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Our Wonderful God

Understanding Him Better



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Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



Edwin R. Thiele (September, 1895-April 14, 1986) began his work as home missionary secretary in the East Michigan Conference. He served for 12 years as editor and 2 years as manager of the Signs of the Times Publishing House in Shanghai, China.

While on furlough he taught religion at Washington Missionary College (now Columbia Union College) in Takoma Park, Maryland, and after permanent return from China, he taught at Andrews University for an additional 29 years.

During his years of service, Elder Thiele also authored numerous books and articles. Dr. Thiel gained recognition as a world-renowned expert on Old Testament chronology. His book, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, remains the foremost authority on Bible chronology in print today.

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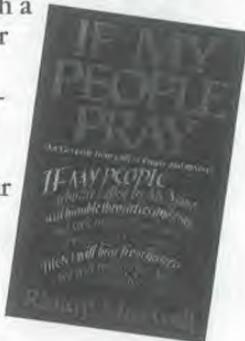
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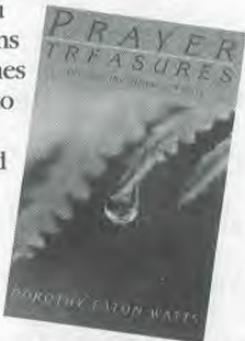
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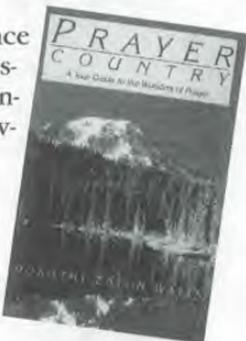
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OUR WONDERFUL GOD

Understanding Him Better

God is the outstanding fact of the universe. Our greatest needs are to understand Him better and to have His image restored in us. If these needs are not fulfilled, it is impossible for us to be truly happy or at peace with ourselves and others.

When we become acquainted with God, we discover that He is, indeed, wonderful. He is a God of goodness, as well as greatness. Of love, as well as wisdom. Of mercy, as well as justice. He is the God of the poor and meek, the wealthy and the great. He is the God of all races, which are equally loved by Him.

The purpose of the lessons this quarter is to help us become better acquainted with our wonderful God and to serve Him better. We will begin by learning what the Bible reveals about His nature and characteristics. Other lessons will show us specifically why He is called "wonderful" and what He has done so we can claim Him as "ours." An overview of the entire quarterly is given below:

Lesson 1—"Our Ancient of Days." God cannot be compared to humankind. He is eternal, omnipresent, and without equal.

Lesson 2—"Our Lord Most High." God is Creator and Benefactor of all creation. His universal scope makes Him the perfect Judge.

Lesson 3—"Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The Godhead consists of three divine Beings, unified in action but distinct in personality.

Lesson 4—"Emmanuel—God With Us." Voluntarily, God came to this earth as a man to redeem what Satan had snatched away.

Lesson 5—"The Holy One." Because of His perfection, power, and glory, God stands distinct—that is, holy—above all else.

Lesson 6—"The God of Love." Nature, the Scriptures, and the life of Christ reveal God's love. It knows no season, geography, or culture. It reaches out to all unconditionally.

Lesson 7—"The God of Peace." God provides peace to all who receive Christ and obey the Spirit.

Lesson 8—"Wonderful, Counselor." Those who reach out to God find a hand waiting to grasp theirs.

Lesson 9—"The Lamb of God." God offered the Lamb in a dramatic act of reconciliation.

Lesson 10—"My Father and My God." God desires to be our dearest friend and closest companion.

Lesson 11—"The Lord of Hosts." The angels who serve God unselfishly play an important role in our salvation.

Lesson 12—"The God of Help." Because He is on our side, God makes His unlimited power available to protect us and guide us.

Lesson 13—"King of Kings." The righteousness of God will triumph.

Our Ancient of Days



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Chron. 16:24, 25; Ps. 90:1, 2, 4; 139:7-10; Isa. 44:6-8; 14:26, 27; Jer. 10:10, 11.

MEMORY TEXT: “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: It is important to have a clear concept of God. It is important to know how He relates to evil and how we should relate to Him.

“DOES GOD HAVE A BEARD?” Four-year-old Schuyler asked her mother.

“Why do you want to know?” her mother wondered.

“Because,” Schuyler explained, “I don’t like beards. And if God has one, I need to get used to the idea now so I won’t mind hugging Him when I meet Him in heaven!”

Schuyler’s curiosity about God echoes both our own interest in Him and the need to have that interest satisfied. But how can we learn about God? We recognize that we cannot really know Him unless He chooses to reveal Himself. So we are grateful that He has revealed Himself in Creation, the Bible, and the life of Christ. We also have the writings of Ellen White, often referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy, a modern-day manifestation of God’s revelation through a prophet. Through all these sources we can become acquainted with God, whom to know is eternal life (John 17:3).

Knowing God lifts us out of the mire of human life. Although we have inherited the fallen nature of Adam, we look forward to the time when we can reflect God’s character more fully.

THE ETERNAL GOD (Ps. 90:1, 2, 4).**What does Psalm 90:1, 2, 4 emphasize about God?**

In this psalm, Moses contrasts our temporary existence with the eternity of God. Our life is limited. We come and go like the grass. We spend our years as a tale that is told. But God abides forever.

How do the following texts describe God?**Rev. 11:15** _____

_____**Dan. 2:44** _____

_____**1 Tim. 6:13-16** _____

"My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations" (Ps. 102:11, 12, NIV).

The eternity of God means the eternity of His righteousness and peace. When we make the eternal God our refuge, we will never be moved. Everything around us changes and decays. But God never changes. When God abides with us, we can abide in Him forever.

"I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things that are transpiring daily."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1099.

We like and expect new things, new experiences, new ideas. And many of us try to retain our youthful looks as long as possible. Perhaps these are some of the reasons why many of us find it difficult to relate to the eternal God. "He is ancient," we seem to be saying. "How can He offer anything to help me cope with this fast-changing world?" Take time today to consider how our eternal God can change your life for the better.

THE ONLY GOD (Isa. 44:6-8).

Isaiah 44:6-8 describes the uniqueness of God. As you read these verses, choose one or two phrases that highlight this uniqueness. Why do these phrases appeal to you?

The Bible makes it clear there is only one God—the God who created us and who is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. God's Word emphasizes that the Lord is the only true God.

Explain how the following texts increase our understanding of God's uniqueness.

Isa. 45:5, 6 _____

Isa. 43:10 _____

1 Cor. 8:6 _____

Ps. 86:10 _____

The more we learn to appreciate God's uniqueness, the more we will appreciate His first and second commandments (Exod. 20:3, 4). As we love God more and more, we will put away our other gods and worship only Him.

The *SDA Bible Commentary* on Isaiah 44:8 points out that the Hebrew word translated "God" in this passage literally means "Rock," "a common Scriptural term for God, denoting His enduring qualities and His strength (see Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 22:3; 23:3; Ps. 18:2; cf. Isa. 26:4). Israel has nothing to fear with God as their strength and defense."—Vol. 4, p. 264. In what practical ways have you experienced God as your strength and defense? Think of two areas in your life that God's enduring strength can fortify. Be prepared to share one of these experiences with your class members. Pray to God the Rock to make you strong.

THE UNIVERSAL GOD (Isa. 14:26, 27).

How does Isaiah contrast God's greatness with our insignificance? Isa. 14:26, 27.

When Isaiah wrote these verses, "the whole world stood in awe of Assyrian might. But Isaiah saw the Lord as One who had 'measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span,' before whom the 'nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance' (ch. 40:12, 15). . . .

"Isaiah saw the hand of God stretched out in judgment against Assyria and the other nations of his time, and knew there was no power in heaven or earth that could turn it back. When God purposes to do something His will shall be accomplished, regardless of the will of man (see Num. 23:19; Job 9:12; Isa. 43:13; Dan. 4:32, 35)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 172, 173.

List three or four facts Matthew 10:29, 30 teaches us about our universal God.

It is comforting to know that the Supreme Ruler above is our Friend. People everywhere are objects of His saving grace. "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

"The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. . . . That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 191.

The way Christ treated others while He lived on earth shows us that Christianity is a religion meant to serve everyone. See Him win Matthew the tax collector (Matt. 9:9), the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), the children (Mark 10:13-16), blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), and the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-30). How many others can you think of? Include yourself in the list.

Because our "God is no respecter of persons," how should we treat those around us, even our "enemies"? Think of at least one person with whom you have a less-than-ideal relationship. Ask God to help you develop a Christlike love for her or him.

THE LIVING GOD (Jer. 10:10, 11).

Besides His eternity and uniqueness, what other characteristic does God have? Jer. 10:10, 11.

These verses set forth the living God of the Hebrews in striking contrast to the handmade gods of the heathen, which have no life. (See 1 Sam. 17:36; 1 Kings 18:26-29; 1 Thess. 1:9.) The term "living God" means more than that God is alive. It also means that God gives life. That is why the psalmist says: "With my whole being I thirst for God, the living God" (Ps. 42:2, NEB; see also Ps. 63:1). The psalmist knows that, as the parched animal drinks water and is refreshed, so we can come to the living God and receive renewed energies. There is also the idea of watching, caring, and acting—something a living God could do but idols could not. We can be thankful we have a living God whom we can trust to care for our every need.

By what name did God reveal Himself to Moses? Exod. 3:14. What does this name tell you about God?

The four Hebrew letters composing this name have no related vowels. The devout Hebrew considers the name too sacred to pronounce. The name suggests that God is the ever-present, ever-active God, the One who is ready to help when the need arises. Of Jesus, Peter proclaimed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16, NIV). Jesus claimed that He is the Life-giver (John 6:47; 10:10), the Bread of Life (John 6:51), the Door (John 10:7, 9), and the Shepherd (John 10:9, 14).

"It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' Ex. 3:14. This was the pledge of Israel's deliverance. So when He came 'in the likeness of men,' He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God 'manifest in the flesh,' 1 Tim. 3:16. And to us He says: 'I AM the Good Shepherd.' 'I AM the living Bread,' 'I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth.' John 10:11; 6:51; 14:6; Matt. 28:18. I AM the assurance of every promise. I AM; be not afraid.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 24, 25.

If the words of Christ are eternal life, what should I do about them? How do His words of life become life to me in my daily experiences?

THE OMNIPRESENT GOD (Ps. 139:7-10).

What two phrases does David repeat in Psalm 139:7-10 to emphasize God's omnipresence?

God is everywhere. There is no place where we may flee from His presence, nowhere that His power is not at work. By the omnipresence of God we mean that God is not limited by space as we are. We can be in only one place at a time. But He can be everywhere at the same time. It is not that He spreads Himself out everywhere but that He is wholly present everywhere. This concept is beyond our comprehension. But so is everything else about God!

God has given us assurance in His Word that He is ever present with us. To His followers, Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Through His prophet Isaiah, God spoke these words of courage, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10). In the final crisis, God's people will be able to say, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Ps. 46:7).

What desire did God express in Exodus 25:8?

The church building today has, in some ways, taken the place of the tabernacle of Old Testament times. There the Lord meets with His people. There we can hear His voice speaking to our hearts. God can be to us more than mere theory. Wherever we may be, walking and talking with Him can be a matter of personal experience. With our spiritual ear, we personally can hear God speaking to us, telling us He loves us and is with us, directing our ways, and speaking confidence and joy to our hearts. When Jesus returns in glory, we can be with those who say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

In 1845, Sir John Franklin set sail to look for a passage across the polar seas. Crew members of a whaling ship in Baffin Bay were the last to hear from him. One of the items recovered from the shipwreck included Franklin's Bible. He had underlined Psalm 139:9, 10.

Recall an experience when the omnipresence of God was of great assurance to you. Be prepared to share that experience with your Sabbath School class.

FURTHER STUDY: David's concept of God includes the following: "Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chron. 16:24, 25). Also read Job 38: 1-41; Psalm 19:1-6; Isaiah 40:9-31; and *Education*, pp. 13-19, "The Source and Aim of True Education."

"God so loved the world that He would not suffer it to remain possible for it to be said that He could have given us more, or manifested for the human family a greater measure of love. He knew that the great manifestation of love, displayed in the life and death of the Son of God, would awaken the fiercest jealousy on the part of Satan. The gift of Christ to the world was beyond computation, and no power could compete with God by giving a gift that would bear any comparison to the value of heaven's best treasure. The greatness of this gift was to furnish men with a theme of thanksgiving and praise that would last through time and through eternity. Having given His all in Christ, God lays claim to the heart, mind, soul, and strength of man. Looking upon the treasure which God has provided in the full and complete gift of Christ, we can exclaim: 'Herein is love!'"—Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, "Words to the Young," Dec. 13, 1894.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List some of the ways we can see God's greatness. The following texts will help you: Ps. 31:19; 92:5; 139:17; 1 Sam. 12:24. What others can you think of? Which ways are most meaningful to you, and why?
2. Define greatness by worldly standards and by God's standards. How can we be truly great? (See John 15:1-17; Gal. 5:22-26; 1 Corinthians 13.)
3. What would you say about why it is important to have a clear concept of God? How does He relate to evil? And how does He want us to relate to Him?
4. Based on what you learned about God from this week's lesson, how would you describe Him to a friend who does not believe in Him?

SUMMARY: We serve an eternal, living God who delights in making us the objects of His saving grace. His greatness and omnipresence can give us strength and courage during even the most difficult situations. Nowhere else can we find such a friend.



A Work to Do

J. H. Zachary

Vasele Lupu looked up from his hospital bed into the eyes of his son, Benone. "It's not good news," he said quietly. "The doctor says the cancer might have spread. But I have placed my life in God's hands. I am ready to live or die as He wills."

The two men prayed together in the hospital room in Bucharest, Romania. Then Benone left. Two days later when he returned to visit his father, he found him preparing to go home.

"What happened?" the younger man asked. "You were so ill!"

"I may have been dreaming," the elder man told his son. "But after you left, I saw an intense light at the foot of my bed. A man standing in the light told me that God had a work for me to do. Later I asked my roommate if he had seen a bright light or heard a voice during the night, but he had seen and heard nothing. Surely I have been visited by an angel!"

Lupu asked God to show him the ministry God had for him. He began visiting the prison in Bucharest where he had spent several years as a prisoner for his faith during Communist times. He recognized many of the guards, and he remembered the insults that he endured from guards and prisoners alike because of his faith. One guard recognized him and hurled new insults at him.

Lupu began sharing with the prisoners messages of hope in Christ. The guard who had insulted him listened to Lupu's testimony. His heart was touched, and he accepted Christ as his Saviour.

But the guard's wife was angry with his decision. "How can an intelligent person believe there is a God?" she demanded. Then she challenged her husband. "Do you see this plant? It has never blossomed. If your God can make this plant bloom, then I will believe!"

Later that day the woman walked into the room where the barren plant sat. She stared at it amazed, for the plant was blooming! Faith blossomed in her heart, and she joined her husband to worship God and later followed him in baptism.

Lupu thanks God for giving him a special work to do.

Vasele Lupu (left). J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for The Quiet Hour.



Our Lord Most High



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 18:25; Ps. 147:5; Jer. 31:34; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 1:19-21; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 5:13.

MEMORY TEXT: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust’” (Psalm 91:1, 2, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: As Creator, Judge, and Benefactor of His created beings, God is sovereign over all the universe.

THERE ARE MANY PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY. For some, history is a random occurrence of events, without meaning or purpose. For others, history can be explained in terms of economics and personal ambition. Still others think of history as cyclical, ever repeating itself like a wave.

The Christian understands by revelation that above and through all history there is a God who began the process, sustains it, and ever works to accomplish His plans and purposes. We are not alone to fend for ourselves or determine our destiny.

“To understand these things, . . . to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who ‘removeth kings, and setteth up kings’ (Daniel 2:21),—this is to understand the philosophy of history.

“In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations . . . is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.”—*Education*, p. 175.

THE SUPREME RULER OF ALL (Rev. 5:13).

What portion of God's creation acknowledges God as ruler of all? Rev. 5:13.

The Bible makes it clear that God is the one Supreme Ruler of this world and all the universe. It is He who rules in the heavens. And it is He who is sovereign over the earth.

What position does David say is God's? What possessions? 1 Chron. 29:10, 11.

These words are part of a prayer David offered when he presented to his son Solomon the plans for a temple in Jerusalem. David had indicated what he had prepared for the temple and what he had given. He called upon the people also to be generous with their offerings. This they were. Everyone was happy with the results (verse 9). This prayer is one of the most beautiful in the Old Testament. It represents how devout people feel when they stand in the presence of God. Words are hardly adequate to express all the supreme qualities God possesses.

In contrast to God's position, David wrote that His people "are like a shadow" (verse 15, NIV).

We have nothing in ourselves. But in God we have everything! As we submit ourselves to Him, He gives us a loyal heart to keep His commandments and statutes (verse 19). Our Supreme Ruler becomes our Supreme Benefactor if we are faithful to Him.

"The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Dan. 4:17, NIV). So Daniel implies that even though much of the world is in rebellion against God, the time is coming when the forces of evil will be overthrown and God will take complete control. (See Rev. 11:15.) This time is portrayed in the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-34).

"The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by [man's] power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—*Education*, p. 173.

Though God is the Supreme Ruler of the world, why does He permit so much misery and injustice? How do you deal with misery and injustice? Be prepared to share your answer with your class.

THE CREATOR OF ALL (Col. 1:16, 17).

According to Paul, how complete is God's creation? Col. 1:16, 17.

Paul excludes nothing from God's creation. It includes heaven and earth. It may or may not be visible. It may be any order of supernatural being included under such terms as *thrones* or *principalities*. Then he points out that Creation was accomplished *through* Christ and *for* Him. That is, Christ is the agent of Creation and its goal. (See John 1:3.) Christ is the one in whom all things are held together. There could hardly be any stronger statement to indicate the comprehensiveness of Creation and its total dependence upon Christ. Here is a doctrine by which we can test all theories of origin, all philosophies of existence.

How does nature testify to its Creator? Ps. 19:1-6. What part of Creation speaks most eloquently to you about God? Why?

Only a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and love could have brought the world into being. In the sunset, the snowflake, the rose, we can see God's sense of beauty. In the mountains that tower above, the abyss that yawns beneath, the seas that circle the globe, and the stars in their paths through space, we can see something of God's infinite power.

We ourselves provide the most telling picture of the Creator. Our wisdom and love can reflect the wisdom and love of God. Our physical form in some small way reflects something of the form of God. Our sense of justice, mercy, and truth is a spark of God's matchless and holy character.

But also in us may be seen the evil image of the enemy who has sought to destroy in us the image of God. The greatest work of the Creator is that of restoring us to His own image. (See 1 John 3:2.)

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. . . . His nature was in harmony with the will of God. . . . He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God, and in perfect obedience to His will."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

Some people express gratefulness to the Creator through music, painting, prayer, poetry, service, etc. How can you express gratefulness to God? Determine to express your gratefulness to God in some way every day.

THE INFINITE GOD (Ps. 147:5).

In what respects may God be declared to be infinite? Ps. 147:5; Rom. 11:33, 34.

Since we are finite, we cannot grasp the meaning of infinity. But we can begin to feel its magnitude when we think of all the knowledge in the world, both past and present, and recognize that God has comprehended it all. We bow today before the superior knowledge of authorities in fields of learning. But God is *the authority*. When we think of how narrow a field is included in the expertise of the expert and how vast the area of possible exploration, we begin to marvel at a God who has the expertise of innumerable experts. There is no area in which He is not an expert. God's knowledge is infinite. And we cannot but bow before Him in utter awe and humility.

How does this infinite God relate to you and me? Jer. 31:3.

"A minister remarked: When Mary and Martha sent to Jesus their message, it was not, "'Lord, he loveth Thee,'" but, "'Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.'" It is not our imperfect love to Him that comforts us, but His perfect love to us."—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, ed. Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers, 1979), p. 496.

However complex your problem may be, God can unravel it. However difficult you may be to understand, God can enter into the deepest recesses of your mind and appreciate every aspect of your thinking and feeling. There is nothing too difficult for Him. We can commit our ways to Him with absolute confidence that He will work everything out for our best interests.

"If you come to God, feeling helpless and dependent, as you really are, and in humble, trusting prayer make your wants known to Him whose knowledge is infinite, who sees everything in creation and who governs everything by His will and word, He can and will attend to your cry, and will let light shine into your heart and all around you; for through sincere prayer your soul is brought into connection with the mind of the Infinite. You may have no remarkable evidence at the time that the face of your Redeemer is bending over you in compassion and love, but this is even so."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 323.

Why is the infinity of God important to you? What difference does this make in your everyday life?

THE ALL-POWERFUL GOD (Eph. 1:19-21).

What evidence of God's power does Paul mention in Ephesians 1:19-21?

