It is finished” (John 19:30, KJV) signaled the redemption of humankind from the wages of sin, which is death. In Genesis, the Lord instructed Adam that eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was an assurance of death. Satan, through trickery and deceit, caused humanity to sin, thereby bringing us under the dominion of death. It is ironic then that Christ, through His death was able to reverse this effect. His death gave the gift of eternal life to humanity and brought Satan under death’s power.

The war between God and Satan began before humankind was created.

As prophesied by Isaiah, “He will swallow up death forever. . . . The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth”(Isa. 25:8. NKJV).

REACT

1. If death has been defeated, why is it still such a threat?
2. Is it fair that God lets us off the hook by having His Son die in our place?

Explain your answer.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 758.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 759.

Easy as 1, 2, 3

HOW-TO

John 17:3

You are given an assignment, and the deadline seems so far away. But to do well, you and I would agree that a solid plan of action is needed in order to complete the task set for you. You sit in a quiet place, collecting your thoughts. Every now and then you jot down a few key points that seem useful. Next, you go through the process of elimination, removing unnecessary or repetitive ideas. Finally, you put your plan into action, carefully following step-by-step. You don't want to miss a point, for you want the assignment to be complete. Before you know it, your deadline is near but you have no worries because you had a simple, fool-proof plan that gave you ample time to complete the assignment.

God also had an assignment: to end Satan's revolt. He needed a solid, fool-proof plan. So He sat down in a quiet place. I imagine He was beside a peaceful, crystal-blue river in the cool of the morning. There He brainstormed ideas. After what would seem like hours, He called His Son Jesus. Together they went through the process of elimination, weighing the odds and trying to decide what would be the best route to take. Finally, the plan was put into action; God entrusted Jesus to follow it step by step. I imagine that Jesus looked at His Father and said, "No problem, Dad, this is easy as 1, 2, 3! And when He was done, Jesus said, " 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do' " (John 17:4, NKJV).

**We have all been given
an assignment by our
heavenly Father.**

We have all been given an assignment by our heavenly Father and have a deadline that is fast approaching. Our assignment is to continue in our faith, to stand firm, not moving from that blessed hope until His return. But in order to achieve this we must have a solid Satan-proof plan. First we brainstorm. We then search for things that prevent us from having a closer relationship with God. Next, with the help of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and Bible study, we eliminate the things that are holding us back.

Finally, we take some action and put our faith to the test. With God's help we will be conquerors. And when the due date for our assignment comes we can say, "I [your name] have glorified [God] on this earth. I have finished the work which [He] has given me to do."

REACT

What is preventing you from living a victorious life through Jesus? Be specific.

Thursday
March 7

Reclaiming Lost Paradise for God's People

OPINION

Rev. 22:1-5

"We speak of the realms of the blest, That country so bright and so fair, And oft are its glories confessed—But what must it be to be there! We speak of its pathway of gold—Its walls decked with jewels so rare, Its wonders and pleasures untold—but what must it be to be there!

"Do Thou, midst temptation and woe, For heaven my spirit prepare; and shortly I also shall know, And feel what it is to be there. Then o'er the bright fields we shall roam, In glory celestial and fair, With saints and with angels at home, And Jesus Himself will be there."*

The first introduction to the Garden of Eden is in Genesis 2:8, where God placed Adam and gave him the responsibility to dress and keep it. God commanded Adam that he could eat from any tree within the Garden, because it was all good for food, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The explicit reason for this was that spiritual and physical death would result if this command was broken.

In chapter 3 of Genesis, the story of the fall of humankind and its consequences are told. In the form of a serpent, Lucifer approached Eve and questioned her concerning God's command. He convinced her that God was withholding wisdom from them because they would be gods just like Him and that they would not surely die. Both Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and their eyes were open, knowing good from evil. Thus the great controversy began.

The words of the song above have touched me personally. They give me a

**He convinced her that
God was withholding
wisdom from them.**

vivid description of what heaven will be like and I'm longing to be there! I am and will always be eternally grateful because Christ came and redeemed humankind from the curse of death. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22, NKJV). Jesus'

enormous love for me caused Him to give up His omnipresence, come to this world, and live among fallen beings. He died that I might have salvation and make living in Eden (New Jerusalem) possible once again.

Let each of us individually hold fast to the salvation obtained through the shed blood of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and we can reclaim paradise lost.

**Seventh-day-Adventist Hymnal*, p. 434.

Why Fight a Battle That Is Already Won?

EXPLORATION

Rom. 8:31-39

CONCLUDE

The ubiquitous battle between evil forces and good forces is so very real. What is unreal makes no human sense, except that we have a graceful God on our hands. He supplies the plan. We claim it; we carry it out. It is called surrendering to salvation. But He has put the universe on a very long leash, so we freely face choices. One of them is not to choose God. How more vulnerable and unthreatened could we expect Him to be? That kind of a God is worth loving.

CONSIDER

- Writing a parable involving several characters to show how a victim or doomed person finds friendship, healing, or victory.
- Creating a puzzle. By cartooning or labeling, create the various pieces that demonstrate how one surrenders to salvation.
- Taking your puzzle to a Sabbath School division of teens or even younger people and (1) ask them to arrange it, and (2) discuss how the pieces may interrelate.
- Writing a piece of poetry of praise or victory in God.
- Taking the poetry as lyrics, compose an upbeat chorus to match the style and sentiments of the poetry.
- Designing a poster or billboard for public consumption that poses a serious question and then directs the reader to your church for answers.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chap. 40.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, "On Religion"; Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, chap. 7, pp. 144, 145.

The **war** within



“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, NKJV).

Can You See the Real Me?

INTRODUCTION

Eph. 6:12

In high school I was part of the “nice” group. We did everything together.

One Sabbath afternoon somebody presented cigarettes. After the initial shock, we did that together too. That week I agonized over what I’d done. My nights were sleepless; my days avoidance.

I talked to a friend and told him that I wasn’t really comfortable with what had happened. He said I was already guilty and it wasn’t like I was so close to being perfect that it would drastically affect my spirituality. I continued to smoke the following week, and the next, and the next. Everything about me began to change to someone behind many masks.

He didn’t see my
struggle, only my
decision.

A few years, and new friends, later I met a newly baptized Adventist Christian whom God used to reveal the real me. I rediscovered a God of hope regardless of past mistakes.

A short while ago, I met a high school friend who, surprised by my change, said he was happy to see the new me. He said it seemed in high school I was pretty messed up. I was shocked and told him that he used to be far worse! His answer was quiet. He said he knew I was a baptized Christian, and he couldn’t reconcile the difference.