1. _____

2. _____

Note also that God manifests His power to "us-ward;" that is, in the direction of our interests. If our all-powerful God left us to our own devices, His power would mean nothing to us.

Contrast how people treated Jesus with the way God treated Him. Left to our own devices, we do not know what is for our best interest. Religious leaders rejected Christ (see John 1:11). But God has made Christ the means of our salvation.

Infinitely greater than any power on earth is the power of God. He is the Source of all power in the heavens or in the earth. The power of the mightiest sun or the power in the smallest atom has its origin in Him. The power in the minds and bodies of humans came from Him and is sustained by Him.

We witness further evidence of God's power in His Creation (Rom. 1:19, 20). As we meditate upon the infinite power of God, we stand before Him with awe and reverence. "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. . . . Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:13, 14).

How can we receive power to accomplish our daily tasks? Isa. 40:29-31. What special power is available to us as Christians? Acts 1:8.

"Worry is blind and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. . . .

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 481.

If infinite power is available to us, why are we so slow to take possession of it? List at least one area of your life that could benefit from God's power. Then list two things you can do to accept and use His power to improve in that area.

THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH (Gen. 18:25).

What did Abraham hint to God about His judgments? Gen. 18:25.

Abraham was concerned about the safety of Lot, his nephew, now living in Sodom. Would God destroy a righteous man and his family along with the wicked? It seemed unthinkable. What evidence was there that this would not happen? The story in Genesis 18 shows Abraham pleading with his heavenly Visitor—who was Christ—that God would not destroy a whole city for the sake of ten righteous ones.

The heart of a person calls for justice to be done to all, to the righteous as well as the wicked. As it is right for the wicked to be condemned, so it is also right for the righteous to be freed from condemnation.

While the Bible teaches that God is the Creator and the Supreme Ruler of the universe, it also teaches that He is the Supreme Judge, who will exercise His saving grace in behalf of the salvation of the righteous and give final judgment to the wicked and rebellious.

Who will judge the world and how? Acts 17:29-31. On what basis will people be judged? Matt. 25:31-46.

"Those whom Christ commands in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.

"How surprised and gladdened will be the lowly among the nations, and among the heathen, to hear from the lips of the Saviour, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me'!"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

What makes Christ supremely qualified to judge? Why are we not to worry about or fear His judgments?

FURTHER STUDY: What condition does God say will eventually exist in the world? Jer. 31:34. Also read Isaiah 54:13 and Jeremiah 33:8. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35-46, "Pentecost," provides a picture of how such a condition can be achieved.

God has made it clear that His efforts for the restoration of this earth from rebellion to loyalty will succeed. The iniquity of this world will ultimately destroy it, and this world of evil will be replaced by a new world of righteousness. Christ's sacrifice for sinners will not be in vain. This world created by God will be restored to its original purpose. Humankind, created in the image of God, will be morally re-created in that image.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List five steps the disciples at Pentecost and their listeners took in accepting God and His salvation (Acts 2:1-41).
2. What evidence do we have today of the effective ministry of the Spirit of God?
3. What leads us to expect fairness in God's dealings with us? (See Ps. 97:2; 96:13; 103:6.)
4. Explain the ultimate goal of our Supreme Benefactor.
5. Describe the effect believing in God's supremacy will have on our lives. Provide biblical support for your thoughts.

SUMMARY: God is not dependent upon any other being for permission or guidance in order to sustain what He has created or to conquer the terrible reign of sin. However, God chooses to use human agents such as kings, presidents, prime ministers, governors, and other individuals as instruments by which the purposes of His grace may be fulfilled in the earth. The Scriptures teach that both individuals and nations are exalted through their adherence to the principles of God's kingdom. These principles are but a natural outflowing of the nature of God, which is love. That love brings blessing to all who allow it to be a part of their lives, individuals and nations alike.



Give Me My Brother! Part 1

K. Dkhar

Baxstar Fanwar received an invitation to conduct evangelistic meetings in Shillong, a large city in northeast India. He yearned to minister in the land of his birth, where he had begun his career in teaching and evangelism. Years ago he had accepted a call to serve as a school principal on the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada and later taught at Columbia Union College in Maryland.

Teaching was his career, but evangelism was his passion. Wherever he lived he conducted group Bible studies and successful evangelistic meetings. But the Adventist church in Shillong had never had notable success in evangelism; other Christian churches were too firmly entrenched. Would it be worth the expense to go?

As he prayed about the invitation, he gave God a list of requests: "Lord, if it is Your will that I go to India, I want former Adventists to return and believers to be stirred to evangelistic action. I want to reach the Khasi-speaking people for You. And, Lord, I want my brother back in the church!"

Fanwar had not seen his brother, Ulstar, in 20 years. Ulstar had drifted away from the church, traveled around the world as a merchant marine, and married a woman who belonged to a Sunday-keeping denomination. Fanwar had heard that his brother had joined his wife's church. "If You will give me these souls, Lord, and take care of expenses, I will gladly go."

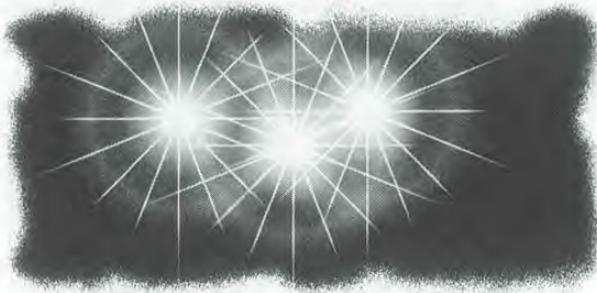
Almost immediately donations began arriving from unexpected sources. It was evident that God wanted Fanwar to go. He shared his goals with the church in Shillong.

"Enlarge your vision," he challenged. "Lift up Jesus Christ and let Him draw men and women to Himself. Expect God to do the impossible. I have asked God for 100 souls!" The church was hopeful but could not forget that up until then they had baptized only a few new believers a year. "God is going to move, and we must be prepared!" he urged. "Rent a tent—a big tent! Act in faith!" But as he prepared to return to India, Fanwar could not shake the feeling that God had His own plans for Shillong.

(continued next week)

K. Dkhar is the communication director of the Northeastern India Union. Baxstar Fanwar is a retired teacher living in Grenada, West Indies.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 6:9; John 1:14, 18; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Tim. 3:16.

MEMORY TEXT: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?’” (Rom. 11:33-36, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: One of the mysteries of God's being and nature is that the Godhead consists of three divine Beings, unified in purpose and action but distinct in personality.

THE NATURE OF GOD IS A MYSTERY. We approach the subject with reverence and with a recognition that in matters not revealed we have no right to speculate.

The oneness of God was declared in the days of Moses—“The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4, KJV). Jesus quoted this and said it was the first commandment of all. (See Mark 12:29.) The Christian faith is, therefore, monotheistic. Yet Jesus told His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19). This indicates there are three Persons in One. Jesus taught His disciples to address God as “our Father” (Matt. 6:9). He Himself addressed God as His Father (John 11:41). At His baptism, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Him. (See Matt. 3:16.) A voice from heaven spoke and said, “This is my beloved Son” (verse 17). These texts and others lead us to believe that our wonderful God is three Persons in one, a mind-boggling mystery but a truth we accept by faith because Scripture reveals it.

THE TRUE GOD (Deut. 6:4).

What do we learn about the nature of God in Deuteronomy 6:4?

Down through history, people have worshiped many gods. But there is only one Supreme Deity.

"In striking contrast to the nations about them, who were polytheists, the Hebrews believed in one true God. This profession of faith has been the watchword of the Hebrew race for more than 3,000 years (see Mark 12:29). The apostle Paul states the same truth as a tenet of Christianity (1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:4-6)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 974.

How does Isaiah 43 characterize the true God? Contemplate how this is helpful to you. Fill in the blanks of each verse below. (If you are using a version other than the NIV, you still should be able to complete this exercise successfully.)

Verse 1: "But now, this is what the Lord says—he who _____ you, O Jacob, he who _____ you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have _____ you; I have called you by name; you are mine'" (NIV).

Verses 11, 12: "'I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no _____. I have _____ and _____ and _____. . . .'" (NIV).

Verse 15: "'I am the LORD, your _____ One, Israel's _____, your _____'" (NIV).

Nature also speaks to us of God. (See Ps. 19:1.) It tells us there is a God who brought it into being, because it did not create itself. It also tells us about the greatness of God, because only the true God could have brought into being the vast universe with its galaxy of stars. Only the true God could have designed all the aspects of nature with its infinite detail and microscopic structure. There can be nothing better for us than to look beyond nature to the true God and worship Him who made the stars, the world, and everything in it.

Sin has affected nature to the point where it can even harm us (tornadoes, hurricanes, monsoons, floods, etc.). Yet there is still much about nature that speaks to us of God. What aspect of nature do you find particularly helpful in this respect, and why? Be prepared to share your testimony with your class members.

THREE PERSONS (Matt. 28:19).

Read Matthew 28:19. In this baptismal formula, it is notable that the word *name* is in the singular, but it is followed by the three names, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.

The word *persons* used in the title of today's lesson must be understood in a theological sense. If we equate human personality with God, we would say that three persons means three individuals. But then we would have three Gods, or tritheism. But historic Christianity has given to the word *person*, when used of God, a special meaning: a personal self-distinction, which gives distinctiveness in the Persons of the Godhead without destroying the concept of oneness. This idea is not easy to grasp—or to explain! It is part of the mystery of the Godhead.

What hints of a Trinity does the Old Testament give us? Gen. 1:1-3.

The Hebrew word for God in this passage is *Elohim*, a plural form. Yet the verb *bara*, “created,” is in the singular form. God speaks; that is, He uses the Word, in Creation. (See John 1:1.) And the Spirit of God “moved upon the face of the waters.” Here there seems to be an indication of at least more than one person. Note also the use of *us* and *our* in this pronouncement, “Let *us* make man in *our* image” (Gen. 1:26). “The plural ‘us’ was regarded by the early church theologians almost unanimously as indicative of the the three persons of the Godhead.”

—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 215.

“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”—*Evangelism*, p. 615.

How do the following Old Testament verses suggest the concept of the Trinity?

Gen. 16:7-13; 48:16 _____

Isa. 9:6 _____

Isa. 11:2; 42:1 _____

How does the concept of the Trinity help us to see how God is love? In what ways may we partake of this divine love and share it with others around us?

GOD THE FATHER (Matt. 6:9).

How did Jesus teach His disciples to address God? Matt. 6:9.

1. _____

2. _____

What description of God did Daniel receive in vision? Dan. 7:9, 10.

Such a picture of the Father should strike one with awe. Our Father loves us with an everlasting love. But we must ever be careful not to be disrespectful or unduly familiar with Him.

Who is the express image of the Father? Heb. 1:2, 3.

When we forget that Jesus came to reveal the Father, we will begin to misunderstand the Father. We must remember that when we see Jesus in His sacrifice and love, we also are seeing the Father at work. We must never separate the work of One from the work of the Other. God is not demanding and Jesus pleading. They both demand. And They both plead.

“Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world’s Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life.

“When Philip came to Jesus with the request ‘Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,’ the Saviour answered him: ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?’ Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 738, 739.

The world is at enmity with God because it misunderstands Him. It is for us to change that conception by being God’s true ambassadors, who reflect His character of love. (See 2 Cor. 5:17-21.)

How do we go about telling the world that God is love? If someone you know has not had a good relationship with his or her father, how can you help that person understand God as his heavenly Father?

GOD THE SON (John 1:14, 18).

"The Word became flesh; he came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

"No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known" (John 1:14, 18, NEB).

John wants us to be sure that in Jesus, the Son of the living God, we recognize full Deity. He was God incarnate. (Read verses 1-4.) He was One with the Father and existed with Him from eternity.

Which of the following statements best describes Jesus' relationship to the Holy Spirit? Check your answer by reading John 15:26.

— **The Holy Spirit goes where He sees a need. He testifies of Jesus.**

— **The Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus to testify of Him.**

In another passage, Jesus says the Father will send the Comforter (John 14:26). Thus there seems to be perfect collaboration between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This perfect cooperation among the three Persons is to help Christ's disciples powerfully testify of Him and spread the good news of salvation.

Describe the relationship between the Father and the Son. John 5:19-22.

It is interesting to note that not only do the Father and the Son work together, but They assume parallel functions. The Father raises the dead. So does the Son. He gives life to whom He will. As for judgment, the Father seems to have given this authority to the Son, so there will be mutual honor. (See verse 23.) Everlasting life is dependent on hearing what Jesus says and believing in the Father (verse 24). Both Father and Son have life in Themselves (verse 26).

After the resurrection, Thomas called Jesus "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28, NIV). There was no doubt in his mind about the deity of Christ—after he had examined Christ's scars. Jesus told Thomas that he had been given the privilege of the direct touch in order to help him believe. Then Jesus called those people blessed who do not have the privilege of visual contact, yet still believe (verse 29).

How does Jesus' relationship with the Father help us to see that the Father is by nature a living God? What difference does this make in our relationship to God?

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT (2 Cor. 13:14, 15).

Read 2 Corinthians 13:14, 15. This threefold benediction shows that, in the days of the apostles, Christians understood the doctrine of the Trinity fairly well. It was for later centuries to work out philosophical and other aspects of the teaching.

What part did the Holy Spirit have in the birth and baptism of Jesus? Luke 1:35; 3:21, 22.

What evidence is there that the Holy Spirit is a Person and not a mere influence? Match the texts in column A to the items in column B.

Column A

- A. 1 Tim. 4:1
- B. Rom. 8:26
- C. Rev. 22:17
- D. Eph. 4:30

Column B

- The Holy Spirit makes intercession.
- The Holy Spirit feels emotions.
- The Holy Spirit speaks.
- The Holy Spirit invites.

What important function does the Holy Spirit serve in each of our lives? Gal. 5:16-26.

“Several centuries ago, the Emperor of Japan commissioned a Japanese artist to paint a bird. Months passed, then years. Finally, the Emperor went to the artist’s studio to ask for an explanation. The artist set a blank canvas on the easel and in fifteen minutes completed the painting of a bird that became a masterpiece. The Emperor asked why there had been such a long delay. The artist then . . . produced armloads of drawings of feathers, tendons, wings, feet, claws, eyes and beaks of birds; these he placed one by one before the Emperor.

“The Holy Spirit operates in the life of the believer, so that we may be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Romans 8:29). This is not done in the moment of our new birth. . . . It is just the beginning of the long work . . . ‘until Christ be formed in you’ (Galatians 4:19). Then the day shall come when the Emperor of emperors will come for us, and the completed work will flash forth in a moment.”—Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Let Me Illustrate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Fleming H. Revell, 1967), pp. 160, 161.

Which fruit of the Spirit do you feel you need to grow? Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to cultivate that characteristic, remembering all the while that the fruit describes the character of Christ.

FURTHER STUDY: Read 1 Timothy 3:16. What about the Godhead does this text emphasize? Also read *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, "The Word Made Flesh," pp. 746-749; vol. 7, "Extending the Triumphs of the Cross," p. 29; and vol. 8, "Nature a Key to Divine Mysteries," pp. 326, 327.

"Great is the mystery of godliness. There are mysteries in the life of Christ that are to be believed, even though they cannot be explained. The finite mind cannot fathom the mystery of godliness. . . .

"The work of redemption is called a mystery, and it is indeed the mystery by which everlasting righteousness is brought to all who believe. The race in consequence of sin was at enmity with God. Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem. In human flesh He lived the law of God, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and bear witness to heavenly intelligences that the law was ordained to life and to ensure the happiness, peace, and eternal good of all who obey. But the same infinite sacrifice that is life to those who believe is a testimony of condemnation to the disobedient, speaking death and not life."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 915.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week's lesson, how would you explain the Godhead to an unbelieving friend? Include in your explanation evidence from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
2. Why is the "mystery of godliness" not a good reason for disbelief? What text can you use to support your answer?

SUMMARY: Have I allowed the Father to be my friend? Have I opened my mind to the beauties of salvation through the Son? Have I surrendered my life to the guidance and ministry of the Holy Spirit? Have I allowed Those who provided my salvation to become the rulers of my life?



Give Me My Brother! Part 2

K. Dkhar

Baxstar Fanwar had accepted an invitation to return to his birthplace in northeastern India to hold evangelistic meetings. God had opened unexpected doors to provide for his travel and the campaign costs. But Fanwar's deepest hope and prayer was for his brother, Ulstar, to return to the church that he had left nearly forty years earlier. But when he arrived in Calcutta, his daughter met him with the news that his brother soon would be ordained into a lifetime position in the Protestant church to which he belonged. The news shocked Fanwar, for it seemed that his deepest desire would be denied him. But Fanwar prayed, "God, You have not brought me this far just to see my brother lost forever. You must stop the ordination!"

Meanwhile, Ulstar was so wrapped up in his impending ordination that he did not even know Fanwar was in India.

Fanwar arrived in Shillong and began preparations for the crusade. In spite of church members' doubts about the success of the meetings, they caught the vision and rallied behind the evangelist. They pooled their meager funds and rented the largest tent they could find; they prepared notices and sent out invitations to the meetings; they invited their friends and relatives. And they prayed for big results.

God honored their faith, and the tent was filled with some five hundred people, two-thirds of whom were not Adventists. Among the visitors was Fanwar's brother, Ulstar. After the meeting Ulstar spoke to his brother. "You know that I did not get the ordination."

Fanwar nodded. "I prayed that God would stop the ordination and call you back to His true church." As the brothers talked, Fanwar told his brother, "I asked God for 100 souls in this crusade. But my first goal in coming was to win you back to the truth." With tears, his brother decided to return to the church of his childhood.

If no one else had taken a stand during those meetings, Fanwar still would have rejoiced. But his brother's wife and mother took their stand as well. Following the meetings, 88 people were baptized in a river near the church, and others continue studying. God gave Baxstar Fanwar his brother—and a hundred more.

K. Dkhar is the communication director of the Northeastern India Union. Baxstar Fanwar is a retired teacher living in Grenada, West Indies.

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Emmanuel—God With Us



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 1:1-3, 10, 11; 3:16, 17; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rev. 5:9.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

KEY THOUGHT: Entirely through Their own initiative, the Godhead arranged for One among Them to become a human being. They did so in order to (1) provide us with our Substitute and Surety, (2) make God’s ways plain, (3) restore us to our pre-sin perfection, and (4) settle the debate about God’s justice.

HUMANKIND NEEDED GOD, AND GOD EARNESTLY SOUGHT THE RETURN OF HIS WAYWARD CHILDREN. That was why He came to earth. Without His coming, we would be eternally doomed.

God came to earth in a vastly different form from what people expected. Not even God’s chosen people looked for the Saviour to come in poverty and humility. They looked for greatness above goodness, for majesty above meekness, for power above poverty, for statelessness above sacrifice.

Emmanuel was God in the truest and fullest sense. He was God in heart and God in everyday life. He was in human flesh all the love of God and the revelation of all His goodness. This was Jesus, the son of Mary, the Son of God—Emmanuel.

This week, meet Jesus again as if it were the first time. Renew your commitment to Him and let Him renew your life.

THE WORD OF GOD (John 1:1, 2).

What three things do we learn about Jesus from John 1:1, 2?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

John's language is simple but deep. We need to study these verses in great detail to draw out their full meaning. For instance, do you fully understand the expression *the Word*? Do you see how important the Word is? We really do not know Jesus unless we recognize His divinity, His part in Creation, His relation to the Father, and what He has done for humanity.

Jesus is the Word of God. The Word is an expression of God. Through Jesus, God expressed Himself to angels and to humans. In Jesus we find the expression of the inmost, the dearest, the most vital, the most enduring thoughts of God. Jesus is so completely identified with His Father that He can be considered His Word.

When Philip wanted Jesus to reveal the Father, Jesus answered, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NIV). When we become acquainted with Jesus, we become acquainted with God. If we desire to become acquainted with the love, the goodness, the ways of God, there is no better way than to become acquainted with Christ. He is God's very word, a perfect expression of His Father.

How do we know that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons? Matt. 3:17; John 20:17. What does Their distinctness, as well as Their union, teach us?

Because of the complete identification between God and Jesus, between Father and Son, there are those who look upon Them as one and the same Person. But that is not true. Jesus was a perfect expression of God. But He was a separate Person from the Father.

Why did Philip, why would anyone, want to see the Father? Why do you want to see the Father? If you were in Philip's place, how would you have felt about Christ's response?

THE WORLD'S CREATOR (John 1:3, 10, 11).**What great doctrine of the Christian faith do we find in John 1:3?**

Christ's creation of the world was an event of outstanding importance to every human being, to all created beings.

"It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. . . . It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

"When God said to His son, 'Let us make man in our image,' Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. . . .

"Until this time all heaven had been in order, harmony, and perfect subjection to the government of God."—*Early Writings*, p. 145. Now, however, the harmony of heaven was broken. Satan was cast out to take up his abode in the newly created world, purposing to carry his rebellion throughout the universe. He enticed humans, created in the image of God, into disobedience. Thus they lost their innocence and happiness and were doomed to suffer the penalty of death. God, however, still loved them. So He created a plan whereby He could reclaim them from sin and restore them to loyalty and holiness. Jesus came to the world to save it.

What do the following verses tell us about Christ, the world's Creator?

John 1:10: _____

1 Cor. 8:6: _____

Eph. 3:9: _____

Describe the reception Jesus received when He came. John 1:11. Why is this still often the case? John 7:7.

The scene is beyond understanding, almost beyond belief. Here was something that must not be, that just could not happen. But it did.

If Jesus knew He would be rejected, why did He come? What does this tell us about His feelings for us?

CHRIST AND THE FATHER (John 3:16, 17).

What motivated Christ to come to our world in the form of humanity? What was His purpose for coming? John 3:16, 17.

Motivation _____

Purpose _____

The love of God portrayed in John 3:16 can be divided as follows:
The Breadth: "God so loved the world"

The Length: "that He gave His only begotten Son"

The Depth: "that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish"

The Height: "but shall have everlasting Life."—*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, p. 496.

In the plan for our salvation, there was complete unity between the Father and the Son. God sent the Son. And the Son volunteered to go. The results of this unity of purpose and effort was the death of Jesus and the offer of eternal salvation to us.

In John 10, what facts did Jesus present to show the close unity that exists between Him and the Father?

verse 15 _____

verse 17 _____

verse 30 _____

verse 36 _____

In the relationship between the Father and the Son, there is always the closest possible unity in everything. This is true in thought and purpose, in plan and effort.

"Jesus is the revealer of God. In all that he says and does God is speaking through him. If they [His listeners] have not the spiritual perception to read the revelation in his whole conduct, if they cannot hear the divine voice in his message, at least they ought to be able to know and understand the 'signs' discernible in his mighty **works**. These tell that the **Father is in me and I am in the Father** (vs. 38)."—*The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1956), vol. 8, pp. 634, 635.

What implications does the unity of the Father and the Son have for you if you are in Christ? How should this affect your daily life and witness?

GOD MADE FLESH (Heb. 2:14).

What change did God the Son accept when He came into the world? What were the results of this change? Heb. 2:14, 15; 2 Cor. 5:21.

The change _____

The results _____

It is a great mystery that the God of heaven appeared on earth in the form of human flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). The God who created the world made the dust that composes the earth. God formed humankind of the dust. Yet God became human when He came to earth. That mystery is the very heart of Christianity. That mystery is also the fulfillment of prophecy. (See Matt. 1:21-23; Isa. 7:14.)

Human ears could not have heard a more joyful or important message. God was to come down from heaven to earth to live as a human. The Son of God was to become the Son of humankind so children of earth might again become children of God (John 1:12). Divinity became humanity in order that sinful humanity might be accepted by God and restored to His image.

Jesus came to earth at a time when humanity had sunk to the lowest depths of vice and iniquity. He took on human flesh after it had been weakened by thousands of years of wickedness. But never once was He overcome by evil. He came both to die for us and to show us how to live with the help of His divine power. As He was victorious against the powers of evil, so He wanted us to know that we also could be victorious.

"He gave His only-begotten Son to come to earth, to take the nature of man, not only for the brief years of life, but to retain his nature in the heavenly courts, an everlasting pledge of the faithfulness of God. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and love of God! 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God' (1 John 3:1)." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 258.

"Through faith in Christ we become members of the royal family, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. In Christ we are one." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 258.

Why might it have been harder for Jesus to live on earth than for you and me?

Earlier, it was said that God's coming to earth as a human is the heart of the Christian faith. Is it the heart of *your* faith? If not, how can you make it so?

THE WORLD'S REDEEMER (Rev. 5:12).

Of what seven things is our Redeemer worthy, and why? Rev. 5:12.

Revelation 5:12 is the chorus of praise and victory sung by the redeemed as they stand about the throne at Christ's final coronation. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 671.) The saints are there because Christ has redeemed them from death. They were sinners, doomed to eternal death. But now they enjoy eternal life and glory because Jesus paid the price for their redemption. That price was His life and blood. He died that they might live. He gave up all that they might inherit all. He came from heaven in order that heaven might be theirs eternally. He came from heaven to earth that earth itself might become heaven. He left His position on the throne with His Father that the redeemed might reign in glory. Now they give Jesus, crowned universal King, the universal acclaim He deserves.

How does 1 Peter 1:18, 19 assure us of our salvation in Christ? How does this verse assure us of our inestimable worth? How does it affect our sense of self-worth in Christ?

Christ is the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He is the provision that God had made before the Creation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8). This is an important concept to consider. God is not Creator first and Redeemer second. He did not become Redeemer after Adam had sinned. He planned for redemption before creating humankind. It is not that we want to limit God by a time factor. But it is important to recognize in Him an eternal Redeemer, as well as an eternal Creator.

Satan laid hold to the claim, "prince of this world." Jesus came to earth to dispute that claim and to redeem us from the enemy's hold. As He faced the cross, He said, "Now is the hour of judgment for this world; now shall the Prince of this world be driven out. And I shall draw all men to myself, when I am lifted up from the earth." This he said to indicate the kind of death he was to die" (John 12:31-33, NEB).

Christ's death on the cross purchased eternal life for the righteous and ensured a just judgment for the wicked. The hour of humankind's redemption by the blood of Christ is *your* great hour of destiny.

Imagine yourself with the multitude, singing the words of Revelation 5:12. What do you see? How do you feel? Determine now, that by God's grace, you will be there!

FURTHER STUDY: In view of what Christ has done, how should we respond to Him? Read Philippians 2:9-11. To learn what the Lamb will do for the victorious saints, read Revelation 7:17. Also see *The Great Controversy*, pp. 666, 669-671.

"All who have borne with Jesus the cross of sacrifice will be sharers with Him of His glory. It was the joy of Christ in His humiliation and pain that His disciples should be glorified with Him. They are the fruit of His self-sacrifice. The outworking in them of His own character and spirit is His reward, and will be his joy throughout eternity. This joy they share with Him as the fruit of their labor and sacrifice is seen in other hearts and lives. They are workers together with Christ, and the Father will honor them as He honors His Son."

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 624.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God use both the words of language and the words of a life to help us understand what He is like?
2. What effect does the Word of God have upon those who receive it and understand it? What effect does a person's Christian example of service have upon those who observe it? (Think of a person whose life in Christ has made a specific difference to another person. Be prepared to share this example with your Sabbath School class. Give as many details as you can without betraying a confidence.)
3. Describe the lifestyle of those who seek to be ready for the Second Coming. Include in your description not only standards but attitudes and relationships. Is one of these three more important than the other? Why, or why not?
4. How did God's becoming a human help us to (1) experience Him as our Substitute and Surety, (2) make God's ways plain, (3) restore us to our pre-sin perfection, (4) settle the debate about God's justice?

SUMMARY: At precisely the right time and in the right way, the three Members of the Godhead put into operation a plan They had devised before the world was created. They surrendered a portion of Themselves—the Divine Son—to become the Saviour of the world. (See Gal. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-21.) Is He your Saviour today?



Anywhere for Jesus

J. H. Zachary

Garneita Goffar and her husband moved into their new apartment in a large condominium complex in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Garneita wondered how she could share her faith with her new neighbors.

The condo community was home to many retired people. Taxis drove up often to pick up or deliver one of the residents who did not have a car. As Garneita watched one taxi pull away from the curb she thought, *I could offer to drive people to their appointments.* She prepared a notice for the community bulletin board. "Please give me a call if you need a ride to an appointment." She listed her name, apartment number, and telephone number.

The first callers were hesitant. Was it safe to ride with a stranger—even one who lived in the same building?

But soon word spread that Garneita was a kind neighbor willing to help others, and she began to get regular requests to drive to doctor appointments, the airport, or the shopping mall. "It took many trips in my car before my neighbors learned to trust me," Garneita reported.

Finally one curious neighbor asked, "Why are you doing this? Are you a Christian?" Garneita answered that she was, and the rider responded with a big smile and another question. "Would you be willing to study the Bible with me?"

One day Garneita saw a woman struggling to move a stack of boxes into a nearby apartment. Garneita understood the challenges the woman faced. She greeted her new neighbor with a smile and an offer. "Welcome to the community! I live a couple of doors away. May I wash your windows while you are unpacking your things?" The surprised woman gratefully accepted her offer of help, and the two women spent several hours working together.

A few days later the new neighbor commented to Garneita,

"You are different. Are you a Christian?" When Garneita answered that she was, the new neighbor asked, "Why don't we start a Bible study group?"

Garneita praises God for opening the door to a unique witness to her neighbors. She requests prayers for the condo Bible studies she has begun with several neighbors.

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for The Quiet Hour.



Produced by the General Conference Office of Mission Awareness
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The Holy One



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 2:3; Exod. 15:11; 3:5; John 17:19; Rom. 7:12; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9.

MEMORY TEXT: “And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:3, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The Sovereign of the universe, by virtue of His perfection, power, and glory, stands distinct—that is, holy—above all else. Whatever He dwells in becomes holy, including the human heart.

HOLY TIMES THREE. Some Bible scholars believe the threefold repetition of the word *holy* in Isaiah 6:3 suggests the three Persons of the Godhead. Be that as it may, a triple repetition of a characteristic must mean an emphasis. This week, we shall try to discover what the holiness of God means. It seems to be an attribute that distinguishes Him from all other gods. It stands for a high moral perfection that sets Him apart from all others. All three Persons are called holy—the Father (John 17:11), the Son (Acts 4:30), and, of course, the Holy Spirit.

God has attributes that are incommunicable, that are part of His Godhead, such as omniscience and immortality. But holiness is an attribute He not only communicates but desires to communicate. Thus His people are to be a holy people. Holiness is what God is seeking for us so He can take us into His kingdom (2 Pet. 3:14). This is a grace that is possible only through Christ, who said that He sanctified Himself in order that we might be holy (John 17:19). What a wonderful God we worship, a Holy God, whom we have the privilege of worshiping “in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2).

A HOLY GOD (Exod. 15:11).

Exodus 15:11 is part of a victory song that Moses and the children of Israel sang after they crossed the Red Sea and witnessed the destruction of the Egyptian armies. While in Egypt, they saw many gods. They saw these gods put to shame by the plagues that were called down because the Egyptians would not let God's people go. But now they had witnessed how God can work on behalf of His people. He not only did wonders but He was "glorious in holiness." What does this mean?

The key idea seems to be separateness and, as applied to God, means that He transcends His created works. He is the Supreme Deity, to whom nothing can be equal. To worship any other is to worship the lesser one. That is sinful. Holiness also has a moral quality and suggests that God is morally excellent. Finlayson says: "Since holiness embraces every distinctive attribute of Godhead, it may be defined as the outshining of all that God is. As the sun's rays, combining all the colours of the spectrum, come together in the sun's shining and blend into light, so in His self-manifestation all the attributes of God come together and blend into holiness."—J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 530.

How did the following persons address God and Jesus?

Mary, Jesus' mother (Luke 1:49) _____

Jesus (John 17:11) _____

The disciples (Acts 4:30) _____

How careful should we be in using God's name, and why? Exod. 20:7.

"This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. Psalm 11:9. All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character. . . ."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 306, 307.

Reread Exodus 15:11. Write a "poem" that expresses praise for God's work in your behalf. Be sure to include in your "poem" the concept of God's holiness.

HOLY PLACES (Exod. 3:5).

How did Moses show reverence for the place where God appeared to Him? Exod. 3:5.

The custom Moses followed still prevails in some parts of the world. In other parts of the world, men show reverence by removing their hat and women by covering their heads. It is not the particular custom that is important. It is the fact of reverence.

How were the children of Israel to show reverence at Mount Sinai? Exod. 19:10-13.

God's presence can be terrifying. (See verse 18.) All nature trembles at His presence. How much more should sinful humans enter into His presence with holy fear.

The sanctuary was to be a symbol of God's presence with His people (Exod. 29:42, 43). It was to be a holy place. The garments used by the priests were holy (Exod. 39:41). All the vessels were holy. The altar was most holy (Exod. 40:9, 10). Wherever God is and whatever is dedicated to the Lord is holy. In the same way, the temple was holy (Ps. 65:4). The New Jerusalem is the Holy City (Rev. 21:2). And all heaven is holy (Ps. 20:6).

The Bible makes it clear that there is a difference between that which is hallowed and that which is common. We ignore those differences at great risk to ourselves.

"Humility and reverence should characterize the deportment of all who come into the presence of God. In the name of Jesus we may come before Him with confidence, but we must not approach Him with the boldness of presumption, as though He were on a level with ourselves."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 252.

"To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate to heaven. . . .

"Common talking, whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the service. . . .

"If when the people come into the house of worship, they have genuine reverence for the Lord and bear in mind that they are in His presence, there will be a sweet eloquence in silence."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 491, 492.

Examine carefully how you behave in church. Think of two ways you could be more reverent. Pray that God will help you develop these behaviors.

A HOLY LAW (Rom. 7:12).

What three words does the apostle Paul use to describe God's law? Rom. 7:12. Why can the law be described in such a way? Exod. 20:1.

We generally dislike the law of God (Rom. 8:7) because anything that goes against our fallen natures is unpleasant to us. We want to be free to do what we please. But if we want to be free to enjoy life, we must learn to live in harmony with the laws of God (James 1:25; 2:12). Only by observing the laws of harmony can a musician compose good music. Only by observing the rules of the game can an athlete play and win. Without law there can be only chaos and frustration.

Jesus summed up God's holy law in Matthew 22:37-40: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV). Read what else Jesus said about the law in Matthew 5:17, 18.

"If the law could be changed, man might have been saved without the sacrifice of Christ. . . . The very fact that Christ bore the penalty of man's transgression, is a mighty argument to all created intelligence that the law is changeless; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 70.

Those who follow God's law are pronounced "blessed" (Ps. 119:1). Discover some of the ways obeying God's holy law can be a blessing by filling in the blanks below with the following words: simple, reviving, eyes, joy.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, _____ the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the _____. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving _____ to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the _____" (Ps. 19:7, 8, NIV).

The Ten Commandments are not merely a list of "Thou shalt nots." Each one has a positive side. "Thou shalt not kill" means "Thou shalt promote life." We desire and work for the happiness of the people we know. (See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 235.) Take time now to consider the other nine commandments (Exod. 20:2-17). What are the positive principles represented by each one? How could each principle improve your life and the life of those around you?

A HOLY DAY (Gen. 2:3).

The weekly cycle has no relationship to any phenomenon of nature, like the day, the month, or the year. It has its origin in a holy God, who created the world in six days and rested the seventh. God's sanctifying it, or making it holy, set it apart for a holy use—holy communion with a holy God.

According to Abraham Heschel, Jewish theologian, God's presence in time makes it holy, just as His presence in a place makes it holy. "The reason that it matters which day one keeps as the Sabbath is that God puts Himself in a special way, so to speak, into the hours that comprise the Sabbath. He pauses and fills the time that runs between sunset and sunset with a quality of presence not found in any other time period during the week. . . . The seventh-day is the one God has set aside as a special day for communion between heaven and earth."—Donald John, *Teaching Aids for Adult Lessons*, first quarter, 1978, p. 71.

What did Jesus say about the Sabbath and its Lord? Mark 2:27, 28.

People have made the seventh day a day of evil omen, a day of fasting, a day of buying and selling, or doing one's own pleasure. But Jesus pointed out that the day "was designed to bring men into communion with God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 286. Jesus showed that bringing release from sin or disease is in harmony with the purpose of the Sabbath. A day of mere rites and ceremonies would be wearisome, and the whole objective of bringing good to others could be set aside by such practices.

What two acts of God does the Sabbath memorialize?

Exod. 20:8-11 _____

Exod. 31:13 (Deut. 5:15) _____

The fact that Deuteronomy gives another reason for the keeping of the Sabbath does not negate the fact that the Sabbath is a memorial of Creation. It points out that there may be other reasons for keeping the Sabbath, reasons that have to do with our deliverance from sin.

One Sabbath, Ann and David's elderly neighbors asked them to fill a desperately needed prescription. It couldn't wait until sundown. What should Ann and David have done? Upon what principles regarding the Ten Commandments in general and the Sabbath commandment in particular would you base your answer?

A HOLY CALLING (2 Tim. 1:8, 9).

Upon what two things is our “holy calling” based?

1. _____

2. _____

“There is no alteration of life, no change of condition that implies half so much as the alteration which Christianity introduces. It is a kingdom of heaven begun upon earth, and by being made members of it, we are entered into a new state of goods and evils.”—William Law, *Christian Perfection* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1975), p. 31.

By what term does the writer to the Hebrews address his fellow Christians? Heb. 3:1.

Some Christians are reluctant to apply this term to themselves. This may be because they have met Christians who have done so, yet have lived lives that were otherwise. The fact is that the nearer we come to the pattern Jesus has set for us, the more humble we will become. We should not run away from this pattern. But we should be sure that the experience we enjoy is genuine and God-given.

The apostle Paul calls the Christians to whom he writes *saints*. (See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1.) The word *saint* is not a popular word for Christians today. It has been used to refer to outstanding members of a church who have been officially canonized, and thus it cannot be applied to everyone. That is why some modern versions of the New Testament in English avoid using the word. The word *saints* is translated “his dedicated people” (Rom. 1:7, NEB), “his own people” (Rom. 1:7, TEV), and “God’s holy people” (1 Cor. 1:2, TEV).

Paul lived a life that we may be proud to imitate. But the fact is, he recognized he was nothing in himself (Gal. 2:20). He could glory only in the Cross, because that was the symbol of the salvation that had been purchased for him. It was the reason why he could be what he was (Gal. 6:14).

“Paul realized that his sufficiency was not in himself, but in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influence filled his heart, bringing every thought into subjection to Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 251.

How is it that some people have joined the church, keep the Sabbath, and yet are far from being holy in the way they treat other people?

FURTHER STUDY: Read John 17:19. In praying to His Father, Jesus said that He sanctified Himself, consecrated Himself (NEB), or dedicated Himself (TEV) so that His disciples may be sanctified, consecrated, and dedicated. This is an example of total commitment. A holy God is dedicated to the cause of having a holy people. Could anything be more appealing to produce a response of dedication in us?

To discover God's desire for us and why it is so important to fulfill this desire, read Leviticus 11:44, 45; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; and Hebrews 12:14. How can we attain this desire? John 15:1-8; Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 8:10. Also read *Steps to Christ*, "The Sinner's Need of Christ," pp. 17-22, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, "Blessed Are the Pure in Heart," pp. 24-27.

"Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love."

—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List the reasons why God declares certain places or certain times (like the Sabbath) holy.
2. The worshipers at the wilderness sanctuary or at the temple in Jerusalem knew when God was present because of the brightness of His glory, called the Shekinah. Can we today determine whether and when God is present? If so, how? Does the dedication of a place of worship make it holy? Or is it also necessary for God to be present? Explain.
3. What can we do to recognize the Sabbath as distinctive without making its observance a burden as the Pharisees did? Base your answers on the guiding principles of God's laws.
4. A friend believes you are legalistic because you observe the Sabbath. Based on what you learned from this week's lesson, how would you respond?

SUMMARY: It was not natural for a holy God to take on human nature as Christ did. It is not natural for us to become partakers of the divine nature as we may. But the redemption of a sinful world required God to take this step. Your own personal redemption requires that you take your step. Will you choose to remove all barriers today and allow Christ's power and grace to lead you to holiness?



Face to Face With Death

Marec Smalek

When a young Polish man named Mark was inducted into the Polish military, he was assigned to the paratrooper school. While on a training mission thousands of feet above the ground, he moved toward the plane's door, ready to jump when his commander gave the signal. When he saw the signal to jump, he pushed himself away from the plane and yanked on his parachute cord. But another paratrooper had jumped at nearly the same instant. Both men's parachutes opened at the same time. The chutes became entangled and failed to open completely.

The two men desperately struggled to separate their parachutes as they plummeted toward earth. In an instant Mark sensed that he was facing death and he was not prepared. He had no idea what lay beyond the grave. After what seemed like an eternity, the men were able to separate their parachutes. They opened their emergency chutes in time to slow their plunge to earth and allow for a safe landing.

Dazed, but without any broken bones, Mark could not shake the thought that he had just faced death. But he was not ready to die. During the remainder of that day, thoughts of death haunted him, and the question, *What happens to me when I die*, played over and over in his mind.

That evening he turned on his radio, hoping to get his mind off his close call. As he searched the shortwave dial for a station broadcasting in Polish, he found Adventist World Radio's Polish *Voice of Hope*. He listened in stunned silence, unable to believe his ears. The speaker's topic was what happens when you die.