He didn’t see my struggle, only my decision.

The entire universe is watching us. The battle between God and Satan is over, yet the war between good and evil rages on. We fight it everyday. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, NKJV).

The devil trips us any way he can. It’s OK to be confused and searching. But it’s important to see right . . . to see God. We forget that God has a manual for life. As a visiting pastor once told us the Bible is our “**Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth.**” God uses people of truth to cut through the devil’s confusion. We are God’s witnesses of truth.

The major battle is over. Because of that victory, Satan and his minions will lose the war. The only casualties will be hopeless choices.

The Ultimate: Choice

LOGOS

Matt. 8:31-34; 16:13-17; 26:14-16, 20-25, 47-50; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 4:12; 6:13-18; Rev. 12:11

Victory is ours. Though we are very often bruised, we are never broken.

The most important realization is knowing we can be winners just by making a choice. Like the demon-possessed men who found solace in the presence of Jesus (Matt. 8:31-34), we have the opportunity to approach Him with all our demons.

Jesus sought to know from His disciples whom they thought He was. "The various opinions men held of Jesus were a sad admission that in spite of all the evidence provided by Heaven, 'his own' had failed to recognize Him for what He was in truth, the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecy."¹

Our lifestyle today echoes what kind of relationship we have with our Savior. It

**Do we depict a lifestyle
that demonstrates
God's truth?**

is unfortunate that within Christian circles today, there are those who pursue their own gain from their association with Christ. Do we depict a lifestyle that demonstrates God's truth? Or when expected to stand firm, do we run like the disciples (Matt. 26:56)? In a world where

falsehood can be airbrushed for a variance of truth, we must be beacons of God's calling.

In our quest to build a stronger relationship with Him, we should know that our choice to follow Him is a requirement for our salvation. We should seek to build an intimate relationship with Him so that we, like Simon Peter, can say, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16, NIV).

We should declare that we are Christ's followers. The strength of God cannot be effective unless we declare on which side we stand. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16, NKJV).

Ellen White describes followers of Christ: "Sincere Christians have no doubtful piety. They have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have made no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. . . . These are messengers of the Lord, a light amid the darkness. Their hearts throb in unison with the great heart of Christ."² To be a true Christian involves making decisions to follow His teachings—always—not swaying from light to darkness.

Our choices, motivated by power-driven ambitions, can lead to our ruin. Many a time we act like Judas (verses 20-25). Truly to be a disciple, we must discover

Christ in all His splendor. We must look beyond personal gain, give up our selfishly motivated acts of justice, and realize God is. That's it: God is. And that is all we need to believe.

Therefore, if we profess that we are God's people, yet choose to live our own version of truth, we are declaring defeat as victory.

REACT

1. Does choice really make a spiritual difference? How specifically?
2. What dangers are involved in postponing a decision about Christ?
3. What are the likely results of choosing Christ for the wrong reasons?
4. How can we be certain that we are choosing Christ for the right reasons?
5. What steps should a person take to gain the victory over self? Be specific.
6. What are the elements of Satan's snares that lead us to trust ourselves more than we trust God?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 429.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1081.

Monday
March 11

Shaken, But Not Broken

TESTIMONY

Eph. 6:12

"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, NKJV).

Ever been in a state of battle, a conflict, when you were about to do something wrong, and an ethereal voice deep inside pleads, "No!?" How many times have you gone ahead, ignored that voice, and done what you wanted?

Picture Eve battling with that voice when offered the forbidden fruit; Cain, when urged to spill his brother's blood; Moses, with anger, when he struck the rock; David, when his lust turned to action with Bathsheba; Solomon, when he forsook wisdom and married heathen women; Jonah, when he criticized God's redemption; Judas, when he betrayed his Friend and Leader; and you, when you gave in, because you thought it didn't matter.

The same conniving Satan who tempted the Son of God is alive today and is waiting to divide and conquer our faith. When we endeavor to live in Christ, "We shall meet with conflicts to test our faith and courage, but they will make us strong if we conquer through the grace which Jesus is willing to give. But we must believe; we must grasp the promises without a doubt. They are ample and rich, even during the perils and trials of the last days."¹

Because our focus is not on God, it has become very difficult for us today to elude Satan's snares. "Yet this battle must be fought by every heart that is truly converted. We must war against temptations within and without. We must gain

The same conniving Satan who tempted the Son of God is alive today.

the victory over self, crucify the affections and lusts; and then begins the union of the soul with Christ. . . . After this union is formed, it can be preserved only by continual, earnest, painstaking effort. Christ exercises His power to preserve and guard this sacred tie, and the dependent, helpless sinner must act his part with

untiring energy, or Satan by his cruel, cunning power will separate him from Christ."²

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 434.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 47.

Traitors in the Fortress

EVIDENCE

Rom. 7:15

"I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate" (Rom. 7:15, NLT).

Malacca fell in 1511 because of a traitor. Si Putum is a familiar name among Malaysians; he opened the Fortress Gate for the Portuguese and betrayed the independence of Malacca.

Imagine waking up in a concentration camp, the smell of human waste around you. You look around and see your family, beaten and bruised; your mother bleeding by the wall. Imagine your waking to the realization that you had betrayed your family and in turn yourself!

As Paul discovered a constant conflict in his daily Christian life, he was in this type of dilemma. This led him to shout desperately, "What a wretched man I am!" (Rom. 7:24, NIV). What is this struggle that led Paul, a faithful servant of God, to consider himself cursed? Modern psychology terms these internal struggles as repressed thoughts and emotions, of the unconscious, that need to be expressed. As far as they are concerned, sin does not exist; the war within, against sin, is just the imagination of weak minds who are influenced by primitive thinkers like Paul.

**Jesus Himself
experienced the reality
of this struggle.**

Does an internal conflict really exist? Ephesians 6:12 describes a conflict against external powers. Yet the Bible is not silent concerning our internal adversary. Jesus recognized this when He said about His disciples' failure that their "'spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Matt. 26:41, NKJV).

We can find many instances of internal ethical conflicts in the lives of great men and women. Martin Luther's words, "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his Cardinals" show that he underwent such conflicts.

Jesus Himself experienced the reality of this struggle in His temptation in the wilderness and His agony in Gethsemane.

The struggle is real. It occurs in our lives even after conversion.

The verbs that express Paul's hatred for sin in Romans 7:15 are in the present tense. He referred to his life after conversion, proving that there always exists a war within a Christian.

REACT

1. When has the devil brought out the "traitor" in you?
2. How do Christians betray Christ today? What can help change that?