Mark felt that it had to be more than coincidence that he had tuned in to this particular program that answered his deepest questions just when he needed it. He became a regular listener and requested a Bible correspondence course. He completed the course and began attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In time he was baptized.

Mark thanks God for saving him from death and leading him to that radio program that in turn led him to a Christ-filled life. Now Mark and his wife share with others how up-to-date God's ancient truths are.

Pray for people around the world who are finding their way to Jesus through the ministry of radio.

Marec Smalek is director of the *Voice of Hope* in Poland.

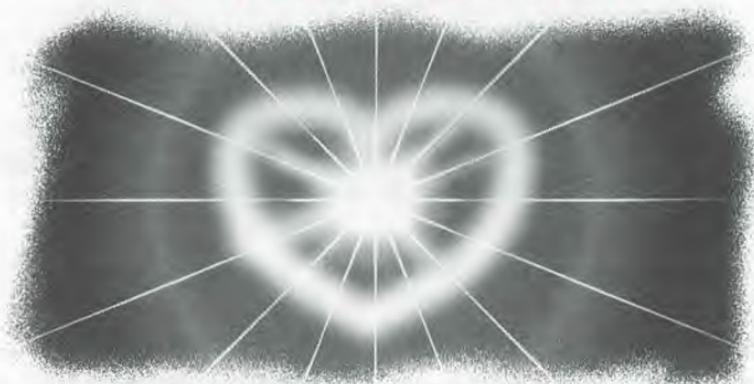
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The God of Love



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 103:2-4; Hos. 11:8; Matt. 22:36-40; John 3:16; Rom. 5:7, 8; 1 John 4:16.

MEMORY TEXT: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: God’s love for humankind, revealed in nature and the Scriptures and demonstrated perfectly in His Son’s life, knows no limits of season, geography, or culture. It reaches out to all.

LOVE IS A FLAME THAT WARMS, a light that glows, a magnet that draws, a fragrance that refreshes, a cup that cheers, a mountain that endures, a smile that reveals.

When you see love, you know it. When you experience it, you recognize it. When you lack it, you need it and want it.

When you experience the new birth of conversion, you experience a new birth of love—toward God and toward all the world about you.

“God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from Him to all His creatures. . . .

“When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. . . .

“Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked, for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father’s care.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 77, 78.

GOD IS LOVE (1 John 4:16).

If there were only one word to describe God, what would that word be? 1 John 4:16.

Love is the very nature of God. Everything He does is prompted by love. We may see His love in all His works. His wondrous love is revealed in the things of the world about us and in the infinite expanses of the heavens above. If we would see love, we must see God. No one can see love without seeing God! Those who feel the touch of God feel the touch of love.

Because human vision is limited, we do not always see love in the ways of God. Children do not always perceive their parents' love in deeds of the greatest wisdom and most tender concern. The more fully our eyes are opened and the more comprehensive our understanding becomes, the more clearly we are able to see that God, indeed, is love.

Were it not for a God of love, there would be no world and no one to inhabit it. Were not God a Being of love, He would not be the embodiment of infinite wisdom and power. God's power exerts itself always, and only, in love. God's wisdom shows itself in constant outpourings of love to make us truly happy.

Love is personal. It must have someone to love, someone with whom to share. Unless it can expend itself in deeds of honest concern for the welfare of others, it is not happy, and it is not love. Love craves love and creates love. The more it manifests itself, the wider will be the circle of happiness and love.

What two words describe the Christian's relationship to God's love?
Eph. 3:17. What effect will such a relationship have on our lives?

1. _____

2. _____

Effect: _____

All of our highest attributes are due to love, and therefore due to God. Unselfishness, truthfulness, sympathy, justice, goodness, and mercy all come from love and cannot exist without it. These attributes find their fullest expression in God. He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. 34:6, KJV).

Describe what life would be like without love. What impact has God's love had on your life?

GOD'S LAW OF LOVE (Matt. 22:36-40).

What was Jesus' summary of the Ten Commandments and the teaching of Scripture? Matt. 22:36-40.

"Our duty to obey [God's] law is to be the burden of this last message of mercy to the world. God's law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known. It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1104, 1105.

There can be no greater law than love. Love embraces every duty we have—to God and to those in the world about us. If we have supreme love for God, we will do all that God commands. If we love others, we will do nothing against their best interests.

In heaven, the law of angels is the law of love. They need no other law, for their every thought and deed is always, and only, love. With us, however, that is not the case. The details of right and wrong in our relationships with God and others need to be set before us in more specific detail. That is why God gave us His Ten Commandments, the first four pointing out our love and duties to God and the last six, our love and duties to others.

"Man's natural tendency is to make self first, irrespective of obligations incumbent upon him in his relations to God and to his fellow men. To be completely selfless in dealing with his fellows, a man must first love God supremely. This is the very foundation of all right conduct."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 484.

The saving acts of God in our lives form the basis of our relationship to God (Deut. 6:5; Exod. 20:2). God brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty arm, and so the Israelites were to recognize Him as the one true God. They were to remember His acts of Creation (Exod. 20:11) and deliverance (Deut. 5:15). They would be moved to respond in love.

You and I have experienced God's love in our lives. Thus, we are moved to thank Him and to love Him. When God instructed Moses to tell Israel, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2), one of the specifications was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (verse 18). Love was as important in the days of Moses as it was at the time of Christ. It was ever the basis of God's law as it is ever the foundation of God's eternal throne.

How do we show we love God? John 14:15; 1 John 5:2, 3. How can Christians have both love and hate in their heart? Ps. 97:10; Amos 5:15.

GOD'S LOVE TOWARD SINNERS (Rom. 5:7, 8).

How do we know God takes His love for us seriously? Rom. 5:7, 8.

God has shown His love in untold ways—in His works of Creation and preservation, in bringing into existence holy beings who are to be eternally happy, in maintaining an endless universe by boundless wisdom and love. But God's greatest demonstration of love was the love He showed toward sinners who were in rebellion against Him. "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6, NKJV).

Sinners need love. But they do not deserve it. What they deserve is death. But it is from death that God purposed to save them. Only love could have prompted that purpose. Justice demanded that sinners should die. But God's love provided a substitute.

God loves not only good people but bad people; not only one person but all persons. God loves people who do not love Him. He loves people who reject His love and spurn His mercy, who love sin rather than righteousness, and who choose ways of death rather than ways of life. God loves people who despise and reject His Son, who came to save them. He loves them even though they would put His Son to death on a cruel cross, demanding death for the Prince of Life but mercy for a servant of the prince of evil.

Because of God's great love, of what may we be confident? Rom. 8:38, 39. What about Paul's life qualified him to write these verses?

Paul lists a number of elements that might be strong and that we think might prevent God from reaching us with His love. But Paul holds these elements up to ridicule. Not one of them is more powerful than God. Not one of them can be considered an obstacle to God's saving grace.

It took just such love to save us. Nothing less would have worked. Unless God had been willing to give up His Son for sinners, they could not have been saved. Unless Jesus would have given up His throne and His life for sinners, they would have perished in their iniquity. "We, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgement of God. But God, rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ" (Eph. 2:3, 4, NEB).

What about your life qualifies you to believe the way Paul does? How can the Holy Spirit help you in your daily life to share in Paul's vibrant life of faith?

GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS (Ps. 103:2-4).

Read Psalm 103:2-4. The word translated "lovingkindness" has been translated in a number of different ways: "mercy," "kindness," and "goodness" in the KJV. The RSV translates it "steadfast love." Two related ideas are "covenant" and "faithfulness." (Compare *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 719, 720.) The thought of the psalmist seems to be that God has given a covenant to His people and has been faithful to it, and this relationship can be considered as honorable and glorious as the wearing of a crown.

God's ways are ways of incomparable kindness. His gifts are those of the most tender love. No parents ever displayed greater love for their child than does God for His children. Where God is, there His loving-kindness is revealed and His goodness and mercy are displayed.

Wherever we find loveliness and harmony, grandeur and virtue, it is because of God's goodness and love. If only the eyes of our spiritual vision were opened, we would everywhere see evidences of God's tender, all-pervading, never-failing love. We would see God's love in rain as well as sunshine, in the clouds above and the grass beneath.

What is the basis of true happiness? Ps. 144:15.

"God's love is revealed in all His dealings with His people; and with clear, unclouded eyes, in adversity, in sickness, in disappointment, and in trial we are to behold the light of His glory in the face of Christ and trust to His guiding hand. But too often we grieve His heart by our unbelief. . . ."—*My Life Today*, p. 12.

"God is neither capricious nor petty, neither remote nor repressive; but a God of holiness and love, of wisdom and power. The God of the Bible is greater than any man's experience of him, far greater than human powers of expression; but while far above us in majesty and might, he cares for us, deals with us individually, and grants to those who trust him fullness of life. He is the God of light and truth, of strength and beauty and peace. Not only did he create, but he is ever active, working in infinite patience and with endless resources. Happy are the people who acknowledge such a God, wait for him, live with him, obey him in thought and speech and deed. His peace is in their hearts, his liberty and joy in their minds, his omnipotence at their disposal."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4, p. 739.

What special blessings come to those whose relationship with God is right? Ps. 103:1, 3, 5. What is the greatest blessing you have received from God, and why?

GOD'S UNIVERSAL LOVE (John 3:16).

In the verse below, circle the two words that tell us God's love is universal.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV).

God's love is like an artesian well. We do not have to sink a shaft hoping to strike water. We do not need a bucket or a pump to bring the water up. It flows freely. It cannot be stopped. The symbolism of water in the Bible portrays the picture of God's generous, refreshing, life-giving, ever-flowing, never-failing love. (See Ps. 1:3; Isa. 12:3; John 4:14; Rev. 22:17.)

Christ's perfect love enabled Him to love even His enemies. Why are we to do the same? Matt. 5:43-48. How is it possible to love our enemies when it seems so impossible?

We usually discriminate in our love. But that is not true of God and must not be true of those who claim to be Christians. The Christian standard of relationship to other people is that of God, who distributes His gifts bountifully without regard to worthiness or response. The main criterion is that of need. The good and the bad alike need sunshine and rain, and God supplies them impartially. Does my enemy need my witness? If so, then it is my responsibility, as a Christian, to reach out a helping hand and do what God would do if He were in my place.

Everything, animate or inanimate, constantly experiences the care of God (see Matt. 10:29-31; 6:26-31). "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (verses 15, 16). "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (verse 18).

God sent Israel into Canaan with the charge "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut. 31:6). Has God helped to transform an enemy to a friend by His love? If yes, what valuable lessons have you learned from this experience?

How has God displayed His universal love to you, even in difficult times? Now think of ways you can share God's universal love with someone you consider to be your enemy.

FURTHER STUDY: What is God's attitude toward people who are unworthy of His love? Hosea 11:8. Admah and Zebolim are two cities of the plains that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. (See Gen. 14:2; 19:25, 29.) Fire and brimstone rained down from heaven (Gen. 19:24) and the "smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (verse 28). There comes a time when God must punish evil. But it is not a pleasant task for a God of love. To learn more of God's attitude toward the sinner, read Ezekiel 18:31, 32; 33:11. Also read *The Desire of Ages*, "The Divine Shepherd," pp. 476-484.

"All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. . . . You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Sabbath and Thursday's lessons, there are figures of speech describing God's love ("love is a flame that warms" or "love is a cup that cheers," etc.). Based on what you have learned from this week's lesson and from your own experience, write two or three original figures of speech to describe God's love.
2. Define love by writing out some of its aspects. For example, love is a self-forgetting concern for the well-being of others. Then apply these definitions to God. Do they still fit? For example, how has God shown self-forgetting concern for others? For you?
3. A family in your church has learned that one of its members has terminal cancer or AIDS. Based on what you have studied this week, how do you react toward them?
4. In Matthew 5:47, after telling us to love our enemies, Jesus says, "'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect'" (verse 48, NIV). What is the standard of this perfection and why? 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

SUMMARY: Do you marvel that God could do so much for so many who are so ungrateful? Will you just now let Him lead you to this river of gracious love, where you may drink from these waters of life, never to thirst again?



A Child Shall Lead

Charlotte Ishkanian

Ten-year-old Eglute Ratkute is a quiet, intense girl who lives in Kaunas, Lithuania. When she learned about Jesus Christ, she wanted to follow Him. In doing so, she led her mother to Christ as well.

Shortly after Communism fell in Lithuania, Eglute's mother heard about some Bible lectures and decided to go. Eglute wanted to go, too, but she was just seven years old then, and her mother wondered if she could sit still through the meetings.

As they entered the lecture hall, Eglute's mother noticed that no other children were present. She worried that Eglute would be bored, but the little girl was fascinated with the slides of the ancient city of Petra and listened carefully to the lecture. After the meeting a lady invited Eglute to the special children's meetings, but Eglute wanted to attend the adult meetings.

Eglute attended all the lectures with her mother. She heard the speaker explain the importance of following Christ. When he asked who wanted to follow Jesus, Eglute raised her hand. When the speaker presented the topic of baptism, Eglute again raised her hand; she wanted to obey Jesus and be baptized.

Later at home Eglute told her mother she wanted to follow Jesus and be baptized. When Mother told her that seven years old is too young to be baptized, Eglute began to cry. Mother tried to console her, but Eglute could not be persuaded to wait.

Eglute's mother talked to the pastor about her child's wish to be baptized. He agreed that probably she was a little young, but he asked Mother, "Have you considered baptism?" Eglute's mother shook her head; she had not seriously considered it.

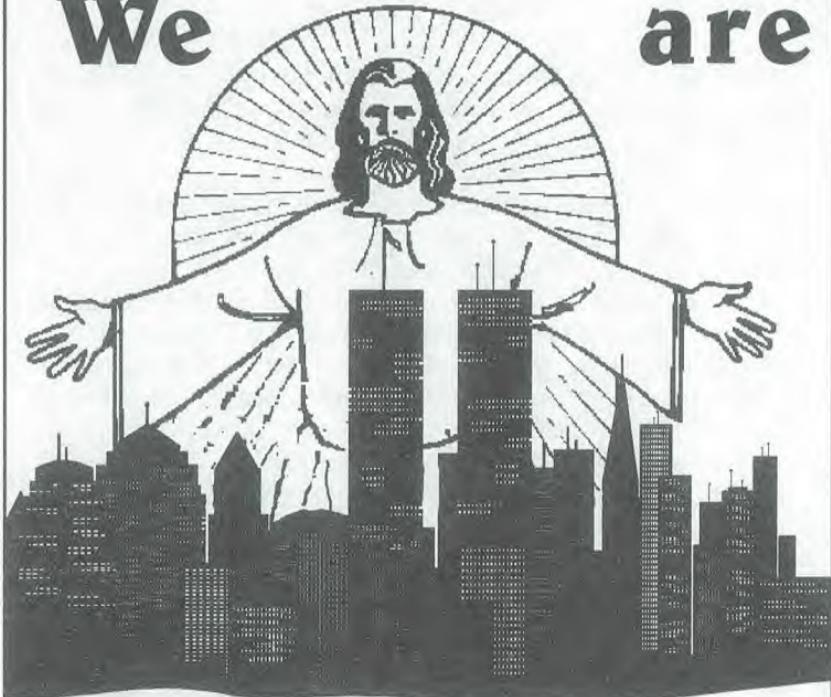
Later at home, Eglute began to talk to her mother about following Jesus. "You really should do what Jesus says," Eglute would urge her mother. Mother's heart was touched, and she decided to follow Christ in baptism. Eglute joined her mother in the baptismal class. She studied the doctrines, and a few months later mother and daughter were baptized together.

Eglute is now 10 years old. After attending adult Sabbath School for a year, she was persuaded to join the children's Sabbath School, where she happily takes part.

Eglute Ratkute (left). Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.



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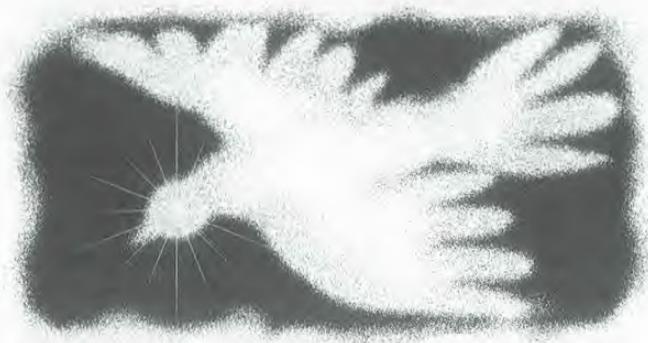
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The God of Peace



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 119:165; Matt. 10:34; Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 4:6, 7; Col. 1:19-22; Heb. 12:14.

MEMORY TEXT: “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isaiah 32:17, 18, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Our God has provided that each one who receives Christ and obeys the Spirit will experience a peace and contentment beyond imagination.

GOD MAKES NO STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT TRUE. Nor does He make promises He does not keep. What He says concerning the relationship between righteousness and peace is altogether true, and what He promises His people is altogether certain.

It is the very nature of righteousness to bring peace to those who are righteous and the end of inner strife to all who accept righteousness. It is true now in this world, and it will be true in the new earth forever.

Since the saints look forward to a new world of righteousness in harmony with God's Word, they can look forward with certainty to a heaven of peace in accord with His promises. The people of God are those who have permitted peace to replace strife here in their own hearts and lives. For this reason, the land they will inherit forever will consist of sure dwellings for all, with quiet resting places.

This week, learn about the relationship that exists between peace and righteousness, plus some of the results of allowing God's righteousness to be manifested in our lives.

PEACE FROM JESUS (Col. 1:19-22).

In what state of being do we exist before we accept Christ?
After we accept Him? Col. 1:19-22; Rom. 5:1.

Before _____

After _____

"When peace enters the human soul, it will enter by that door [the gospel]. A young woman, whose letter tells its own story, wrote: 'I haven't found Christ's way smooth. Perhaps because I had chosen so long to walk my own. Until one day quite unexpectedly I caught sight of His; and my plans for the future faded before the blaze of one great certainty: whatever the cost, I must follow Him. It meant fighting through years that I had pledged to work against Him. It meant losing one job after another, and one friend after another. But I couldn't turn back. I found in him a measure of life so strong, so joyous, and so unafraid that I had to keep on. He has come to mean not a dusty figure of ancient history, but a living, vibrant Presence; and the throbbing grandeur of the steady purposes of God.'

"There is a peace which is of this world—a spurious peace at the last. And a peace that this world cannot give. 'My peace.'"
—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, p. 341.

What is the nature of the peace that comes to the Christian through Christ? What will it do? Phil. 4:6, 7.

Jesus tells us that His sense of security, His peace, rested not on the circumstances in which He found Himself, not even on His being able to understand the meaning of those circumstances, but in absolute, unwavering confidence in His Father (John 14:27-31). He knew that the Father would permit nothing to come into His experience that was not a part of Their plan.

God instructed Aaron and his sons to bless the Israelites with the following words:

"The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace" (Num. 6:24-26, NIV).
How long has it been since you claimed this blessing?

PEACE AND HOLINESS (Heb. 12:14).

If we are to see God, how should we relate to others? Heb. 12:14.

That such a command exists suggests it is not an easy one to follow. It requires a goal we are to pursue with effort, giving no heed to obstacles.

We should note that relating thusly toward others means more than the absence of war or trouble. It means we deal justly with others, that we are no longer motivated by jealousy, greed, or hatred but by God's great love shining in our hearts.

How do we achieve such a relationship with others? Isa. 26:3.

"In his autobiography, Robert Louis Stevenson tells of a day in his childhood when he accidentally locked himself in a dark room. He could not turn the key to release himself, and he was in terror by reason of imagined enemies, until his father came to the door and called to him. Then he became quiet. In a little while the music of his father's voice made him forget his surroundings and his terrors. And he actually enjoyed the remaining time of his imprisonment before the coming of the locksmith. So we may bear terrors, difficulties, dangers—every untoward thing—as we remember that God is with us, Who speaks reassuringly.—F. S. Corbett."—J. Gilchrist Lawson, ed., *Greatest Thoughts About God* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), p. 282.

What other attribute must go along with peace, and why? Heb. 12:14. How can we "pursue" such attributes as this text indicates?

Peace is very closely connected to holiness, and holiness is closely connected with God. It is not a matter of peace at any price! The Christian must pursue the goal of peace only in ways compatible with Christian principles. Genuine peace is a matter of the heart and spirit.

Peace within produces happiness. God's people are a happy people because they are a peaceful people. Heaven will be a place of happiness because it is a place of peace. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).

Is there someone with whom you are not at peace? A family member perhaps? Or a co-worker? Pray that the music of your Father's voice will bring peace to your heart and your relationships with others.

PEACE AND THE LAW OF GOD (Ps. 119:165).

Describe the connection between the law and peace among people. Ps. 119:165.

God designed His law to preserve a close and happy fellowship between Himself and all created beings. If we violate any of its first four precepts, there will be conflict between us and God. If we violate any of the last six commandments, there will be conflict not only between us and others but also between us and God. Loving obedience to God's will brings forth His peace in our hearts.

Consider Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Neither peer pressure, mob psychology, loss of position, nor safety from physical pain and death could influence them to waver in the least from their allegiance to an unseen God!

Let us sense the "calm contentment with which they stood their ground in face of Nebuchadnezzar's ultimatum—"if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Their reply (Dan. 3:16-18) is classic: 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.' (No panic!) 'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.' (Courteous, but unanswerable—they knew their God!) 'But if not'—if no deliverance comes—"be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.' (It doesn't matter! It makes no difference! Live or die, they are content.)"—J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1975), pp. 26, 27. "Great peace have they which love thy law" (Ps. 119:165, KJV).

What is the source of fightings and wars? James 4:1-3. How does being "a friend of the world" fit into this picture? See verse 4.

War erupted in heaven because Lucifer violated the very first principle of the law in his attempt to set his throne above the throne of God. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed, Eden was deprived of peace, and humankind was robbed of the tranquility and happiness God had placed in its soul. Sin brought unrest.

Heaven will be the eternal home of all happiness and peace, because all who abide there have God's law of peace written in their hearts, and they live it out in their lives.

Have you had a difficult time viewing the Ten Commandments as a source of God's peace? Review how each command can be a source of peace in your life.

PEACE—A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Gal. 5:22, 23).

What is the only way we can have peace in our hearts? Gal. 5:22, 23; Rom. 8:6.

Although the natural heart is against God, against right, against peace, it need not remain so. God has provided a remedy. He has sent His Holy Spirit into the world to convict us of sin and give us strength to overcome. Instead of the works of flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), we are to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit. In place of hatred, discord, wrath, and strife, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace.

Sometimes peace floods over the Christian in a dramatic way. Dr. R. A. Torrey, founder of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and his wife passed through a period of severe trial when their 12-year-old daughter died. Their hearts were leaden; their grief keen. Even the weather added its gloom on the day of the funeral. Rain was their companion as the little coffin was lowered into the ground.

The next day Dr. Torrey felt a renewed surge of grief as he thought of their loneliness in the years ahead, the emptiness of their house, and the many changes their daughter's death would introduce into their lives. With tearing heartache, he looked to the Lord for help. He wrote of that moment:

"And just then this fountain, the Holy Spirit, that I had in my heart, broke forth with such power as I think I had never experienced before, and it was the most joyful moment I had ever known in my life! Oh, how wonderful is the joy of the Holy Ghost! It is an unspeakably glorious thing to have your joy not in things about you, not even in your most dearly loved friends, but to have *within* you a fountain ever springing up, springing up, always springing up three hundred and sixty-five days in every year, springing up under all circumstances unto everlasting life!"—Quoted by Ray C. Stedman, *Secrets of the Spirit* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming W. Revell Co., 1975), p. 120.

"The mighty power of the Holy Spirit works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus. . . . The peace that dwells in the soul is seen on the countenance. The words and actions express the love of the Saviour. There is no striving for the highest place. Self is renounced. The name of Jesus is written on all that is said and done."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117.

In what area of your life do you particularly need to experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His peace? Look to the Lord for help and experience the transforming power of His Holy Spirit.

PEACE AND THE SWORD (Matt. 10:34).

How can you harmonize Christ's promise of peace with His statement in Matthew 10:34?

The parallel scripture, Luke 12:51, reads: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" (RSV). The verses following—in both Gospels—clearly reveal how those who follow their Master will suffer ostracism, how those who are closest to them will become their most stubborn enemies. God and mammon, light and darkness, righteousness and sin have nothing in common. Christ's sword is His Word of truth. Those who abide in His Word are separated from those who reject His Word, as a sword cleaves the flesh.

"It was the mission of Jesus to reconcile men to God, and thus to one another. But the world at large are under the control of Satan, Christ's bitterest foe. The gospel presents to them principles of life which are wholly at variance with their habits and desires, and they rise in rebellion against it. . . . It is in this sense—because the exalted truths it brings occasion hatred and strife—that the gospel is called a sword."

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 47.

What danger does the Christian face? But what victory assures us of final peace? 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:7-21.

Danger _____

Victory _____

Christ's word about the sword had a sure, early, and sad fulfillment. His own disciples were to experience it. John the Baptist had already fallen. Stephen was soon to fall. Peter and John in prison (Acts 4:1-3), the apostles in the common jail (Acts 5:18), the scattering of the church before the persecuting Saul (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1, 2), the vexed church at the hands of Herod, and the death of James (Acts 12:1, 2), the numerous persecutions of Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-26), and the banishment of John to Patmos (Rev. 1:9)—all point to the certainty that the forces of evil will make war against the teaching of righteousness. In the last days, God's people will experience those forces again (Rev. 12:17).

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Pet. 5:10, NIV). Pray to God for the strength and steadfastness to withstand your "most stubborn enemies."

FURTHER STUDY: To learn how we can enjoy inward peace despite outward turmoil and strife, read Philippians 4:6, 7. For images of the peace we can experience as Christians, review Psalm 23. What images of peace in this psalm are the most meaningful to you, and why? Why not try writing your own psalm of peace? Also read *Christ's Object Lessons*, "To Meet the Bridegroom," pp. 419-421.

"Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which comes first, peace or the keeping of the law? Will people who keep the law possess peace because they are free of guilt? Or will people naturally keep the law when they are at peace with the One who governs them?
2. What is the relationship between righteousness and peace? (Ps. 85:10-13). What are some of the results of accepting God's righteousness?
3. Your next-door neighbor was laid off three months ago from a high-paying job he had held for several years. Now the bank is threatening to foreclose on his mortgage. One day, he asks you how you seem to stay so calm in the face of adversity. How do you respond based on what you have studied this week about the God of peace?

SUMMARY: When the angels announced the birth of Jesus, they sang of peace. God was freely providing His grace and mercy for all who would accept them, bringing forgiveness of sin through the Saviour of the world. Scripture reveals that Christians may experience peace *with* God and the peace *of* God. The first means the end of God's wrath against the sinner; the second, the tranquility that floods the mind with the assurance that one is reconciled with God. It is not enough to say that God through His Son brought peace to this earth or that peace is a euphoric substance that can be injected into the human experience. Rather, peace becomes ours when we receive Jesus Christ, for He is our peace. (See Eph. 2:11-18.)



A Priest's Long Search

J. H. Zachary

A priest stepped inside the Adventist church in Milasauti, Romania. The woman cleaning the church welcomed him then continued her work while the priest sat down and meditated. Later, when the woman returned to the sanctuary, she was surprised to hear someone playing the organ in the balcony and went to investigate. She found the priest playing an Adventist hymn from memory, singing along with all his heart.

How was it that an Orthodox priest knew this Adventist hymn? the woman wondered. But she did not ask. Before leaving the church, the priest asked directions to the Adventist church in Radauti, a city near his monastery.

A few days later Pastor Benone Lupu of the Radauti Adventist Church watched as the same priest entered the churchyard. Lupu greeted him. "May I see inside your church?" the priest asked. Pastor Lupu smiled and showed him the way.

The priest was deeply impressed by the church, especially the children's Sabbath School rooms. The two men began talking. When it grew dark, Pastor Lupu invited his guest to stay the night. The two talked until long past midnight.

The priest told Pastor Lupu that during his teens he had sometimes attended an Adventist church. But when his father learned of his visits, he beat the boy brutally and even chained him to a post so he could not go to the church. Once the man threw him into a well, intending to drown him, but the neighbors saw what had happened and rescued the teenager. Finally, to make peace with his father, the teen agreed to enter a monastery and become a priest. But he had no peace. Now, seven years later, he saw the Adventist church and stopped to visit.

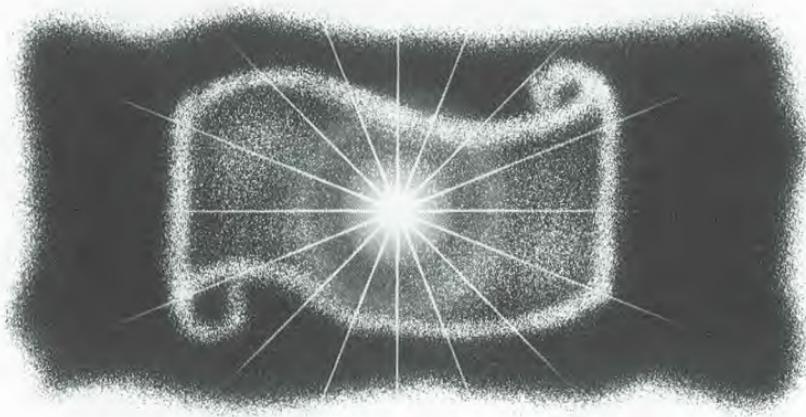
A few weeks later, while gathering alms from the people to help finance the monastery, this priest saw another Adventist church. He decided to attend church that Sabbath. He did not want to go in his clerical robes, so he used some of the alms he had collected to buy civilian clothes. He packed his robes in a box and sent them to the monastery with a note. "I have found Jesus in the Adventist church. Please forgive me, Father, for leaving you."

This former priest found Christ and the peace, joy, and fellowship he needed in the Adventist church. Would he have found them in your church?

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Wonderful, Counselor



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Prov. 3:1, 2; Eccl. 12:13; Isa. 40:13, 14; Jer. 31:3; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:7; Rev. 3:18.

MEMORY TEXT: "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Because of His love for His children, God offers beneficial counsel to all who look to Him.

GOD AS COUNSELOR IS THE THEME OF THIS WEEK'S LESSON. Good counsel is always important, whether from another person or from God. Counsel from God is always good. In this world, we owe much of our happiness and success to counsel that comes from others. Misery and mistakes are all too frequently the result of our failure to accept counsel, both human and divine. We always hurt ourselves when we neglect to heed counsel from God.

The Word of God consists largely of counsel the Lord has given. It is always the best counsel we can receive, because it is designed to give us happiness, prosperity, and peace here and an eternity of bliss in the world beyond. Only to a slight extent have we come to recognize the wisdom and worth of the heavenly counsel found in the Word of God. Giving heed to injunctions will expand our intellect, give health to our body, and purify our soul.

COUNSEL OF WISDOM (Isa. 40:13, 14).

What is unique about God's wisdom and knowledge?

With whom could the Creator of the world, the One infinite in power, wisdom, and knowledge, have taken counsel when He brought the world into being? He alone knows and understands all. Only He can teach all others but has no one who can instruct Him. Only He can give unerring counsel to all but has none to direct His ways.

What contrast does Solomon make between the person who seeks counsel and the person who does not? Prov. 12:15.

The person who seeks counsel is _____

The person who does not seek counsel is a _____

Accepting God's counsel of wisdom and counsel of love is like taking God by the hand. Without these counsels, we are no different from the wicked, who grope along in deep darkness, knowing not what they are stumbling over.

"I bless the Lord who gives me counsel," wrote the psalmist; then, addressing his Benefactor: "Thou dost show me the path of life" (Ps. 16:7, 11, RSV). There is One who knows the way, and we may safely trust our footsteps to Him.

How does the psalmist describe people who follow God's counsel? Ps. 25:9.

God being the embodiment of wisdom, all His counsel is wise. And God being the embodiment of love, all His counsel is good. It is wisdom for us to listen to counsel of wisdom. He might have kept His wisdom to Himself. But had He done so, He would not have been God, for love called for the sharing of His wisdom and counsel with those in need.

"Let God teach you His way. Inquire of Him daily to know His will. He will give unerring counsel to all who seek Him with a sincere heart." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 276.

What area of your life are you having problems with? Your marriage? Your relationship with a friend or co-worker? Negative emotions such as anger, pride, or jealousy? What helpful counsel does the Bible give concerning this area? How can this counsel improve your life?

COUNSEL OF LOVE (Jer. 31:3).

How does God draw us to Himself, and what does this reveal to us about what He is like? Jer. 31:3.

True love does not forget. It always seeks to help, never to hurt. One of the best ways in which love can show itself is by giving counsel. Gifts of counsel are often of greater value than any other gifts. They cannot be measured in terms of material value, although at times they are of the highest material value. Heavenly counsel provides us with the greatest values we can obtain in life.

Counsel from people is not always prompted by love and is not always wise. People may give counsel to others that they would not want for themselves. Counsel from people may be for the purpose of benefiting the giver rather than the receiver.

But God's counsel is always prompted by love and is always helpful and wise. Accepted, God's counsel may seem to hurt at the time, but its fruitage is always good.

Those whom God loves, He rebukes and disciplines (Rev. 3:19). Jesus at times administered counsel in terms of stern rebuke. But when He did, it was prompted by love. "He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 12.

As persons and situations differ, so counsel varies. What is good counsel for one may prove to be poor counsel for others. When people follow counsel intended for others in entirely different circumstances, the results they reap may be ill instead of good. But God must not be blamed for people's lack of judgment or discernment.

What counsel did Jesus give to a rich young ruler? Matt. 19:21.

"God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 46.

Why are we sometimes reluctant to accept good counsel? If you had the choice of receiving money or good counsel, which would you choose, and why?

COUNSEL TO A MINISTER (2 Tim. 1:2; 2:7).

What counsel did Paul give Timothy? 1 Tim. 1:2; 2:7; 4:12, 15, 16.

Although Paul's words were directed to Timothy, they are of value to all who aspire to be God's helping hand.

Timothy was a young minister with his future before him. In his work, he might be merely mediocre. He might be a failure. Or he might be an outstanding success. Paul loved Timothy as his own son and gave him the best counsel he could so he might be successful.

"This epistle was written to Timothy while he was pastor of the Ephesian church, and is composed primarily of instructions addressed to him as a leader of the church. . . . In it Paul admonishes Timothy to conduct himself in a manner pleasing to God and helpful to the flock over which God has placed him, and delivers to him a solemn charge to preach the Word and to defend its teachings."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 285.

"Paul urged Timothy to meditate upon those things that are pure and excellent, that his profiting might appear unto all. The same counsel is greatly needed by men of the present age. I urge upon our workers the necessity of purity in every thought, every act. We have an individual accountability to God, an individual work which no one else can do for us. It is to strive to make the world better. While we should cultivate sociability, let it not be merely for amusement but for a higher purpose.

"Is there not enough taking place around us to show the need for this caution? Everywhere are seen wrecks of humanity, broken-down family altars, ruined homes."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 125.

What truth did Paul note to encourage Timothy to be fearless? 2 Tim. 1:7, 8.

When one is on the side of right, on the side of God, there is no reason to fear. Note how Jesus was unafraid in the storm and before the two demoniacs. (See Matt. 8:23-34.)

"The inference may be drawn from this epistle that Timothy was a man of mild temperament and not so aggressive as Paul might have wished. Accordingly the apostle encourages his younger companion in the ministry to more vigorous leadership."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 285.

Read 2 Timothy 2:1, 2, 16, 19, 22-25; 3:14, 15; 4:2, 5; and indicate the ways in which this counsel is relevant to you today.

HEAVEN'S COUNSEL FOR ALL (Eccles. 12:13).

Explain why it is important to fear God. Eccles. 12:13. Why is our first duty to God and not ourselves?

No better counsel can be given than to make first things first. True religion requires an ordering of priorities. Eternity is at stake. If we lose heaven, we lose everything. If we do not find God in this world and fail to live in accord with His ways, we not only lose the finest and best that this life can offer but eternal life, as well.

What counsel do we read in Matthew 6:25-33 regarding our daily needs?

"God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love. . . .

"Lead the children to see in every pleasant and beautiful thing an expression of God's love for them. Recommend your religion to them by its pleasantness."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 97.

The present world of sin is doomed to pay the wages of sin, which is destruction. Evil people are simply destroying themselves and the world in which they live.

When we forget God and His commandments, we forget the only force that can hold the world together, the only means by which peace, happiness, and well-being can be preserved and life itself maintained.

We need to learn that there is a God in heaven and that we owe allegiance to Him—an allegiance we can neglect only at the expense of our present well-being and eternal happiness. When we do neglect our allegiance to the Lord, we neglect ourselves and others and the world in which we live. The price for such negligence is a life on earth without God's goodness and love and the loss of life in heaven.

What is Micah's summary of God's requirements? Mic. 6:8.

Is there a person you know who walks humbly with God and treats others with mercy (kindness) and justice? How has that person made a difference in your life? Pray for God to help you meet these requirements.

COUNSEL FOR LAST-DAY PEOPLE (Rev. 3:18).

What special counsel does Revelation 3:18 give to the Laodicean church?

We do not need to be rich in this world's goods. But we do need to have spiritual riches. The symbolism of gold, white raiment, and eye salve may be interpreted as follows: gold—faith that works by love; white raiment—Christ's righteousness; eye salve—the ability, through the Spirit of God, to distinguish between truth and error.

Why is it necessary for us to be on guard at all times? Matt. 25:13.

God has given many details concerning the kind of people the saints should be in order to be ready for His coming. Some characteristics are as follows:

Sober (1 Thess. 5:6). The daytime is a time to work, not to sleep. (See John 9:4.)

Diligent (2 Pet. 1:10, 11). Although we are called and chosen, we must never cease to be careful lest we fall.

Obedient (Rev. 22:14). An alternate reading gives "wash their robes." We need to have the robe of Christ's righteousness to enter the kingdom.

Confident (Heb. 10:35). There may be periods of waiting and uncertainty. But our faith must remain firm.

Patient (Heb. 10:36, 37). Christ's coming is as certain as day following night. Wait for it!

Overcoming (Rev. 2:7). The Christian is a faithful warrior for Christ. Victory is assured.

Now look up the following texts to find others:

1 Pet. 5:8 _____

2 Pet. 3:11, 14 _____

1 John 3:3 _____

Rev. 21:27 _____

Rev. 3:14 _____

Why is it more difficult, or less so, to be holy in the last days than in earlier times? In what practical ways can God help you to grow in holiness?

FURTHER STUDY: To learn about the blessing of heeding God's counsel, read Proverbs 3 and Deuteronomy 28. Also read *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 147-152.

"Had the Israelites obeyed the instruction they received, and profited by their advantages, they would have been the world's object-lesson of health and prosperity. If as a people they had lived according to God's plan, they would have been preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations. Above any other people they would have possessed physical strength and vigor of intellect. They would have been the mightiest nation on the earth."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 283.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are the present-day sources of divine counsel and guidance? How do these sources relate to each other?
2. The principal source of God's counsel is the Bible (Ps. 119:105). In what areas of life is the Bible an especially important counselor?
3. Why should God's remnant people search both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy writings? Why is there need for additional counsel in the last days?
4. If you were to give your pastor counsel for the carrying out of the work in your congregation, what would that counsel be?
5. What do submission, surrender, and humility have to do with the effectiveness of divine counsel to leaders and church members?

SUMMARY: God is not silent. He speaks. What He says benefits His creation. Although Adam and Eve walked away from Him in disobedience and rebellion, God did not remain silent. He has kept in touch.

The extent to which our wonderful God has kept in touch is truly amazing. He might have simply revealed His keen disappointment over our first parents' lack of trust. But He did more. He came calling for them in the Garden. He might have simply told them how He was going to put an end to Satan's escapades. But He did more. He promised the guilty pair full restoration. He might have simply told them to look for a better tomorrow. But He did more. He helped them and their descendants live good lives today. God has always been interested in the total welfare of His people. He is a wonderful Counselor.



God's Persistent Call, Part 1

Mihalet Dogaborh

Josef had recently finished school and started a new job in Budapest, Hungary. With time on his hands, he began looking for new friends and interesting things to do. He became involved with some young people who worshiped Satan. They taught him how to call up demons, and he soon won their respect, for he seemed to have great psychic power.

The young people spent their time smoking marijuana, drinking, and listening to hard rock music. Josef bought a motorcycle so he could ride with his friends. But a serious accident nearly cost him his life when a piece of flying debris cut a long gash in his neck, and he nearly bled to death. The doctor who cared for him told him he was lucky to be alive. "You should have died beside the road," he told Josef solemnly. But Josef paid little attention. He did not believe in God.

Just weeks after his near-fatal accident, Josef was again riding his motorcycle. Then one day as he sped down a road, he lost control and hit a pole, tearing his motorcycle apart and throwing him into a ditch. But he climbed out of the ditch with barely a scratch. His friends began calling him Lucky, but Josef began to think that maybe something—or Someone—had saved his life. But why? Was God trying to tell him something?

Josef knew nothing about religion; he felt he needed to learn if God exists and what God wanted from him. He had no idea which church to attend, so he looked up a friend who was a Christian. Josef talked to him about religion and began attending church and studying the Bible with him.