HOW-TO

Matt 11:28

Life is tough, especially for Christians with Satan tripping us in every way. He is an enemy, always at work, presenting conflicts in our minds, causing us to doubt and sin.

The lives of characters in the Bible and the decisions they made help us to deal with similar daily situations. Relate Eve's action with the forbidden fruit to the things we indulge in, knowing that they are wrong. Where was Eve wrong? Learn from her mistake. Daniel and his friends teach us to be firm and confident. Firmly deciding their diet and confident in not bowing to the statue demonstrated their will for God. Abraham's

**Make utmost use
of God's grace.**

decision to obey God's words, and leave to an unknown land showed him (and shows us) God's promise.

Peter, Thomas, and Judas show us end results when caught in conflict. Think about Peter denying Jesus, the conflicts that came to his mind. Similar conflicts keep us from witnessing for the Lord. Peter repented and realized the purpose of his life. And so should we. Thomas doubted, but Jesus cleansed his doubt and unbelief. Let God help you out and see you through. Never let your human mind betray you as it did Judas; the result will be like his.

Realize God's need and your deficiencies and you will reach moral excellence. Let God's Spirit enter in and you will be strong enough to bear conflicts.

"Our Saviour's words, 'Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28), are a prescription for [all] ills."* Make utmost use of God's grace and you will be victorious over the devil's deceptions. Remember that these daily battles fought and won are of more value than the mind can think of.

REACT

1. Why is self-satisfaction such a deadly enemy when fighting against temptation?
2. How do positive choices help us to make more positive choices? Why do negative ones have the opposite effect?
3. Should we rehabilitate those whom we consider traitors, or let them accomplish their mission as Jesus did with Judas? Explain your answer.

**Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p.66.

Just Like Judas's Kiss

OPINION

Matt. 26:20-25

Judas fulfilled a prophecy when he betrayed Jesus—a prophecy he could have chosen not to be a part of. A selfish act on his part landed him in that very odious spot in history.

He hungered for power, pushed his patience to the limit, and couldn't bear watching Jesus taking His time to claim the kingdom of David. That's what he thought—that's what he knew—was his Master's mission. It's amazing how a man who walked with Jesus for three educational years could miss the whole aim of his Teacher's mission!

Judas took it upon himself to hasten the event, believing he was doing the right thing (Luke 22:2-5). His tool of choice was a kiss—a symbol of affection (Matt. 26:48, 49). Picture Judas, after the arrest, waiting for Jesus to seize power, asking himself, "When is it going to happen? When will power, riches, respect, and honor be mine?"

Contrary to his expectations, Jesus showed no intention of fighting back and declaring Himself king. Judas couldn't believe it. The result was both confusion and revelation: it revealed his misjudgment and confused his soul. He tried to buy back innocence. He cried in vain as Satan taunted him, making all hope of forgiveness unbelievable. Death was counterfeit relief—and the counterfeit is what he chose (Matt. 27:3-5).

Like Judas, we betray Jesus every time we indulge in power plays, negativity, selfishness, jealousy, or lust. Is our focus on structures of power? Is a rise to fame our calling? Are we more interested in the power of baptismal statistics than the nurturing of the church? Have these statistics become our Judas kiss—our bid to hasten the Second Coming? Has the devil cloned Judas in each of us? Are we here for the wrong reasons?

Jesus showed no intention of fighting back and declaring Himself king.

We are the reason He came to this earth. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17, NKJV).

Regardless of our sins, we should not feel like Judas. There is hope; forgiveness is ours for the asking. Remember that Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice for all humanity—that includes you and me.

EXPLORATION

Eph. 6:12

CONCLUDE

We will always face the temptations of self and Satan, but these can be an instrument in God's hands to strengthen and prepare us to be faithful in the future. It's helpful to observe the results of both faithfulness and unfaithfulness—giving in to temptation versus obeying God.

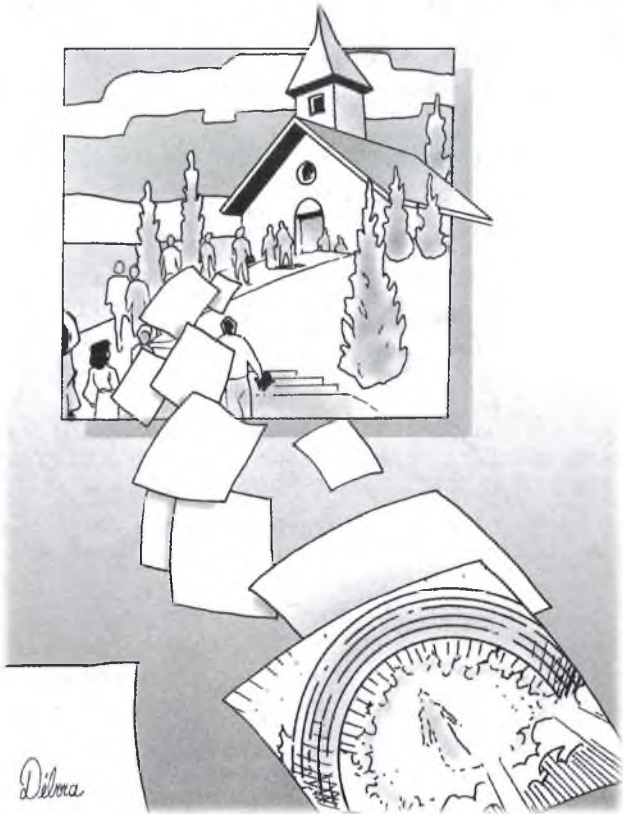
CONSIDER

- Choosing two or three people you know who are struggling with a temptation in their lives and begin praying for them and supporting them—with tact and sensitivity. Ask someone else to be your prayer supporter and to hold you accountable in a struggle you're having with temptation.
- Pretending you're a reporter for a newspaper in heaven, doing a short human interest story on a week in the life of someone facing the battles of temptation. Write the story as if it's about your life last week.
- Listening to "The Warrior Is a Child" by Twila Paris. Think of specific strategies that can help you in overcoming temptations, relying always on God as the source of power. How can you resist when you feel tired and worn down spiritually? What are ways you can resist when you feel defeated.
- Choosing a sinful habit in your life that seems impossible to overcome. Confess it to God and make a 60-day chart for this activity. (Changing an old habit or starting a new one takes up to 60 days.) Choose a new, righteous habit to replace the old one and begin immediately to develop the new habit through God's power. Keep track of the new habit on your 60-day calendar. If you slip into the old habit, confess it right away.
- Going to a public place where people might face temptations as consumers, such as a candy store, clothing boutique, auto supply store, or bookstore. You'll be able to observe people in the process of temptation and see how they respond. If you're feeling particularly bold, interview people about temptation (as a general topic). Later, at home, ask yourself what others might learn about temptation in your life if they observed you for a few days. Meditate deeply on scenes from Christ's life in which He was tempted. Let your desire for victory over sin sweep fully into your heart and mind as you pray and meditate.