The devil was not willing to let Josef go without a struggle. One night Josef awoke feeling as though a heavy weight had been laid across his chest. He tried to get out of bed, but he could not move. It was as if a mighty hand was holding him down. The experience frightened him, and when he told his girlfriend, she became frightened too. "You must pray to God—and keep studying the Bible!" she urged. She found an enrollment card for a Bible correspondence course and gave it to Josef. He sent for the course and began studying it.

(continued next week)

Mihalet Dogaborh is a pastor in Hungary.

The Lamb of God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exod. 34:5-7; Isa. 53:5, 6; Rom. 3:28, 5:1; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Thess. 5:23.

MEMORY TEXT: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: When confronted with Adam and Eve's rebellion, God provided a means of reconciliation that proves His love for each sinner even though He abhors sin.

JESUS CAME TO EARTH AS A SINLESS LAMB to take on Himself the guilt of a sinful world. He came knowing that He would die but knowing also that we would live. Today heaven is ours because Jesus was willing to give up heaven. I am a child of God because Jesus became the Son of man.

“Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life’s peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

To test the acoustics in Agricultural Hall, London, Charles Spurgeon shouted into the empty auditorium, “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” A worker in the ceiling heard, knelt before God, and received salvation. Won’t you kneel before God this week and receive salvation anew?

GOD'S THOUGHTS TOWARD SINNERS (John 1:29).

What does God want to do for us? John 1:29.

Leviticus 4 deals with the case of a person who had sinned “through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done” (verse 2). Four categories of sinners are mentioned: priest, congregation, ruler, and common person. Those who had a greater knowledge of the law were required to bring a more expensive sacrifice, but the poor man was not left out.

“A lamb was even less expensive than a goat, and for this reason it was expected that a poor man would bring a lamb. The lamb was therefore considered the poor man’s offering. It is significant that Christ is repeatedly spoken of as the Lamb of God. He is the poor man’s sacrifice.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 732.

A lamb also was significant in a Hebrew’s mind as an animal slain for the Passover. This commemorated Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt and also pointed forward to their deliverance from the slavery of sin through the sacrificial death of the Messiah to come.

What thoughts must have raced through the minds of the congregation at the Jordan River when John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “the Lamb of God”! Although no one knew it, there before them stood the very Man who some three years later would perish as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Did any truly understand?

What thoughts must have raced through Jesus’ mind as He heard those words! He knew that all those prophetic words implied a Gethsemane, a Calvary. He was to be the sin offering for a lost humanity.

Explain how God views sinners. Ps. 103:8-14; Jer. 29:11.

God looks on us, not as we are, but as we should be, might be, and will be, when redeemed from sin and rescued from its deadly grip.

“Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! . . . We must not think of God only as a judge ready to pronounce sentence against us. He hates sin; but from love to sinners He gave Himself, in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 633.

What thoughts race through your mind as you hear the call “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”? Before you stands the Son of God!

GOD'S MERCY TOWARD SINNERS (Exod. 34:5-7).

How did God reveal Himself to Moses? Exod. 34:6, 7.

God's justice demands that the transgressor pay the penalty of transgression. Death is that penalty. So if justice alone were to prevail, all of us would die, for all of us have sinned. God, however, is merciful. His mercy makes it possible for the condemned sinner to live. God, in Jesus, paid the penalty for all who repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Substitute. God's mercy is great. But His justice is real. If we refuse to accept the provisions made for our salvation, then we will have to face full justice.

What truth points out the mercy of God? Rom. 5:8.

Let us suppose that the richest and most generous person on earth set up a trust fund with the simple provision that any person who wrote and asked could have \$10,000. Would that multibillionnaire watch to see how many took advantage of the offer? Would that person be interested in knowing why some had not gotten the word and why, when they had heard, they did nothing about it?

God the Father and God the Son watch eagerly to see who will accept Their gift of mercy. Some have never gotten the word. Some who have heard pay little attention. As Satan tries to snatch the gift away from many, God lovingly, anxiously presses His gift upon those who will accept it. To coerce them to do what is right would be to play into the hands of Satan, who claims that God forces obedience. God's loving approach is to urge sinners to turn from their evil ways, allowing them to be attracted to Him and to respond in turn by love. This kind of love is hard for us to understand. We have never seen anything like it. So God has to reassure us that He is not out to destroy us. He said through Jeremiah: "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11, RSV).

"Theme for the most profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

Take a few moments to meditate on "the matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him!" As you do so, put yourself in the picture. You are part of that world. How much do you love Him? And how will you express that love?

HEAVEN'S SACRIFICE FOR SINNERS (Phil. 2:5-8).

Through what twofold sacrifice did God reveal His love for us?
Phil. 2:5-8.

"Now our whole souls are filled with one thought—the condescension of God. . . . As we assign no limit to the height of his glory, we shall assign none to the depths of his grace. . . . So far from taking offence at the inferiority of the position which he assumed, the very lowliness of his incarnation and the very degradation of the death he died, will kindle in us a brighter and more burning gratitude, when we remember that though rich it was for our sakes he became poor; and that for us, his wayward and wandering sheep, the chief Shepherd offered up himself as the Lamb of God, laying down his life of his own accord, and taking it up again to die no more."—Edward H. Bickersteth, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1959), p. 92.

Why do you think God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son?
Gen. 22:1-13. What did Jesus say about this experience that caused some people to be angry? John 8:56-58.

Some have been called upon to make the sacrifice of a son or daughter to die for their country. It is not an easy experience. Some parents would rather die and have their children live. But the supreme sacrifice becomes the measure of supreme love and devotion.

For the Son "this was a voluntary sacrifice. Jesus might have remained at the Father's side. He might have retained the glory of heaven and the homage of the angels. But He chose to give back the scepter into the Father's hands, and to step down from the throne of the universe, that He might bring light to the benighted, and life to the perishing."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 22, 23.

Before Jesus came to earth, He knew what suffering, humiliation, and shame it would bring. He knew that He would be despised and rejected; insulted, spat upon, treated as the vilest of criminals, and die upon the cross. But He was willing to pay the price.

The sacrifice made by Christ is likened to that of an innocent lamb placed upon an altar. Until Christ came in person to offer Himself upon the cross, the system of sacrifices kept ever before the repentant sinners the high price their salvation would cost. What a price it was: the very life of God!

Are you willing to respond to God in the same way He responds to you? What are you willing to sacrifice for Him?

OUR SINS ON THE LAMB OF GOD (Isa. 53:5, 6).

How are we healed of the gaping wound caused by our sins?
Isa. 53:5, 6.

"All that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 755, 756.

List the results of Christ's sacrifice. 1 Pet. 2:24. Consider the relationship between dying to sin and living for righteousness in the context of Christ's great sacrifice for us.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

While dying on the cross, Christ agonized "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, NIV). The sins of the ages resting on Christ caused separation between Him and His Father, and He died for sin.

"The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

At times, we all feel forsaken by God. How does the cry of Christ recorded in Matthew 27:46 help you to work through those times? Remember that He was forsaken for your sake that you may never be forsaken for His sake.

THE GOD WHO JUSTIFIES (Rom. 3:28; 5:1).

What must we have to be justified? Rom. 3:28; 5:1.

Sinners are not at peace with God but at enmity. Sin fights against God, rebels against conformity to His law and His will. Death is the penalty for sin. Christ came into the world, however, to rescue us from that death penalty and to restore us to peace with God. He offers love for enmity, pardon for condemnation, reconciliation for alienation.

All this is what is meant by justification. God accepts us not because of what we have done for God but because of what God has done for us in Christ. Justification is accomplished the moment we accept salvation by faith in Christ. It changes our standing before the court of heaven. Our sins are pardoned. We are accepted as members of the heavenly family, in peaceful and happy relationship with God.

“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17, KJV). Justification is the opposite of condemnation. Christ’s purpose was to justify, not condemn.

We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24), not “by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16). Sinners are justified by Christ immediately when they accept Him by faith—there is no waiting until sainthood has been achieved.

“We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

“More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

Put your name in the blank that appears in the verse below:

“Being justified by faith, _____ [has] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

What does “peace with God” mean to you? What experience can you share to describe it?

FURTHER STUDY: Not only is our God a God who justifies; He sanctifies, as well. What do the following verses teach us about this process? Acts 26:18; John 17:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 5:23; Ezek. 11:18-20; Gal. 5:16-25. Also read *Steps to Christ*, "Growing Up Into Christ," pp. 67-75.

Justified means I am cleansed from the guilt of sin, and I walk free from its penalty; *sanctified* means I am strengthened by the Holy Spirit to resist the power of sin.

The effect of sin is to destroy the image of God in us. The effect of the gospel is to restore us to God's image. The purposes of Christ in coming to the world were to reveal God's character to us, to die for our sins, and to make it possible by His grace that His character be reproduced in us. If we are to live eternally in a holy heaven with a holy God, we must accept and manifest His gift of holiness. (See Heb. 12:14.) The transformation from sinfulness to holiness flows from our Saviour's righteousness. It is the holy law of God being written on the hearts of the saved.

"One day alone is ours, and during this day we are to live for God, beautify our characters by faith in the righteousness of Christ. This one day we are to place in the hands of Christ in solemn service, in all our purposes and plans to be guided by Him. This one day we are to do unto others exactly as we wish them to do unto us. We are to be ready to speak kind words from hearts full of sympathy and love. We are to manifest patience, revealing to the world what it means to be a practical doer of the words of Christ, ever remembering that our life is bound up with the life of Him who died for us. Christ and the child of humanity become one, so that the Spirit and character of Christ are represented in His followers day by day and hour by hour. *By faith Christ becomes unto the believer righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" —Ellen G. White, "By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them," *Signs of the Times*, July 11, 1892; italics supplied.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Christ fully qualified to be our Sin-bearer?

2. Which was a harder experience to bear, the Father giving the Son, or the Son offering Himself for our salvation? Why?

SUMMARY: May this consecration prayer be your heart's desire:

O Lamb of God, You freely chose to take away the sins of the world. I accept Your perfect sacrifice as a full atonement for all my sins. I plead Your abiding presence for power to obey. You are my strength, my everlasting helper. Our Father has made You my righteousness and wisdom, my sanctification and redemption. Amen.



God's Persistent Love, Part 2

Mihály Dogaborh

While he was a member of a group that worshiped Satan, Josef was involved in two serious motorcycle accidents. His miraculous escape from death forced him to wonder if God was trying to tell him something. But the devil was not willing to let go and tried to frighten Josef into giving up his search for God. But the devil's plan only drove Josef to seek God more intensely.

Josef spent his free time reading his Bible and studying the Bible correspondence course he had sent for. One day he found the passage in Exodus that commanded God's people to remember the Sabbath day. He wondered, *How is it that the Bible commands God's people to keep the Sabbath, but Christians worship on Sunday?*

When he found no one who had an answer, he asked God to send him the answer. A few days later he received the next lesson in the Bible study course. It was on the Sabbath. He recognized this lesson was God's answer to his prayer, and he decided he would keep the Sabbath holy—even if he had to keep it alone.

Then he received the Bible lesson that spoke of Jesus' soon return. This was another surprise for him. Josef wanted to talk to someone who could help him understand these new teachings. He wrote a letter to the Bible correspondence school, asking if they knew someone in his area who could answer his questions.

A pastor telephoned Josef and arranged to meet him at the train station. Josef waited at the appointed spot, but no one came. Finally a man walked up to him and asked, "Are you Josef?" Josef nodded. The pastor explained that Josef did not look the way the pastor had pictured him in his mind, so he did not recognize the young man. Josef smiled as he thought of his long hair, shaggy beard, and army pants.

Josef told the pastor of his experiences with Satan, the motorcycle accidents, and his subsequent search for God. The pastor arranged to begin personal Bible studies that would answer Josef's questions about God. Josef was an eager student and the pastor a patient teacher. Josef thanks God for saving him from death while riding his motorcycle; but even more, for saving him from eternal death at the hands of Satan and giving him a new life, new hope, and the promise of an eternity with Christ.

Mihály Dogaborh is a pastor in Hungary. Josef now lives in Goreab, a small town in Hungary.

My Father and My God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 7:6-8; Ps. 34:8-10; 91:2; 145:18; Mal. 3:16, 17; Rom. 8:38, 39.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation’” (Psalm 89:26, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The God of all creation awaits our invitation for Him to be our dearest Friend and closest Companion, so that we may be His special people.

GOD WAS VERY REAL TO DAVID. He knew from personal experience that the Lord guided the meek and taught them His ways (Ps. 25:9). He had learned that God gave strength to His people and blessed them with peace (Ps. 29:11). He had the assurance that the Lord encamped about those who feared Him and that He delivered them (Ps. 34:7). To David that person was a fool who said, “There is no God” (Ps. 53:1).

Because the lovingkindness of God was better than life to David, he praised God with joyful lips. Because the Lord had been his help, David rejoiced in the shadow of the heavenly wings (Ps. 63:3-7).

The purpose of the lesson this week is to see how the God of heaven is the personal God of His children on earth. From the time of Adam to the present, there have always been people who knew God as their Saviour from sin, their Deliverer from evil, and their Guide and Companion in daily life. There is nothing more important in life than to become acquainted with God as a personal Friend. As you study this lesson, ask yourself, How personal is God to me?

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE (Mal. 3:16, 17).

List at least three ways the Lord relates to those who love Him.
Mal. 3:16, 17.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The first few lessons this quarter revealed the great and magnificent qualities of God. Succeeding lessons have introduced His more endearing qualities—His interest in us, His redeeming love, and His thoughts of peace. This week we will see this divine Being through the eyes of Bible writers who were particularly conscious of Him as a personal Friend. We will invite Him into our hearts and homes and share with Him our loftiest joys, as well as our most deeply rooted sorrows. We will have the opportunity to begin a lasting friendship (if we have not formed one already) with the One who created us and understands us perfectly.

Because of how God relates to us, how should we relate to one another? Heb. 10:24, 25.

If any people on earth deserve to associate themselves closely together in meaningful fellowship, it is the saints of God. They did so in Old Testament times and also after the Saviour came to earth. God watches over them in this fellowship and blesses them in it.

But the saints are not to fix their eyes on themselves and their own affairs. They are to look at the needs of those around them and encourage everyone to be more loving and more active in good deeds. Saints are not to be concerned only with personal salvation but also with the salvation of others. This means faithful attendance at meetings where they can encourage one another and give public testimony to their unity and common faith. This becomes more important in Christian life as the Second Advent approaches.

Because Janene is shy, she seldom speaks to people first. When she attended church, she grew tired of people speaking only to her husband and not her. So she quit attending. What are some other reasons people might not attend these services? What can you do to improve things for them? Think of someone you have not seen in church for quite a while. Write them a friendly note or give them a cheery call to tell them you have missed them.

GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL, PART ONE (Deut. 7:6-8).**Why and for what purpose did God choose Israel? Deut. 7:6-8.**

Why _____

For what purpose _____

What qualities of Abraham showed him to be one of God's people? Gen. 12:1-4, 7, 8; 14:20; 15:6; 18:17-19.

In Isaiah 41:8, God speaks of Abraham as "my friend." How did this friendship come to be? It appears that God made the first move. He came to Abraham (Gen. 12:1) and commanded him to move out of Ur and into a "land that I will show you" (RSV). The story suggests that God and Abraham entered into a gentleman's agreement for the purpose of establishing a great nation that would bring blessing to the whole world. Abraham's side of the friendship occasionally left much to be desired. He sometimes acted out of fear rather than principle. Yet his Friend did not forsake him.

To become a friend of God requires a response to His friendship. That involves accepting His protection, His wisdom, His guidance, and His friendship. "[God] watches over us with more tenderness than does a mother over an afflicted child. . . . God is a friend in perplexity and affliction, a protector in distress, a preserver in the thousand dangers that are unseen to us."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 16.

The psalmist spoke of meditating on the law of the Lord and on His works. God was his delight. His mind frequently turned to the goodness of his Maker and to the marvelous provisions He has made for the happiness of all His creatures. This kind of thought life leads to trust. Can there be a meaningful friendship without trust? To lift one's thoughts to heaven, to appreciate the tiny blessings of life as well as the dramatic providences, to contemplate the majesty of forests and mountains, to see beauty in a leaf—these are some of the ways we draw near to God. The Bible directs us toward our Creator and enhances our ability to see God at work. Reading the sacred pages in personal devotion brings us close to our Friend. The promise then is ours: "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8, RSV).

In what ways does God give us assurance that He will help us as His people? Isa. 41:8-10; 43:5-7, 10. What impact does such assurance have on your life today? In what ways does such a life of assurance in God affect our witness to our friends, neighbors, and colleagues who are experiencing heartache and trials?

GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL, PART TWO (Ps. 91:2).

Describe the psalmist's personal relationship to God. Ps. 91:2.

"Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and to His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 248, 249.

"If we have fellowship with Him, we must ever set the Lord before us, and treat Him as an honored Friend, giving Him the first place in our affections."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 27.

What words or phrases in the following passages indicate a personal relationship with God?

Job 19:25-27 _____

Luke 1:28 _____

2 Tim. 4:8 _____

What words or phrases in the following texts indicate we can all have a personal relationship with God?

Rev. 3:20-22 _____

John 1:9 _____

Rom. 1:16 _____

Explain the three things that should happen to a person when she or he personally encounters God. Isa. 6:1-13.

All the wonderful things God has done for others He desires and has promised to do for each one of us. What we must do is allow the eyes of our spiritual vision to be opened and to respond to God when He addresses us.

What is the secret of experiencing the reality of God's presence? Jer. 29:13. What are the things that keep you from enjoying a personal experience with God? What can you do about them, with God's help?

THE NEARNESS OF GOD (Ps. 145:18).

If Christians view God as a chief accountant, they will not want Him too near. The account book, with its debits and credits, may have too exact a record. It would be better if God were not too close. However, if Christians view God as their Friend and themselves as His special possessions, the thought of God's presence will bring vigor and delight to each hour.

Describe the people who find that God is near to them.

The expression "to call upon" the Lord means to worship Him, to recognize His strength and our dependence. We are always in need of help. To whom shall we turn in our need? We may be tempted to turn to other people or even to one who holds a high station in life. But the psalmist warns against this. (See Ps. 118:8, 9.) There is only One to whom we can turn to supply our deepest needs.

Our challenge is that our worship shall be "in truth"—in sincerity and singleness of heart. We must never divide our loyalty or fail in trust and confidence. Sometimes we are tempted to put our trust in a bank balance, in friends, in our skill, or cleverness. It seems easier to have confidence in what we can see and feel rather than in God who is invisible and apparently intangible. But a faith that is the "evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1) must motivate us in all our dealings with God. Then we can be sure He will never let us down as we let Him have His way in our lives.

Under what circumstance did Jesus say He and the Father would make Their abode with us? John 14:23.

"Our heart the home of God! The door into which Christ turns with the restful feeling that he is in his own place, where love will meet him and surround him, where he is at home. So much do these broken bits of faith and affection which we are half ashamed to offer him mean to our Lord. For it is still true that he comes unto his own, and they receive him not. . . .

"And if remembering our many failures and disloyalties, our hearts misgive us, Zacchaeus also had a sorry record. Yet Christ asked for his hospitality. **Our home**, says Christ, speaking of himself and God. **Our Home!**"—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, pp. 710, 711.

What is the difference between feeling the nearness of God and having faith in His nearness? When have you experienced both?

THE GOODNESS OF GOD (Ps. 34:8-10).

What invitation does God extend to us? Ps. 34:8-10.

The goodness of God is revealed in that He provides us with everything we really need. We are to *experience* God's abundant provision. Nothing is more convincing than experience—being in that situation where only God can be the source of our supplies. We always are afraid of being without our daily needs. But when circumstances take away every visible means of support and we find that God has supplied every need, then we are tasting how good God is. Happy is that person whose trust in God has not been in vain.

The imagery of the lion going hungry is very striking. Can the king of beasts with all its strength go hungry? Yes, it can, says the psalmist. But those who trust in God will never find themselves without necessities. Their lot is better than that of the most naturally privileged.

In view of God's goodness, how should we respond? Ps. 107:8, 9; 105:1, 2.

"Appreciate the *goodness* of God. Count your blessings. Learn not to take natural benefits, endowments, and pleasures for granted; learn to thank God for them all. Do not slight the Bible, or the gospel of Jesus Christ, by an attitude of casualness towards either. . . . Ask yourself the psalmist's question—'What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?' Seek grace to give his answer—'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. . . . O LORD, truly I am thy servant. . . . I will pay my vows unto the LORD now' (Psalm 116:12)."—*Knowing God*, p. 150.

We also will respond to God's goodness by becoming a channel of blessing to the world. One of God's laws of giving and receiving is that those who share with others the blessings they have received soon receive added blessings from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. If the church as a body would bend its energies to bringing God's limitless blessings to the world, its own state would be greatly elevated and its progress toward the kingdom markedly advanced.

"Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 79.

Think of a time when things were going badly for you. What evidence existed even then of God's goodness? How did He still supply everything you needed?

FURTHER STUDY: This week we have learned about God's relationship with His people, God's relationship with the individual, God's nearness, and His goodness. To learn about His invincible love for us, read Romans 8:38, 39 and Matthew 23:37. What comparison does Paul make between human love and God's love in Romans 5:6-8? What illustration does Isaiah 49:15 use to indicate that God cannot forget His people? Also read "God's Love for Man," pp. 9-15, in *Steps to Christ*.

"When through poverty a Hebrew had been forced to part with his patrimony [inheritance], and to sell himself as a bondservant, the duty of redeeming him and his inheritance fell to the one who was nearest of kin. See Lev. 25:25, 47-49; Ruth 2:20. So the work of redeeming us and our inheritance, lost through sin, fell upon Him who is 'near of kin' unto us. It was to redeem us that He became our kinsman. Closer than father, mother, brother, friend, or lover is the Lord our Saviour. 'Fear not,' He says, 'for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.' . . .

"Christ loves the heavenly beings that surround His throne; but what shall account for the great love wherewith He has loved us? We cannot understand it, but we can know it true in our own experience. And if we do hold the relation of kinship to Him, with what tenderness should we regard those who are brethren and sisters of our Lord!"
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What good for the church and the world may come from the interaction of saints? Think of specific examples.
2. What attitude is favorable for staying in close touch with God?
3. Explain what it means to practice the presence of God. How do you practice the presence of God in your life?
4. How would you explain to a curious friend what God means to you? David said God was the light of his pathway and the strength of his life (Ps. 27:1; also see Ps. 18:2). Fill in the blanks below to explain what God is to you:

God is the _____
of my _____

SUMMARY: In light of God's magnificent qualities, we are totally unworthy. Yet this great God invites us to experience personally His presence, love, and goodness. If we will rely upon Him in patience, He will bring us through distressing experiences as more than conquerors.



The Jesus Cow

As told by Deep Thapa

The majestic Himalayas towered brilliantly in the blue sky outside the shop window. But the tailor inside hardly noticed. His skillful fingers guided needle and thread through cloth as he listened to the message coming from his shortwave radio. Through the speaker's words, a seed of hope had been planted that began to grow in his heart, a hope that would change his life. The program was the *Voice of Hope*, heard over Adventist World Radio.

Some weeks later a friend came to the tailor's shop and noticed a new sign above the door. "What does it mean, 'The Shop of the Jesus Tailor'? What is Jesus?" he asked.

The tailor told him the wonderful news he was learning on the radio, that Jesus Christ came to earth, lived, died, and was resurrected from the dead. And all who believe in Him do not have to worry about the future. "Since Jesus has done all that for me, I put His name on my shop sign."

The tailor's friend wanted to know more, so the two men began to study the Bible together. One day the friend said, "I am almost convinced that this Jesus is God, but I want to see if prayer really works." He thought for a while then posed a test. "Your cow does not give milk." The tailor nodded. "If you ask Jesus to make that cow give milk, and if she does give milk, then I will be convinced!" The tailor agreed. After all, if Jesus had the power to save him, surely He could make his cow give milk.

After his friend left, the tailor went to the shed, laid his hands on the cow, and began to pray. Then he wondered, *Would God think this was a silly request, not worthy of His attention?* He dismissed the thought, finished his prayer, and returned to work.

A little later he returned to the cow shed. He stood looking at his cow for a minute, then took a pail, pulled up a stool, and began to milk his cow. Milk flowed in a steady stream.

The tailor jumped up and ran to get his friend. "You must come!" he said. "Come, see for yourself!" The two men returned to the cow shed, and the tailor's friend watched in wonder as his friend milked his cow.

High on the slopes of the Himalayas stands the Shop of the Jesus Tailor. And behind the shop lives the Jesus cow, a testimony to one man's faith in the God who listens to prayers.

Pray that the message of salvation will spread throughout Nepal.

Deep Thapa is president of the Himalayan Region of Seventh-day Adventists.

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The Lord of Hosts



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 19:1, 12, 13; Matt. 16:27; Luke 2:8-11; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 5:11; 7:1.

MEMORY TEXT: “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The angels, who serve God unselfishly, play an important role in our everyday life, and they work actively for our salvation.

WHO ARE THE “HOSTS”? The scriptural usage points to the angels as representing the hosts over which God is Lord. Angels surround His throne and do His bidding. Occasionally, people have seen them and recognized in them a power available for their protection. (See Gen. 32:1, 2; 2 Kings 6:17.)

David mentions the title “Lord of hosts” when he approaches Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45). He uses it again in the climax to his poem of praise in Psalm 24 (verse 10). Jeremiah uses the name 88 times as indicating that God is the Saviour and Protector of His people.

To understand God better, we need to understand something about His angelic hosts. In heaven, there are thousands of them, ten thousand times ten thousand, ever worshiping God and ready to go on their missions throughout the universe. Myriads of them are at God’s service here in this world. Each child of God has his or her own guardian angel. This angel always has access to God Himself on His heavenly throne.

This week, we shall try to become better acquainted with God by studying the work of His angelic hosts. We will see how He uses angels in His activities for humankind.

ANGELS ABOUT GOD'S THRONE (Rev. 5:11).

What creatures and how many of them does John see around the throne of God? Rev. 5:11.

Heaven is the headquarters of the universe. There God is seated on His throne. God is infinitely great. The universe is infinitely large. Its work must be one of almost unbelievable complexity. It is through angels that God conducts His work.

God's work for the world is of great importance, to Him and to every one of us, whether sinner or saint. Every detail is closely watched. Not a sparrow in this little earth of ours falls to the ground without His notice. No king rules, no saint falls, without God's being aware of it.

Angels keep all the extremely complex and mutually interwoven affairs of earth under Heaven's control. In Ezekiel 1:15-21 and 10:9-16, the seemingly chaotic array of worldly affairs is likened to four wheels kept under the control of four living creatures, cherubim, who in turn are under the direction of God. (See Ezek. 1:26, 28; 10:1, 5, 18-20.)

"The seraphim around the throne are so filled with reverential awe as they behold the glory of God, that they do not for an instant look upon themselves with admiration. Their praise is for the Lord of hosts. . . . They are fully satisfied to glorify God; abiding in His presence, beneath His smile of approbation, they wish for nothing more." —*Evangelism*, p. 21.

Describe Jacob's dream in Genesis 28:10-15. What does it symbolize?

David spoke of God's "throne in the heavens" and of His kingdom which "ruleth over all," with His "angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word," the "ministers of his, that do his pleasure" (Ps. 103:19-21). Micaiah saw "the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19). Daniel beheld the Ancient of Days seated on His throne, which appeared "like the fiery flame" (Dan. 7:9, 10). Peter tells us that angels are even interested in our salvation (1 Pet. 1:10-12). These things, which mortal eyes cannot see, are just as real as, and infinitely more important than, the visible things of earth. The Bible draws the curtain aside and helps us to glimpse the close connection between heaven and earth.

Why would angels be interested in your salvation? What does this tell us about their nature?

ATTENDANTS OF CHRIST (Matt. 16:27).

What role do angels play in Christ's second coming? Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26.

The angels of heaven are the attendants of Christ and are under His command. When Satan rebelled and was cast to earth, a majority of the angels remained loyal to Christ. (See Rev. 12:4, 7, 8.)

Since the first rebellion, all the loyal angelic host has been closely connected with Christ in continued warfare against the dragon. In the conduct of the work of Heaven, many activities involve the entire universe. But none are of greater importance than those activities having to do with winning the world back to God. The angels are closely connected with Christ in the conduct of this work, ever eager to be sent on missions of mercy.

"Our Saviour . . . is surrounded with heavenly intelligences, cherubim, and seraphim, ten thousand times ten thousand of angels.

"All these heavenly beings have one object above all others, in which they are intensely interested—His church in a world of corruption. All these armies are in the service of the Prince of heaven, exalting the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. They are working for Christ under His commission, to save to the uttermost all who look to Him and believe in Him. These heavenly intelligences are speeding on their mission, doing for Christ that which Herod and Pilate did against Him. They confederate together to uphold the honor and glory of God. They are united in a holy alliance, . . . to show forth the power and compassion and love and glory of the crucified and risen Saviour."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 967, 968.

On what two special occasions did angels minister to Christ?

Matt. 4:1-11 _____

Luke 22:39-43 _____

When Christ prayed to have "the cup" removed from Him, God responded by sending an angel to strengthen Him instead. Looking back over your life, was there a time when you prayed to have "a cup" removed but God sent an angel to help you drink "the cup" instead? What form did "the cup" and the angel take? How does this experience prepare you to identify with and to minister to others facing trying circumstances?

ANGELIC MINISTRY TO PEOPLE (Heb. 1:14).

Describe the work angels do for humans. Heb. 1:14.

If we would understand the impact of angel ministry in our lives, we must first appreciate angels' involvement in the work of Heaven. In a previous lesson, we learned the extent to which the Trinity have expended Themselves for the sake of this world. This is not to say that God is any less involved in upholding other inhabited worlds or in communing with their holy inhabitants. Not at all. But this world has been the object of untold attention and immeasurable blessings because it is a lost world. As "foot soldiers" of God's army, angels are used in every battle and participate in every victory. They are personally involved.

"Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children. . . . Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences, we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills; and new faith, new life, would spring into being."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 162.

How did angels minister to humans in the following verses?

Acts 12:7-10 _____

Matt. 28:1-7 _____

How only can we be aware of the work of angels on our behalf?
2 Kings 6:17.

"Angels are constantly ascending and descending this ladder of shining brightness, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and bringing blessing and hope, courage and help, to the children of men. These angels of light create a heavenly atmosphere about the soul, lifting us toward the unseen and the eternal."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 153.

As you pray Elisha's prayer in 2 Kings 6:17, replace the word *his* with the word *my* and the word *he* with the word *I*. Then envision the angels ascending and descending the ladder, bearing your prayer to the Lord of Hosts and bringing you blessing and hope in return.

BEARERS OF GOOD TIDINGS (Luke 2:8-11).

What news did an angel host bring to shepherds? Luke 2:8-12.
What song did a host of angels sing? Verses 13, 14.

"Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven's solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noonday, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's commands."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 48.

Describe other instances when angels communicated important messages from God.

Gen. 19:1-23 _____

Judg. 13:1-5 _____

Matt. 1:18-21 _____

Matt. 28:1-7 _____

Luke 1:26-38 _____

Acts 1:10, 11 _____

Acts 27:22-24 _____

When Mary first received her angel messenger, his news greatly troubled her. But as he continued with the rest of the message, she grew calm and accepting. Thus, she symbolizes what we all can become by God's grace—ready and willing to act upon His instructions, submissive to His will.

"Do not forget to entertain [be hospitable to] strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:2, NIV). This was written at a time when inns were rare, and those that did exist were dirty, prohibitively expensive, and of poor repute. Thus the same need for hospitality may not be as great today. But the principle remains. What hospitality needs exist today? How can we as Christians fulfill them?

MESSAGES OF DOOM (Gen. 19:1, 12, 13).

Sometimes the special assignments given to angels were unpleasant tasks. After Adam and Eve's disobedience, angels escorted them from their garden home and guarded the tree of life. (See *Early Writings*, pp. 148, 149.) Shortly before the Flood, with Noah and his family and selected animals safely inside the ark, an angel came to close the door.

Angels aided in the confusion at the tower of Babel and worked mightily in behalf of the children of Israel prior to their escape from Egypt by bringing destruction to that nation.

What message did an angel give in Genesis 19:1, 12, 13?

Because of its iniquity, God saw fit to withdraw His protection and mercy, and the city met its doom. Angels carried out His purpose. At the same time angels were working to save Lot and his family. Their patience and insistence is an example of how God is eager to save us from the destruction of this world.

How are angels involved in the following passages?

2 Chron. 32:20, 21 _____

1 Chron. 21:14, 15 _____

Rev. 16 _____

"The God of the Hebrews had prevailed over the proud Assyrian [Sennacherib]. The honor of Jehovah was vindicated in the eyes of the surrounding nations. In Jerusalem the hearts of the people were filled with holy joy. Their earnest entreaties for deliverance had been mingled with confession of sin and with many tears. In their great need they had trusted wholly in the power of God to save, and He had not failed them." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 361, 362.

At the end of time, angels will again carry out the will of God as the history of sin is closed. They will conduct the work involved with the plagues and the sealing. (See Rev. 16; 7:2, 3; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 591.) Then, at last, earth's clouds will part and down the trackless corridors of space will come *all* the angels of heaven accompanying their King as He returns to take His redeemed ones home with Him. How bright they will shine! How richly fulfilled they will be as they reopen the gates to Paradise and escort their human friends to the tree of life!

How do you reconcile these destructive acts of God's angels with the goodness of God?

FURTHER STUDY: Angels also serve as controlling agents. How did John the revelator see them in this capacity? Rev. 7:1. How was Daniel saved from death? Dan. 6:22. Also read *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 96, 97 and *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 456, 457.

Angels unseen are commissioned by God to hold in check throughout the earth powers that could prematurely explode into outbreaks that would engulf the entire world in final destruction. Satan incites people everywhere to outbursts of wrath and violence. But angels from God hold them in check. Had it not been for the restraining activities of the angels, earth's troubles would long since have erupted into conflicts that would have ended only in Armageddon.

"Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other. But in the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God's chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his angels cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 55.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is a message from an angel as authoritative as if it came directly from God Himself?
2. How do angels relate to those who suffer trials and persecution? Base your answer on biblical examples.
3. How does God use angels to protect us in times of danger? Base your answer on biblical examples. Does this mean that as Christians we will never suffer? Explain. How can angels be with us when harm does befall us? Again, base your answer on examples in the Bible.
4. In what ways have you recognized the intervention of angels in your life?

SUMMARY: The God of heaven, whom we serve, is the Lord of hosts. Under His command innumerable angels move throughout the universe, fulfilling His wishes. Nothing delights them more than to perform some duty, some service, for their beloved Maker.

Angels are by our sides continually. They encourage us in the way of life. They offer us opportunities for spiritual growth. They minister to our every need. Should we not praise God for giving us such personal attention and sustaining us constantly on the battlefield of life?



Following a Good Example

Satulu Gerembaya

As a child growing up in Kinshasa, Zaire (now Republic of Congo), I lived near an Adventist church. I knew nothing about the church or the people who worshiped there, except that they were different. My friends and I sometimes threw stones and shouted accusations at the believers as we walked by the church.

Some years later a friend told me that, according to Revelation 13, the Catholic and Protestant churches would combine and persecute Christians who kept God's laws. I could not understand how Christians could hurt other Christians. Then I began to wonder who were these Christians who kept God's law.

Shortly after I was married, my wife became a Seventh-day Adventist. I was not happy when she told me, for I still thought this church was a bad church. I got angry when she refused to go to the market or cook on Saturday or when she refused to eat certain foods, even though she prepared them for me. But I noticed that when I argued with her, she no longer argued back. Something had changed.

I went to another area of Zaire to work in the gold mines. I discovered that the Adventist church was there too! Curious, I decided to attend a service. As I listened to the preacher and studied the texts he gave, many of the things my wife did began to make sense to me. I liked the way Adventists worshiped too. They did not shout or play loud music as my church did. When I learned about returning a tenth of my earnings to God, who gave them to me, I decided to try. I began returning tithe and waited to see what would happen. Not long after this I found a gold nugget weighing about six pounds!

I returned to Kinshasa and began attending church with my wife. I read some Ellen White books, and soon I realized that the religious minority that would be persecuted for "keeping the law" was the Adventist church. I decided to be baptized.

African men want women to follow them, but this time I was glad to follow my wife's example! My only regret is that so many years passed before I took my stand. I think of all the people I could have witnessed to over the years and wish I had made the decision sooner.

Satulu Gerembaya is a businessman living in Kinshasa, Republic of Congo.



The God of Help



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 27:1-3; 48:14; Isa. 41:10; 59:18-20; Nah. 1:7; Eph. 3:20.

MEMORY TEXT: "So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:6, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: God's unlimited power is available to help us, protect us, and guide us in all situations.

"I NEED AN AMBULANCE!" When people dial an emergency telephone system for help, they immediately reach a dispatcher who reads on his or her computer screen the caller's name, phone number, and address. That way, even if the person calling cannot clearly describe the problem, the dispatcher can still send emergency personnel. As Christians, we have a God who knows our name, location, and circumstance even *before* we call for help.

If, in past ages, God's people needed to know Him as their Helper, there is much greater need today. Now in earth's last hours, there are greater trials, temptations, and dangers than ever before. We are living during the time in which Christ warned that efforts would be made, if possible, to "deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). These are the times about which God spoke when He said the devil would come down in "great wrath," knowing "that he hath but a short time," and that the dragon would be "wroth with the woman" and would "make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:12, 17). In this lesson, we shall endeavor to become better acquainted with God as our divine Helper and Protector.

GOD'S GREAT POWER TO HELP (Eph. 3:20).

What was Paul's view of God's power to help? Eph. 3:20. Focus on the significant words he used to describe the extent of God's willingness to help.

When we want someone to do something for us, we go to someone who is able to do it. If we want a watch repaired, a motor fixed, a house built, we go to someone competent.

We are conditioned to think that, in these days of scientific progress, there is no limit to what science can do. We talk of the miracles of medicine and technology. We think that all we need to do is to invest more money and time, and we will find the answers. But the fact is that we are limited by time and conditioned by environment. With all our efforts and skill, we still face death and the end of the world. If we are wise, we will look beyond the immediate and recognize a God who is there to help; and there is no limit to what He can do.

Explain Paul's attitude regarding his "weakness," or "thorn." 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

"The weakness or defect can bring people into the condition in which they are open to God's Spirit. We come to God through the sense of need. The feeling of inadequacy turns into prayer. . . . We come to that dependence only when self-sufficiency has been broken by some situation or experience that is too much for us. When self in its various forms is laid in the dust, God can fully come in."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10, p. 409.

Isaiah 40:28-31 assures us that when we "wait upon the Lord," our strength will be renewed, and we will soar like eagles. To "wait upon the Lord" is not simply to do nothing. It is to look to God for guidance and strength. In Him and not in ourselves is the secret of success in our struggles with ourselves, with our environment, and with the task God has given us to do.

Does the church feel that Christ's command to give the gospel to all nations is too great a task? Let it recall His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:20, 18). Yes, the One who promised to be with us has all the power in the universe!

What "weakness" have you been struggling with lately? How has it taught you to depend more on God? Pray that He will give you strength to endure and guidance to continue working for Him.

GOD'S WILLINGNESS TO HELP (Isa. 41:10).

Why does God say we need not be afraid in any circumstance? Isa. 41:10.

Every child of God may have complete confidence in God's willingness to help and in His ability and purpose to strengthen and uphold. As a mother loves her child and would make any sacrifice in its behalf, so with God.

When Elijah ran for his life after Jezebel threatened him, the Lord made Himself known to Elijah, showing him "that quiet trust and firm reliance upon God will ever find Him a present help in time of need. . . .

"We have the frailties of mortal feelings to contend with. But if we trust in God, He will never leave nor forsake us. Under all circumstances we may have firm trust in God, that He will never leave nor forsake us while we preserve our integrity."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 292, 293.

"To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly.' 2 Peter 2:9. From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 528. (Review 1 Kings 19:3-18.)

How certain was the psalmist that God would provide for him? Ps. 27:10. What assurance may we have concerning the watchcare of God? Ps. 121:3-7.

"In His loving care and interest in us, often He who understands us better than we understand ourselves refuses to permit us selfishly to seek the gratification of our own ambition. He does not permit us to pass by the homely but sacred duties that lie next to us. Often these duties afford the very training essential to prepare us for a higher work. Often our plans fail, that God's plans for us may succeed. . . .

"In the future life, the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 473, 474.

If God is always for me, why do events so often appear to be against me? Why does God often seem willing to help me at a time or in a way of His choosing instead of mine? How can I keep from becoming discouraged when this happens?

GOD, THE PROTECTOR OF HIS PEOPLE (Ps. 27:1-3).

List the things David did not fear, because the Lord was his light and salvation. Ps. 27:1-3.

Do we sometimes feel the whole world is against us? Perhaps! But we have no reason to fear the outcome. With God, our Helper, on our side, we can be sure of victory. We have enemies. But we need not fear them. We who endeavor to do right have the forces of evil against us. But we need not live in terror. What we need is faith in God and the courage that comes with it. With these we may have peace in our heart and victory in our life.

What may be our confidence? Ps. 17:6-15.

In this psalm, David dials, as it were, God's emergency phone system.