CONNECT

Carlyle B. Haynes, *God Sent a Man*; Randy Maxwell, *Weight on the Lord* (especially the chapter "The One-Minute Christian").

The great **controversy** and the **church**



“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ ” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 28:19, 20

As a freshman in college, I felt it was my duty to get involved in the goings-on around campus. I was not an extrovert by any stretch, but how else was one to attract the attention of cute girls without a little initiative? I decided to go with a group of students who went out witnessing to neighboring college campuses and low-income housing developments each Sabbath.

After attending for a few weeks I was asked to give a 15-minute talk on the campus of Alabama A & M University. As if this wasn't unnerving enough, I would be speaking in front of the main cafeteria where students would be blaring their music and talking loudly. In the days leading up to the big event, I prayed earnestly for God to give me the words to speak and prepare hearts to hear what He had to say.

**I would be speaking in
front of the main
cafeteria.**

To make a long story short, I stepped forward and spoke with all the gusto I could manage. I talked about how much God wants to save us, change our lives, and make us better people for Him. Every so often one or two students would cast a fleeting glance my way. Some watched the scene warily while others hurried into the cafeteria trying to avoid all contact with us.

As I look back on that day, I think of how crazy we must have seemed to the A & M students standing outside the cafeteria that afternoon. "What is wrong with you?" their faces seemed to say. Yet, I cannot help feeling that what we did was a partial fulfillment of God's charge to His people found in Matthew 28:19, 20. Jesus asked us, His church, to share the wonderful gift of salvation with all who would listen.

In these final days of earth's history, God's church (you and I) must proclaim the good news of salvation to a dying world. In the war between God and Satan, we are God's infantry; we are His insurgents. We must express an unpopular message deep in enemy territory. It's not easy, but I am consoled in this: God's church will triumph because Jesus has overcome the world.

Not Ashamed

EVIDENCE

Rom. 1:16

To be a Christian—a follower of Jesus—is not easy these days. One's Christian family background or church affiliation might make one look like an odd one out. Or, it may be one's name that easily identifies them as a Christian. In some situations the principles and values one firmly holds onto may conflict with those of others, bringing embarrassment.

During Paul's days the situation was the same. Paul, a follower of Christ, found it difficult to be a Christian. The Jews considered Paul an apostate. He had been despised and persecuted among the Gentiles. He had been driven from city to city. He had been treated as "the scum of the earth" (1 Cor. 4:13, NIV) by others. He was well aware that the preaching of the Cross was "foolishness" to the Greeks and a "stumbling block" to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23, KJV).

There were good reasons for such reactions toward Paul and other Christians. For the founder of their religion was a Man who had been crucified as a criminal. Besides that, crucifixion was the most degrading form of punishment. Yet Paul was not ashamed of the Cross and Christ.

Paul must have found it difficult to withstand the negative reactions of others. Definitely he was not used to it. For he was a well-educated and famous Jewish scholar. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. He had a thorough upbringing, having the best the society then could offer. He could discuss philosophy, history, and literature with the best minds of his day. So, why was Paul not ashamed of Christ and the gospel?

He was unashamed because he looked beyond the appearance and saw in the gospel of Christ the power of God unto salvation. He was thoroughly convinced of the truth of the gospel. Because he himself had so fully experienced its blessing and power, he not only was not ashamed of any part of it, but even gloried in that which was most offensive to many, the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14). Paul saw in Christ a God who chose rather to go through a cosmic sacrifice than cosmic destruction. He saw a loving God who was not ashamed to maintain a loving relationship with the very human beings who maligned His name and brought Him suffering. So Paul knew what he was talking about.

The same spirit must drive us to live on regardless of the ridicule and problems we face as Christians. Let us be proud that we are followers of Christ.

**The Jews
considered Paul
an apostate.**

Monday
March 18

Choose Your Ultimate Weapons!

LOGOS

Matt. 18:19, 20; Acts 4:1-3;12:5-15; 20:29-31; Rom. 1:16, 17; 2 Tim. 2:15

The church is involved in a great controversy. It has been placed in this position by the mere fact it belongs to God. The enemy of God, Satan, has mounted an attack that has brought much tribulation, persecution, and death into the church. But God equipped His church with tools to withstand the attacks of Satan (Eph. 6:13).

Ultimate Power (Matt. 18:19, 20; Acts 12:5, 15)

The Bible tells us that prayer is the means by which we can call the ultimate power of heaven to our aid. The church has access to this power also. There is no need to call a committee meeting to invoke the power. There is no need to call to order the church board to invoke the power. All that is needed is two persons. That's it! Mega-congregations with their two thousand-plus memberships have no more ability than the country church where two or three gather to call upon the name of the Lord and invoke the power of God.

Some do believe that the more people we associate with especially in spiritual matters, particularly in prayer, the more power that is available to us. Oh, how wrong that is. If that were the case, when Tuesday's scheduled attack begins and the church can't get the membership together fast enough, what is the church to do? The text tells us that it does not matter! When the church is calling on God, it takes only two for His power to be activated for the church.

Prayer is so powerful that it even unlocked doors of the prison. While Peter was in prison, the church called an all-night prayer meeting. It rallied around the one ultimate weapon that is available to it. They are seen praying all night. They were not engaged in a Mission Impossible: Operation Freedom for Peter. The church saw that their ultimate weapon to get Peter out of prison would be to pray, pray, and then pray. The church was praying so fervently that when Peter arrived at the door of the church and knocked, they were so overjoyed they did not even open the door at first.

Prayer made a difference in the lives of those members at the prayer session that night. The same is true today. The church's ultimate weapon is prayer. (See Matt. 21:22; John 14:13; 15:7; Acts 15:25, 26.)

Ultimate Position (Acts 4:1-3; 20:29-31)

The ultimate position of the church is to be watching. Local government systems were disturbed with the teachings and preaching of the apostles. These men of God were sharing the good news to a dying and lost world. But the established

religious and political systems of that time were uncomfortable with this practice and placed Paul under arrest. The church's position needs to be that of watchfulness. Wolves in sheep's clothing were on the prowl to devour the flock (the church). Paul admonishes us—the church—to be watchful, always vigilant, always on guard to ward off the attack of the enemy. He even states that some attacks would come from within (Acts 20:30). Those wolves from within would quietly seduce and deceive the church. Our ultimate position should be vigilance. We should ever be ready to identify the enemy and then to use the church's ultimate weapon—prayer. (See Matt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 10:12; Col. 4:2; 1 Pet. 5:8.)

Ultimate Possession (Rom. 1:16, 17)

With this ultimate possession, all the power available to the church is realized. Without this possession, everything else is but empty and vain words. Faith is needed to actualize the prayer and empower the position of the church. Faith of the believers actuates the power of God for salvation. This controversy that the church is involved in can be victorious for the church only if the faith of the church is in tact. Again, the church doesn't have to possess a whole lot of faith for it to count. Jesus asserted that with the faith of a mustard seed you can move a mountain (Matt. 17:20). The church's ultimate possession is faith. With faith, the church can withstand the attacks of the devil. With faith the righteousness of God is revealed. This ultimate possession complements our prayers and reveals God's righteousness. "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4, NIV).

**All that is needed
is two persons.
That's it!**

REACT

1. How is the church utilizing its ultimate weapons?
2. How effective are these weapons in your congregation?
3. How long do you think you should pray before you see answers to prayer? Does length of prayer have anything to do with it?
4. Does a child of great faith have more to expect from prayer than a university student skeptic who tries God out? Explain your answer.
5. What are some of the answers to prayer that you have experienced? How did faith and quality of prayer relate to them?
6. List as many forms of modern-day Christian persecution as you think of.
7. What are the most subtle forms of persecution or prejudice that you've been subjected to as a Christian? How did you react?
8. What are some instances when you have been tempted to be ashamed or embarrassed of the Cross?

The Church, the Commission, and the Controversy

TESTIMONY

Gen. 4:9

As you read the excerpt below, try to identify your place and function within the church:

“Brethren and sisters in the faith, does the question arise in your hearts, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ If you claim to be children of God, you are your brother’s keeper. The Lord holds the church responsible for the souls of those whom they might be the means of saving.”

“The Savior has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of ministering to the suffering, the sorrowful, and the tempted. A company of believers may be poor, uneducated, and unknown; yet in Christ they may do a work in the home, in the community, and even in the ‘regions beyond,’ whose results shall be as far-reaching as eternity.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 106.

“If you claim to be children of God, you are your brother’s keeper.”

“Our work is plainly laid down in the Word of God. Christian is to be united to Christian, church to church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency to be subordinated to the Holy Spirit, and all to be combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God.—*General Conference Bulletin*, Feb. 28, 1893, p. 421.

“Our churches are to co-operate in the work of spiritual tilling, with the hope of reaping by and by. . . . The soil is stubborn, but the fallow ground must be broken up, the seeds of righteousness must be sown. Pause not, teachers beloved by God, as though doubtful whether to prosecute a labor which will grow as performed.—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 420.

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fulness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.”*

**Christian Service*, pp. 13-15.

Just Do It!

HOW-TO

John 1:1, 14

Being caught in the battle between good and evil in our society, what is our responsibility as Christians?

The first battle. The first battle we have to fight is the recognition of our state and what Christ has done for us. We are sinful beings gravitating toward sin. The Bible tells us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ did not die for the righteous. We need to remember at all times that evil cannot always be externalized. Evil is not something that happens in our society alone. It happens inside of us as well and if we are not aware of this and we set ourselves as judges of others, trying to exorcize evils in them, then we will be the instruments of evil fighting against Christ Himself. We fight against Christ when we do not recognize our need for His redemptive power.

The second battle. The second step we need to engage in is the proclamation of the good news. There is no greater power against evil than that of the Cross, and we are God's instruments in carrying this message to the world. The question is How can we be more effective in carrying the good news?

"In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1, KJV). This clearly expresses the need for communication. We often think that communication takes place through words, but words are symbols. When we look at symbols, we can see different layers of symbolism. The way we talk, the way we walk, the way we listen—these are all symbols, and they carry as much or even more meaning in the communicative process itself.

When God speaks to us, God's Word became flesh. God's Word is active, participative, and engaging. The important factors in communicating the good news, the grace of Jesus Christ, is to communicate through symbolic interactions. Christ must become flesh through us. He must be incarnated through local churches. The church is now God's symbol. And this symbol has the responsibility of communicating grace to the community, to the society, to the world. This communication ought to be symbolic. It cannot be merely our uttering of words such as "Christ," "God," or "redemption." This communication takes place when we act in concrete ways. When we offer cold water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, and rest for the weary. And when society experiences this, they will be able to say, "Emmanuel. God is with us."

**We fight against Christ
when we do not
recognize our need for
His redemptive power.**

OPINION

Revelation 17; 19

Surely the angels were exultant back in Bethlehem. Two millennia of prophecy had pointed to that holy night, yet none of the locals had any clue that history was breaking forth right in the middle of hay bales and census records. The Magi would be fashionably late, so it was up to Gabriel and company to drum up an audience fit for a king. So why use people at all? Angels never tire or retire, never demand a bigger cut of tithe, never sue the conference. Why not just have angels announce, "Hey, next month Jesus is showing up. Be ready"? Quick, efficient, to the point.

But the plan of redemption is not just a roll call. It's a love story. Ezekiel 16 tells of God's passion for ancient Israel through the tale of an abandoned child turned adulterous wife. God lavishes care and love on her, yet she takes God's gifts of beauty and fame and uses them to become a prostitute (Ezek. 16:15). We see this story play out again in Revelation 17 as a woman rides a beast.

Satan has never stopped working to distract Christ's bride, the church, from an intimate relationship with her Groom. What should lead us to the Creator becomes idolatrous, an unholy end in itself. It takes many guises. For Catholics, it may be devotion and prayer to Mary in place of the Son she carried. For Adventists it can be putting Ellen White ahead of the Bible and the Savior her writings point to. For first-century Judeans it was worshiping the law instead of the Lawgiver, as they made

It was up to Gabriel and company to drum up an audience fit for a king.

sure Jesus was dead and buried by sundown so they wouldn't desecrate the day He'd created.

Revelation 19 tells us that Jesus is coming back for His bride. He will never give up on us until we are thoroughly smitten with and transformed by Him. God has chosen to work with us, through us, and in us, because He wants to know and live with us forever. He's invested body and soul in saving us, and He can't wait for the day He greets us with a holy kiss.