Apple of the eye. The Hebrew for this phrase literally means "a little man." "The term is applied to the pupil of the eye, probably because, as in a mirror, one sees a tiny image of himself. The prayer is that God will guard the psalmist as a man protects his eyesight. Compare a similar figure in Deut. 32:10 and Prov. 7:2.

Shadow of thy wings. This phrase, common in the psalms, suggests a mother bird protecting her young. Compare a similar figure in Deut. 32:11, 12 and Matt. 23:37."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 668.

All Paths Are Beset With Peril.—You need not be surprised if everything in the journey heavenward is not pleasant. There is no use in looking to our own defects. Looking unto Jesus, the darkness passes away, and the true light shineth. Go forth daily, expressing the prayer of David, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.' All the paths of life are beset with peril, but we are safe if we follow where the Master leads the way, trusting the One whose voice we hear saying, 'Follow me.' 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Let your heart repose in His love. We need sanctification, soul, body, and spirit. This we must seek for." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1143.

What "armies" are attacking you? What "wars" are you fighting? Perhaps something or someone is tempting you or a particular situation you are in is making the present and the future quite glum. Which of God's promises help you in such situations?

THE GOD OF EMERGENCIES (Isa. 59:18-20).

When God's people find themselves in emergency situations, what will He do for them? Isa. 59:18-20.

We live in a world where those who endeavor to serve God must expect manifestations of the power of the enemy and revealings of the power of God. Left to themselves alone, the children of God would be no match for the relentless foe. But the battle is not theirs alone. It is God's. In every crisis the Lord is with His people, ready to defend and deliver.

"Again and again throughout history God has intervened in the most marvelous ways to deliver His people. Such will again be the experience of God's people in the great crisis at the end of time. At the moment the wicked of earth think they have the saints completely within their power, the Lord will manifest Himself, destroying their enemies and taking the saints home with Him to receive their inheritance."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 312.

Review some of the emergency situations listed here. How does the Lord's intervention in each case help to strengthen your faith? Exod. 14:5-33; Esther 3-8; Dan. 3. What does verse 18 teach us about the true nature of faith?

"From age to age the Lord has made known the manner of His working. When a crisis has come, He has revealed Himself, and has interposed to hinder the working out of Satan's plans. With nations, with families, and with individuals, He has often permitted matters to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked. Then He has made manifest that there is a God in Israel who will maintain His law and vindicate His people."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 178.

"His [God's] power is absolute. . . .

"In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day.

"He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481, 482.

In what emergency situation do you presently find yourself? How is God helping you through it? Can you say, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "Even if God does not save me from this situation, I will still serve Him"?

GOD GUIDES HIS PEOPLE (Ps. 48:14; 32:8).

What does Psalm 48:14 tell us about our need for God's guidance? How personal is God's guidance? Ps. 32:8.

"I will guide you with My eye" (NKJV). Guidance with the eye is a close and intimate guidance. It is more than giving instructions and leaving a person to carry them out. It means watching the person continually to make sure every move is correct. It is the guidance a parent would give a child, freely, willingly, and with a deep concern for the child's best interest.

"Bob Mumford, in *Take Another Look at Guidance*, compares discovering God's will with a sea captain's docking procedure:

"A certain harbor in Italy can be reached only by sailing up a narrow channel between dangerous rocks and shoals. Over the years, many ships have been wrecked, and navigation is hazardous.

"To guide the ships safely into port, three lights have been mounted on three huge poles in the harbor. When the three lights are perfectly lined up and seen as one, the ship can safely proceed up the narrow channel. If the pilot sees two or three lights, he knows he's off course and in danger.

"God has also provided three beacons to guide us. The same rules of navigation apply—the three lights must be lined up before it is safe for us to proceed. The three harbor lights of guidance are:

1. The Word of God (objective standard)
2. The Holy Spirit (subjective witness)
3. Circumstances (divine providence)

"Together they assure us that the directions we've received are from God and will lead us safely along his way."—*Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching From Leadership Journal*, Craig Brian Larson, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), p. 108. (See also *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 512.)

"Let all who claim to be preparing for the coming of the Lord humbly seek Him for a knowledge of His will, and for a spirit that is willing to walk in all the light He sends. . . . Let us go to the Word of God for instruction."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 326.

Memorize one of the following prayers for God's guidance and pray it often: Ps. 27:11; 31:3; 43:3.

How can we make sure the impressions of our hearts (subjective witness) are right impressions?

FURTHER STUDY: What role does trust in God play when it comes to seeking His help? Nah. 1:7. What about the human experience contributing to a lack of trust in God? 2 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 3:12. Explain what trust in God meant to the psalmist (Ps. 48:5-9). Also read *Education*, pp. 253-256.

There is no limit to what we may accomplish when we go forward with full confidence in God and complete reliance on His strength. Read Philippians 4:13. Paul was well aware of his own weaknesses. But he also was acquainted with God's infinite strength that was placed at his disposal.

"God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength, is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency, if they will place their entire confidence in Him, and faithfully obey Him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is trust in God important for the things of earth, as well as for the things of heaven? Explain. If we lack trust in God, how may we secure it? Explain the relationship between trust in God and obedience to His commands.
2. How are we to understand the purposes of God in sometimes providing protection and sometimes withholding it?
3. For one who desires guidance by God, what is the relationship between the Scriptures and the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit?

SUMMARY: Trust in God lies at the heart of all we have studied this week. God wants to provide us with every type of assistance in our battle with the enemy and in our growth as His sons and daughters. But it is clear that unless we are walking in the path of obedience and trust, most of God's help will be unavailable to us.

God has the power to help. He is willing to help. But His sovereignty ends where a rebel's sovereignty begins. If we are rebels, He can give us no more help, no more protection, than He provides for all inhabitants of our wayward world. But the moment we step under His banner, claiming Him our Commander, He accepts the gift of our sovereignty and begins to work in us to will and to do His good pleasure. It is His pleasure to care for us, protect us, and guide us. He will be our God of help.



Apricots for Souls

J. H. Zachary

God works mightily through people who put their trust in Him. Alexander Butoy escaped from Communist Romania and journeyed through Italy and Brazil, finally settling in Southern California.

When Communism collapsed in Romania, Butoy prayed for a way to share his love for God with the people of Mari, his home village. In 1992 he returned to Mari, taking 50 Bibles with him. When he arrived he discovered that not one home had a Bible! He traveled to Bucharest to buy 105 more Bibles, so each home would have one.

While in Mari, two men from Veda, a neighboring village, came to see Butoy. "Please bring Bibles to our village too," they pleaded. Butoy promised to help them, but he had no more money.

He returned to California, praying that God would answer the prayers of these spiritually hungry people. He visited two of his cousins whose ancestral home was Veda and challenged them to help provide Bibles for their village. A few months later Butoy and his cousins returned to Veda with Bibles for every family.

While visiting the homes, they met the Orthodox priest. He thanked the men for providing the Bibles. "I cannot attend your meetings," he said. "But I encourage my people to attend. It is all right with me if half of the town becomes Adventists!" the priest told his surprised visitors.

Butoy wanted to provide Bibles for six additional villages in Romania. He asked The Quiet Hour and several churches to help him provide 2,500 Bibles.

Then some of the people who had received Bibles asked for help to understand the Word of God better. But Butoy had no money to support lay Bible teachers in the villages. Again he asked God to provide for this outreach.

Butoy saw his three apricot trees in full bloom. He knelt under one of the trees and dedicated it to the Lord. "I will sell the apricots from this tree to finance lay workers in Romania," he promised God. The apricot tree he had dedicated to God produced twice as much fruit as the other two trees. The funds from the apricots paid for several lay workers to teach the people in Mari and the surrounding villages. Today there is a company of believers in each of these villages.

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for The Quiet Hour.

King of Kings



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 24:7, 8; Isa. 32:1; 33:22; Dan. 2:44; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 5:12, 13.

MEMORY TEXT: “But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to abide His indignation” (Jeremiah 10:10, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Some day soon the entire universe will joyfully celebrate the final victory of our glorious King of kings and the inauguration of the eternal reign of righteousness.

OUR WONDERFUL GOD IS PICTURED IN SCRIPTURE AS A KING. In these days, there are not many kings. We might well, therefore, review the responsibilities of a king in order to see clearly some of the functions of our God.

Kings, in the days when the Bible was written, were sovereign in their land. In the same manner, God has sole authority. We are to obey His commands. He gives direction to every movement and policy.

Some kings have been arbitrary in their judgments, even wicked in their intentions. David was far from perfect. (Remember the way he treated Uriah, 2 Samuel 11.) By contrast, our God is a righteous king.

Some kings have contributed very little, if anything, to the greatness of their nation. They have been mere figureheads. But this is far from true of our God, whom we can call the King of glory.

Some kings have had to fight for their kingdom and failed. Our God is a king who is engaged in a battle for the truth. And His victory is assured. In this lesson, we look at our God as King of kings.

THE LORD IS KING (Isa. 33:22).

What is God's four-point job description according to Isaiah 33:22?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

This multifaceted aspect of the responsibilities of a king is not true of many, if any, kings today. Most rulers have checks placed on their powers. This seems to be necessary because of the limitations of any person. But the Lord who is our King is able, and He functions in these, as well as other ways.

How did Abraham expect that the Judge of all the earth should act? Gen. 18:25.

Note that it would be an injustice for the righteous to suffer with the wicked. Note also that the wicked can be given extra grace because of the presence of a few righteous people. Have you thought that, when you are fully surrendered to God and obedient to Him, your neighbors profit from your presence among them?

God is not interested in condemning the world and destroying it (John 3:17). But when people refuse to accept God's mercy, then punishment is inevitable. God sometimes has to do things He does not like to do. His heart "churns within" Him as He cries: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?" Hos. 11:8, NKJV.

What is the relation between judging one another and the law of God? James 4:11, 12.

A king could also be a savior to his people. He could protect them from their enemies. Not all kings were always capable of this. But our God is a king who will never fail to save those who come in submission to Him.

What is the relationship of law to Saviour as far as humankind is concerned? How does that relationship affect your daily life and spiritual growth?

KING ETERNAL (1 Tim. 1:17).

List the four characteristics of God that Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 1:17.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Contrasted with the wages of death, what is the gift of God? Rom. 6:23. What is the significance of the words *wages* and *gift* used in this context?

Life is a very precious commodity. God desires that we shall have it abundantly (John 10:10). He is the only source of life (John 11:25). The knowledge of God leads to life eternal (John 17:3). It is very fitting, therefore, that our God should be represented as an eternal king.

The concept of eternal kingship rules out the possibility of unwelcome change or an order passing away. It speaks of stability and continuity, that which creates trust.

David writes in Psalm 145:13 that God's kingdom is an everlasting one and that His "dominion endures through all generations" (NIV). Thus we know that God's kingly authority governs all time and space. In other words, He is the sole ruler of the universe, and as such, demands our compliance and worship.

In Malachi 3:6, God says, "'I the Lord do not change'" (NIV). Because God remains eternally the same, we have the assured hope that He will fulfill His promises.

By contrast, we can see how fickle people are. Laban deceived Jacob and changed his wages ten times (Gen. 31:7). We cannot put our trust even in princes. We can never be certain of anything in this life, particularly riches (1 Tim. 6:17). We can only be certain that God is ruling heaven, that all things are in His control, and that we are under His care if we put our trust in Him. "We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146.

Think of at least three or four ways you can express loyalty to your Eternal King. Plan to follow through with these expressions every day of the week.

KING OF GLORY (Ps. 24:7, 8).**What question and answer do we find in Psalm 24:7, 8?****Question** _____**Answer** _____

Explain how God displayed His glory to Moses in Exodus 33:18, 19. What implications does this have for Paul's counsel to "do all to the glory of God"? (1 Cor. 10:31, KJV).

God's glory is seen in His gracious character. Some people think glory is an outward manifestation of light, a display of riches and power. But God's glory has to do with His inner being. What He is makes Him glorious. God made all His goodness pass before Moses. "The glory reflected in the countenance of Moses illustrates the blessings to be received by God's commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ. It testifies that the closer our communion with God, and the clearer our knowledge of His requirements, the more fully shall we be conformed to the divine image, and the more readily do we become partakers of the divine nature."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 330.

Jesus pointed out the difference between an inner glory and one that is "put on" when He contrasted the lily of the field with Solomon and all his finery. If we want to reflect the glory of God in our lives, we need to allow Him to remake us. (See Ezek. 36:26, 27.) First Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5:13-26 elaborate on the goodness of God that we ourselves are to display.

God's glory is seen not only in His goodness and mercy. It is seen also in the conflict with evil. When sin first entered heaven, God was all good in pleading with Lucifer and his angels. But the time came when there could be no room for rebellion in heaven. A war broke out in which Michael and His angels fought against the dragon and his angels. (See Rev. 12:7-9.) Then there was the struggle on the cross, when it seemed as if Satan had gained the victory. But with the resurrection, God was vindicated. Truth will always triumph over evil. The King of glory is "mighty in battle." His strength is ours to claim.

Meditate upon your relationship with friends, family, and co-workers. How could God's goodness improve these relationships? How could your being made anew in the image of His goodness change some of the uncomfortable situations in which you now find yourself?

FINAL VICTORY (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 22:20).

Summarize what Daniel 2:44 tells about the future of earthly kingdoms and God's kingdom.

Earthly kingdoms _____

God's kingdom _____

The time is coming when God can stand no more delay. Everyone will have decided which side of the conflict she or he is taking, and God will destroy the wicked and vindicate the righteous.

Who does Daniel, in another vision, state are the final victims? Dan. 7:27.

What does God say about when this final victory will occur? Rev. 22:20.

Jesus told His disciples to watch for the signs of His coming (Matt. 24:42). We know we are living in the last days, because the prophecies have almost all been fulfilled. It is not for us to know the *time* of His coming (Acts 1:7). But we are to be ready, since it will be unexpected (Matt. 24:44).

While we look forward to sharing in the victory which the King of glory will win over Satan, we ought to feel deep concern for the millions of unclaimed sinners for whom that victory will mean eternal death.

"Again I appeal to the members of the church to be Christians, to be Christlike. Jesus was a worker, not for Himself, but for others. He labored to bless and save the lost. If you are Christians you will imitate His example. He has laid the foundation, and we are builders together with Him. But what material are we bringing to lay on this foundation? 'Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.' If you are devoting all your strength and talent to the things of this world, your lifework is represented by wood, hay, and stubble, to be consumed by the fires of the last day. But unselfish labor for Christ and the future life will be as gold, silver, and precious stones; it is imperishable."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 466.

Examine your work for the Lord. What materials are you bringing to lay on the foundation He has laid? Pray that with His help you will better imitate His example.

A REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Isa. 32:1).

What two words does Isaiah use to describe how God will rule His eternal kingdom? Isa. 32:1.

"Reign in righteousness. Isaiah turns from the imminent Assyrian attack on Jerusalem (ch. 31:8, 9) to the time of peace that was to follow. . . . In a similar way the overthrow of all the forces of Satan will be followed by Christ's eternal reign in righteousness and glory. As usual, the prophetic picture of peace and security following upon tribulation blends into a description of the glories of the world to come, the Messianic age. In this Messianic setting the 'king' is Christ." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 224.

What wonderful things will God's people experience as He begins this reign?

Rev. 19:6, 7 _____

Rev. 21:4 _____

Isa. 25:9 _____

Being saved is a goal that some of us hardly feel possible. Paul felt that he was the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). But God's grace is abundant (verse 14). Joshua the high priest was a "brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech. 3:2, KJV). But God had made every provision for him. Thus it will be with us. And we shall rejoice that God has saved us in spite of our weaknesses.

It can be our privilege to live during the Lord's eternal reign only because of God's forgiveness. God is eager for us to live in His kingdom. Jesus has extended a gracious invitation (John 14:1-3). John the revelator had a glimpse of the earth made new and recorded the invitation of the Spirit (Rev. 22:17). Paul says that the suffering we may have in this world is no hindrance to us when we consider future glory (Rom. 8:18, 19). We must learn to set our minds on the things above, not on the things around us.

What are some of the things you look forward to when God sets up His kingdom, and why? What spiritual impact does contemplating the wonderful things God has prepared for us have on our challenging daily existence?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Revelation 5:12, 13. Jesus is our worthy King. The scene is His final coronation. He had occupied the throne with God before the fall of Adam and Eve. But He had given it up when He came to earth as a human to give up His life for our salvation. Now Jesus is to reign again as Lord over all the universe. And all the universe is there to witness His coronation. As Christ is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords—as He is given a name “above every name”—all, both good and evil, bow in homage before Him. Why is Christ worthy of the highest honors that can be bestowed upon Him? Rev. 5:9, 10. Also read *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 832-835.

“Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. . . . Satan’s own works have condemned him. . . .

“Before the universe has been clearly presented the great sacrifice made by the Father and the Son in man’s behalf. The hour has come when Christ occupies His rightful position and is glorified above principalities and powers and every name that is named. . . . And the song of praise ascends from the white-robed ones about the throne: [Rev. 5:12 quoted].”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 670, 671.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the following aspects of God and His government are subject to change, and which are changeless? Why? His methods; His nature; His character; His plans; His law; His love. Explain your answers.
2. Why has God delayed His final victory? Why has He allowed the reign of sin to continue yet a little longer?

SUMMARY: Throughout this quarter, we have learned much about God. At times we have trembled to think of His power and majesty. At other times we have rejoiced that every atom in the universe is under His direction. As we have encountered His call for obedience and justice, we also have come to know Him as a God of mercy and peace. Our divine Father combines the traits of strength and love, transcendence and personal friendship. Can all these characteristics really exist in one Person? They can, and they do. They exist in our King of kings. Today, as you celebrate His birth, invite Him again to reign in your heart.



Taking Inventory

Robert S. Folkenberg

Year end is inventory time, a time to evaluate progress and lay plans for the future. As Christians we need to conduct a spiritual inventory, to evaluate our personal spiritual growth. But what questions does a Christian answer during this personal inventory? Here are some suggestions: What is my highest priority? How do I define success? Does God define it the same way? Where do I spend my time? What topic most stimulates my interest?

Ellen White suggested an answer. "We should not make self the center, and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. . . . Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 71.

As a practical example, let me share with you the words penned by a young Christian pastor in Zimbabwe that were found in his office shortly after he was martyred for his faith.

"I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made—I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

"I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labor with power.

"My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions are few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

"I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me . . . my banner will be clear!"—Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus*.

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Lessons for First Quarter, 1999

The first quarter Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, entitled *Revelation and Inspiration*, focuses on the nature of inspiration.

Lesson 1: God Is Good.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 107:1-8; 77:1-13; Jer. 31:33; 1 Chron. 16:8-12.

MEMORY TEXT: Exodus 34:6.

KEY THOUGHT: God uses various means of revelation to help us understand His goodness.

OUTLINE:

- The Goodness of God (Ps. 25:8).
- "God Is Great, God Is Good" (Ps. 77:1-13).
- It Is God's Nature to Love (1 John 4:8-12).
- "Behold, What Manner of Love" (Isa. 63:7-9).
- How Can We Know God? (Deut. 4:29-32).

Lesson 2: That We May Know Him.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Kings 22; Ps. 107:31-43; John 14:8-11; 16:8-14; 17:1-5; Rom. 1:17-23; Col. 1:12-20.

MEMORY TEXT: John 17:3.

KEY THOUGHT: Through various means of revelation, God makes it possible for us to know as much about Him as He thinks is necessary.

OUTLINE:

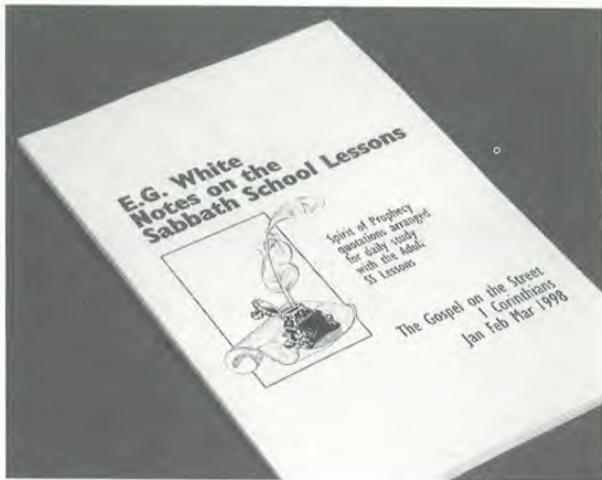
- God Speaks Through Nature (Rom. 1:17:23).
- Science and the Bible (Isa. 40:21-28).
- His Written Word (2 Pet. 1:19-21).
- God Speaks Through His Living Word (John 1:14).
- Other Means of Revelation (Isa. 49:14,15).

Lessons in Braille

The regular adult Sabbath School Guide is available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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