REACT

1. How can your church reflect Christ better? Be specific.
2. What are some of the attacks that you believe the devil is making against your local church?
3. What can you do to work for God in protecting His church? Be specific.

We're the Only Jesus

EXPLORATION

1 Cor. 12:12, 27

CONCLUDE

As the body of Christ, we are His chosen, His anointed. We are His hands outstretched to those around us—not you, not me, but we together, acting out His love in union with each other and with our God. His body united extends His perfect love to a lost world, to our friends and neighbors.

CONSIDER

- Listing alternatives for witnessing that would seem attractive to your prospective audience, such as small loaves of bread for those at a university cafeteria or thoughtful, sensitive literature near a campus bookstore or volunteer labor at a neighborhood park or daycare.
- Making a valentine from God to you telling you why He made and chose you.
- Establishing a prayer partnership with a friend for next quarter to pray for the mission of your class and your church.
- Compiling the qualifications and listing the job description for “Church Member” at your church.
- Thinking of four fresh details from nature that would symbolize the role of an active church in a community. Consider how these symbols cast new light on the impact of a creative, involved church fellowship.
- Creating a wedding collage on which you superimpose a picture of Christ and members of your church, to represent that we are the bride of Christ and the wedding preparations are nearly complete.

CONNECT

Counsels for the Church, chap. 43.

Elizabeth O'Connor, *Call to Commitment*; Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri*.

The **end** of the great **controversy**



“ ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested’ ” (Rev. 15:3, 4, NKJV).

Please Let in the Light!

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 22:5

I remember being afraid of the darkness at night and crying, wanting to leave the light on. My mother would walk in my dark room to comfort me. Just her opening the door brought light. She said, "In heaven there will be no more dark rooms." The light would always be on and I would not be afraid anymore. I always believed in my mother and everything she taught me about heaven. She helped me feel safe, secure and not afraid of the darkness. I trusted her words.

"In the city of God 'there shall be no night.' None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to his name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning, and shall ever be far from its close."*

Imagine how it would be to live in the New Jerusalem. The city has no need of the sun or the moon (Rev. 21:23). There will be no electric power as we know it. The lights are always on! Sin brings darkness and makes things scary. Jesus brings light. He is the Light of life (John 1:4, 5). We do not need to be afraid anymore. The only thing He requires from us is that we, as His children, believe enough to follow His light. This world of darkness, deception, and sin is very close to ending. Satan, the prince of this world, and all darkness soon will be wiped off the face of the earth. Those who are willing to walk in His light and follow His commandments will receive the crown and the white robes prepared for them. The Lord will dwell with them and they shall be His people (Rev. 21:3). God's people will claim heaven, the New Jerusalem. There they will rule as kings and queens forever.

I'm not afraid of the darkness in my room anymore. I still don't like it, but I know that very soon the lights will always be on. I thank God for His love and the opportunity that He gives me.

Every day I have the chance to spread this light to others and tell them about His love, the Second Coming, the New Jerusalem, and the City of Light where there will be no darkness.

**The lights are
always on!**

* *The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

Sunday
March 24

Worship, Obedience, and Eternal Consequences

LOGOS

Rev. 12:17–14:20; 19:11-21; 21:1-4, 22-26; 22:1-5

At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty, He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death.

“Every eye in that vast multitude is turned to behold the glory of the Son of God. With one voice the wicked hosts exclaim: ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!’ It is not love to Jesus that inspires this utterance. The force of truth urges the words from unwilling lips.”¹

John tells of a scene just before that, and as digitally clear—a beast rising out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 13:1-3, 15-17). He foresees a coalition of religious and political powers that will join forces under the leadership of the antichrist beast to cast this world into a seething pot of affliction. There will be a great time of trouble unlike the earth has ever seen before (Dan. 12:1). On many occasions over the past two years, the pope has stated that

**We are running out
of sand to stick our
head into.**

he envisions the new millennium as a time of renewed Christian commitment and unity. In *Dies Domini* (Day of the Lord), released in July 1999, John Paul called on the world's one billion Catholics to set aside one day a week as a time “to rest and celebrate” and to “look anew upon the wonders of nature.” And he reminded them of the “grave obligation” to attend Sunday Mass.² Similar issues have been raised here in Germany when the question was asked whether to lift prohibited activities such as yard work on the “protected” Sunday.

With the future so bleak, isn't it convenient to choose to remain ignorant about last-day events? Do you leave it only to the professionals to study? The truth is, we are running out of sand to stick our head into.

The Final Conflict and the Battle Over Worship

The final conflict will be over worship. We will be divided—those who worship the beast and those who worship the Creator. This issue will supersede all others. We will have to make a choice regarding whom we worship.

This last conflict over worship is the final scene to an extended war that began

in heaven. Lucifer, a created angel, decided his superior beauty and intelligence qualified him better to rule the universe than his Creator (Isa. 14:12-14; Rev. 12:4-9). But this was only the beginning of Satan's campaign for worship that would last thousands of years and cost millions of lives. Donning the cloak of a serpent, Satan's influence over Adam and Eve's worship and service is instructive. We can learn how to keep from worshipping the beast by looking at their mistakes.

Trust and the Forbidden Tree

Eve ate of the forbidden tree because she lacked trust in God. Adam also distrusted God, but unlike Eve, he was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam's decision to eat the forbidden fruit was a conscious, deliberate choice. Unable to think of life without Eve—he didn't trust God enough to come up with a solution to deal with Eve's disobedience that would leave him happy throughout eternity.

Distrust led to disobedience. And this disobedience became an act of worship of the serpent. Worship and obedience are synonymous. "Whatever you choose to obey becomes your master" (Rom. 6:16, NLT). When Jesus was tempted by the devil to bow down and worship him, He revealed that the act of worship is married to service.

When we trust any authorities above the command of God, we leave the realm of His worship. The final conflict in the world cycles us back to retake Adam and Eve's first test. Will we obey and worship the beast or obey and worship our Creator? The same elements are found back then as they will be in the end. Only those who trustingly obey God will enter the pearly gates (Rev. 22:14).

Despite our natural fears, we must not chase after promises of peace and safety that are not founded upon the everlasting Word of God. While we should focus on the love of God for sinners and the true security that comes from making Him Lord and Savior of our life, we should also give attention to the warnings of the Spirit concerning the last days.

REACT

1. List concessions you currently have made, however rationalized, that make you uncomfortable with what you know is right.
2. The Humanism Movement <<http://humanism.org>> espouses a society in which the human being—with his or her needs and aspirations—is the central value. How does this fit into the scheme of obedience and worship? See also <<http://www.progressivehumanism.com>>
3. What are some of the pictures you have in your mind about how the end of time will happen? Where did you get these pictures from?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

2. Bill Broadway, "When Is the Lord's Day? Adventist Says Pope Unfairly Promotes Sunday Sabbath," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1999, p. B-11.

Reaching the Glory That We Seek

TESTIMONY

Mark 16:15

Throughout life we are taught the importance of setting and pursuing goals. The ultimate goal, to live at peace eternally with God, brings purpose and light to existence. We are commissioned to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15, NKJV), which is the good news. Our personal trials and tests, which we have turned into praises and testimonies, can be the good news that we share every day.

We are not placed here to be passive spectators in the lives of our coworkers, neighbors, and friends. The devil rages a continuous battle to distract and capture us. The devil’s deceptions draw in many of God’s precious lambs like an illegal drug. The distractions cause a temporary high that creates a world of pretense and pull so strong only the Savior can break the bond.

We are not placed here to be passive spectators.

His distractions and tricks can blind those who crave the short-lived pleasures he offers. “All the efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome [Christ] only brought out in a purer light [God’s] spotless character.”¹ The light of the Second Coming will not be dimmed. Those who allow Him to order their steps will find the everlasting salvation that they seek. “Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee from His presence, Christ’s followers will rejoice.”²

The grieving that we experience from senseless tragedies today will be no more. Suffering will end and we will walk in His undimmed light. As we gaze upward, nothing will match the thought of dwelling in heaven for eternity. The destruction of the devil and all traces of sin and suffering will bring peace. No longer will they plague God’s people. “For thousands of years this chief of conspiracy has palmed off falsehood for truth. But the time has now come when the rebellion is to be finally defeated and the history and character of Satan disclosed.”³

REACT

1. To what kind of earthly events can we compare the coming of Christ?
2. How can we help others prepare?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 759.

2. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 420.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 670.

Worship the Lord Your God

EVIDENCE

Rev.14:7

I recently attended a Youth Specialties Youth Workers' Convention. About three thousand youth workers from all denominations came to network, learn new ideas, find resources, hear new bands, and be spiritually revived. At the close of a presentation on women in youth ministry, the presenter focused on the Ten Commandments and specifically the fourth commandment. This impressed me, especially when she stressed, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God" (Exod. 20:9, 10, NKJV).

Then she created her own theology. "Sabbath" to her meant to take time for yourself, anytime you can mark out on your calendar. She tried to do her "Sabbath" on Sunday afternoon, and this week it may include some football.

From the beginning God created Sabbath as a special day. He blessed it and made it holy (Gen. 2:2, 3). God knew that humanity needed opportunity for moral and spiritual growth, for character development, as well as to study the character and will of God as revealed in nature and later, in revelation.¹

But someone tampered with the Sabbath. The Egyptians successfully erased the Sabbath from the Israelites' memory. The Jews made many ridiculous rules for the Sabbath: how far you can walk on the Sabbath, what a Gentile can do for you, and so forth. The rabbis effectively squashed the beauty of the Sabbath for a mechanical observance of what may or may not be done (Mark 2:27, 28). During the second century, the Catholic Church changed the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday, the first day, as the day of the Lord.² Enter Darwin and his theory of evolution that denied all authority of a Creator God.

**"Sabbath" to her
meant to take time
for yourself.**

The first angel's message speaks directly to Sabbath observance in the great controversy. We are called to make a choice: worship the true God or worship the beast. God, the Creator of the universe, is the true and only object of worship. "Creatorship is one of the distinguishing features of the true God in contrast with false deities . . . the call to worship the God of heaven as Creator of all things implies that due heed be given to the sign of God's creative works—the Sabbath of the Lord."³

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 588.

2. See also Peter Geierman, *The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, 1951, p. 50.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 p. 828.

Do You Know Your Plans?

HOW-TO

John 14:2, 3; Rev. 21:1-4

How can we apply the end of the great controversy, or the end of sin, to our daily lives? Before Christ's second coming everyone's destiny, good or bad, will be determined. Since "no one knows" the hour (Matt. 24:36, NKJV), we must prepare daily for His return.

To increase survivability, a city develops plans for natural disasters; a Christian has written plans (the Bible) and personal experience as a guide for the second advent of Christ. Preparation for a catastrophe is simple, yet each step is pertinent:

**We must prepare
daily for His return.**

1. Acknowledge the possibility of a disaster. We know through the Bible that Jesus will soon return to earth a second time (Matt. 24:42-44). For the unprepared this will be a disaster.

2. Gather resources and plans. This step is one of the easiest if we know what we are looking for. The Bible and daily study of it are important resources (2 Tim. 2:15; Ps. 119:105). We must also be in constant touch with God through prayer (1 Pet. 4:7).

3. Recognize early warning signs. Signs are all around us, and as the days go by we know that our time here on earth is very short. For this reason, we must be ready now so that when the time comes for our departure we will not be caught off guard (1 Thess. 5:1-4).

4. Rehearse your plan. Most at-risk cities have simulated disasters in order for their residents to get a feel for the real thing. Knowing how to react when our faith is tested is a result of rehearsal (1 Thess. 5:16-24).

5. Correct weaknesses. Our human nature causes us to have imperfect plans; ergo, we must identify these errors and try our best to strengthen them. Mistakes can be found in our character, our behavior toward one another, and our relationships with God, family, and friends (1 Thess. 3:2, 3; 5:5-8).

When we prepare ourselves, we can rejoice in knowing that the end result of the great controversy will give us eternal life with God (1 Thess. 5:9-11; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:8).

REACT

How can you mentally go through the steps of a major disaster with only written instructions and no experience?

Living in a Sin-Free World

OPINION

Revelation 21; 22

What will life be like when the great controversy is ended? In the last two chapters of Revelation, John tries to spell out what God has in mind.

Surprisingly, John spends most of his time telling us what life will not be like. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:4). No more sea (verse 1). No need of light from the sun or moon (verse 23). No night (verse 25). Nothing impure, shameful, or deceitful (verse 27).

But maybe it isn't so surprising, after all, that John emphasizes what will not be in God's new world. Imagine the problem God has trying to communicate to us the reality of life there. It would be like trying to describe a tropical island to an Eskimo before the days of television.

"There are palm trees and white sandy beaches."

"What are palm trees? What is sand?"

"Uh, let's try again. There are coconuts and parrots and coral."

"What are coconuts and parrots and coral?"

Soon you find yourself saying, "There is no ice or snow. There are no polar bears; it's never cold."

No wonder God tells us about things that won't be in His wonderful new world. We probably couldn't understand if He tried to tell us about the things that will be there. And the things He has told us about, we may well have misunderstood. But He assures us that He and Jesus will be there.

And that's the most important thing, isn't it? We'll see Jesus face-to-face (22:3, 4).

In fact, if we find at last that some of our ideas were mistaken and that the golden streets and pearly gates aren't exactly as we thought they would be, I don't think we'll be disappointed at all. For Jesus and for us, the most important thing is the fact that we'll be there together. So when God began to describe His wonderful new world, the first thing John heard was a loud voice from heaven that said, " 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' " (21:3, NIV).

"What are palm trees?
What is sand?"

REACT

Do the river of life and the tree of life in the new earth actually possess healing substances—or are these metaphors? Explain your answer.

EXPLORATION

Rev. 21:1-4

CONCLUDE

Who wouldn't want to trade in the sorrows and tragedies of this life for the pleasures and joys of eternity? Yet two things tend to keep us rooted in the here and now: First, it's hard to imagine a place where there is nothing bad, only good. That, plus the fact that Bible prophecy indicates a time of deception and persecution before Jesus returns makes many people look at the Second Coming with a mixture of hope and fear. The message of a soon-coming Savior is good news only as long as we remember that Jesus has guaranteed the salvation of all who come to Him by faith.

CONSIDER

- Writing five headlines and lead paragraphs that might appear in the *New Jerusalem Times*. What will make news in heaven?
- Planning a service activity that will let someone in your church or community know that "the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 10:9).
- Choreographing a dance performance to accompany the reading of Revelation 21; 22:1-7. Performers include: the narrator, John the Revelator, the angel, the One who sits on the throne, the saints, the sinners, the Son of God, etc.
- Writing a letter to Jesus, apologizing for things you might have done to delay His coming, and outlining the changes you'll make—by His grace—demonstrating your willingness to live in harmony with the principles of His kingdom.
- Calculating the dimensions of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:15-21) and translating the numbers into geographical distances comparable to the area in which you live. If these measurements are symbolic, what do they symbolize?
- Doing man-on-the-street interviews with people who attend your church, asking them what they most look forward to in heaven.
- Creating an attractive, positive ad campaign that God might use to (a) make people aware of Jesus' soon coming, and (b) prepare them to meet Him in peace.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, "Rejoicing in the Lord"; *The Great Controversy*, chaps. 40, 42. Norman Gulley, *Christ Is Coming*, chaps. 1, 37, 44, 45; Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, chaps. 13, 14.

Next Quarter's Lessons

GREAT APOCALYPTIC PROPHECIES

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 2002, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: INTERPRETING APOCALYPTIC PROPHECIES

LOGOS: Dan. 2:28; 7:15-18; Matt. 24:15, 16; Luke 24:27; 2 Thess. 2:3-8

Apocalyptic prophecy unfolds as a study in history, with the rise and fall of great world empires forming the background. Daniel, Jesus, and Paul in the texts used this week, affirm the historicist approach, that of prophecy—rather than covering only the past, or only the future—covering the past, the present, and the future, which should give us comfort because our God has, is, and will be in control of all three.

Lesson 2: THE ABC'S OF APOCALYPTIC PROPHECIES

LOGOS: Daniel 2; 7

Daniel 2 and 7 complement each other, providing an overview of history from God's perspective. The vision, with amazing accuracy, predicted the rise and fall of the ancient kingdoms, including the rise of the papacy, which is depicted in the prophecy with unmistakable clarity and precision. God clearly wanted us to know the identity of that power. The reasons why will become more apparent as we continue this study.

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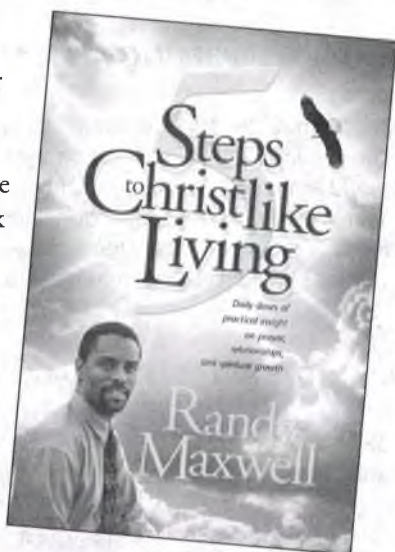
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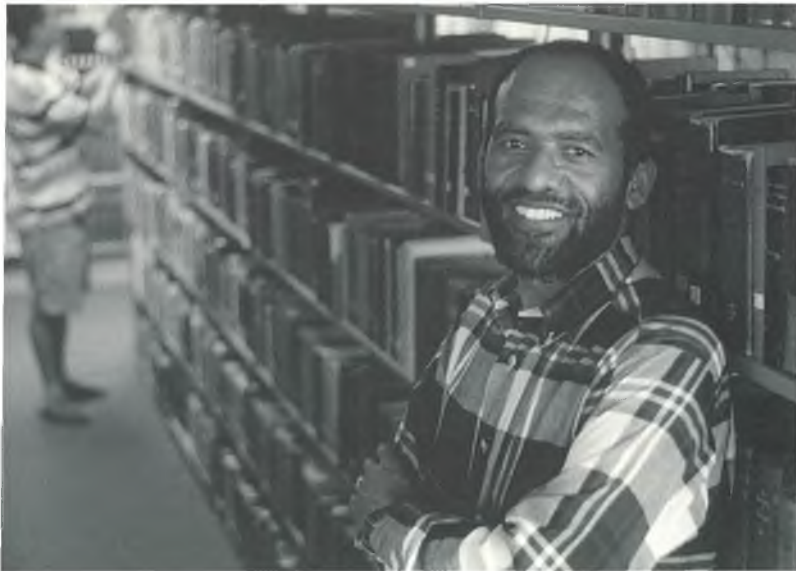


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MISSION PROFILE



Making an Impact

What do playing tag and sorting onions have to do with evangelism?

Just ask some of the 250 teens and young adults who gathered in Toronto during the General Conference Session to take part in Impact Toronto 2000.

During the day they clowned and mimed, puppeted and prayed. They sorted onions and sang with children. Each morning they learned ministry techniques from their peers, and each afternoon they went out and shared their faith, their strength, their love with others. Then in the evening they took part in evangelistic meetings, and then gathered at the Upper Room, a Christian café set up in a local Adventist church.

Read how the hands-on learning and sharing changed lives for givers and recipients alike in this quarter's *Teen Mission*.



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